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STEP 1

We admitted we were powerless over our addictions and compulsive behaviors—that our lives had become unmanageable.

I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. **Romans 7:18**

Engage

AA cofounder Bill Wilson said that the 12 Steps are "...a group of principles, spiritual in their nature, which, if practiced as a way of life, can expel the obsession to drink and enable the sufferer to become happily and usefully whole" (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, page 15). In other words, by simply practicing these spiritual principles, the 12 Steps can keep us sober, happy, and provide a fulfilling life in recovery.

Step 1 is about being honest with ourselves and admitting defeat in our battle with alcohol, drugs, or whatever our addiction or compulsion. The spiritual principle behind Step 1 is **honesty**. But Step 1 is not merely an intellectual admission of powerlessness. Sure, you may know in your mind, that you are powerless over your addictions and compulsive behaviors, but it is also an emotional acceptance of our powerlessness made at the deepest, most painful level possible in the sense of hopelessness and defeat that comes from this powerlessness. It is surrender.

We come to a point where we are brought to our knees, so broken, defeated, hopeless, when we have truly hit our bottom. The Big Book says that this is the point where "we learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. This is the first step in recovery." (Alcoholics Anonymous, page 30)

Key Verses for Step 1

Living as Children of Light

"With the Lord's authority I say this: Live no longer as the Gentiles do, for they are hopelessly confused. Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against Him. They have no sense of shame. They live for lustful pleasure and eagerly practice every kind of impurity. But that isn't what you learned about Christ. Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from Him, throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy. **Ephesians 4:17-24 (NLT)**

Examine Your Heart

1. For some of us, admitting our powerlessness was our first step toward practicing honesty. Is it difficult for you to practice honesty?
2. Can you share an experience where practicing honesty might have been difficult but was ultimately the right thing to do?

Prayer

Father, I pray that you will help me to practice honesty—honesty with you, with others, and with myself. Please be by my side as I admit my powerlessness over my compulsive behaviors and learn to surrender everything to You. Amen.

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STEP 2

We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose. **Philippians 2:13**

Engage

Step 2's spiritual principal is **hope**. In the first step, we admitted we were powerless, and we may have felt stripped of any hope. Now in Step 2, we turn to God, believe that He can restore us from our past lives of self-destruction, and find hope through Him that our lives are on a new and brighter path.

Our 12-step recovery program provides a spiritual guide for living. The Life Recovery Bible lists the 12 steps, related scripture, and the 8 recovery principles as they align with the steps. The recovery principle for Step 2 reads, "Earnestly believe that God exists, that I matter to Him, and that He has power to help me recover." It doesn't say "we," it says HE has the power!

In the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous it says, "Remember that we deal with alcohol—cunning, baffling, and powerful! Without help it is too much for us! But there is One who has all power—that One is God. May you find Him now!" We can't do this alone. We *need* God! We need Him more than we even allow ourselves to understand—to restore us, to heal us, to renew us, to find our peace, and to find hope that we can recover.

Key Verses for Step 2

Wisdom from the Lord

This is what the Lord says: "Cursed are those who put their trust in mere humans, who rely on human strength and turn their hearts away from the Lord. They are like stunted shrubs in the desert, with no hope for the future. They will live in the barren wilderness, in an uninhabited salty land. But blessed are those who trust in the Lord and have made the Lord their hope and confidence. They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they never stop producing fruit." **Jeremiah 17:5-8 (NLT)**

Examine Your Heart

1. What has been your experience in coming to believe in a Power greater than yourself?
2. Have you found hope?

Prayer

God, thank you for all you've done in my life, even when I might have not fully believed in You. I am so grateful I am able to turn to You and find hope to keep moving forward in my recovery and new way of living. I pray You'll continue to bless my path and assure me that I can always turn to You. Amen.

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STEP 3

We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. **Romans 12:1**

Engage

In Step 3 we make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God—to turn everything over to Him: our will, our thinking, our decisions, our behavior, and our control. To just let go and ask Him for help. The spiritual principle behind Step 3 is **faith**. One way to summarize the first three steps is this: I can't. God can. Let God.

Some of us don't really welcome the idea of turning everything over and letting go. Even after working Steps 1 and 2, we still hang onto that illusion of control. It's a scary idea to let go of control! But as long as we believe that we are responsible for everything our lives, Step 3 will be a challenge for us. But are we really responsible for *everything*? We need to realize that we can only be responsible for ourselves—our own actions and attitudes, how we respond to people and situations in our lives. Everything else is beyond our control. So, how do we do this? How do we make this decision?

The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous says that without God there is no recovery: "The central fact of our lives today is the absolute certainty that our Creator has entered into our hearts and lives in a way which is indeed miraculous. He has commenced to accomplish those things for us which we could never do by ourselves." It goes on to say, "We believe there is no middle-of-the-road solution...we had but two alternatives: One was to go on to the bitter end, blotting out the [reality] of our intolerable situation as best we could; and the other, to accept spiritual help." (Alcoholics Anonymous, pages 25-26)

The Big Book also says that we need to let God do His job: "First of all, we had to quit playing God. Next, we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our Director. He is the Father, we are His children." (Alcoholics Anonymous, page 62) It goes on to say if we become convinced of this, remarkable things will follow. We will become less and less interested in ourselves, less selfish, and we become more and more interested in seeing what we can contribute to life. As we become conscious of His presence, we began to lose our fear of today, tomorrow, and of the future. We begin to lose our fear and we begin to have faith.

Key Verse for Step 3

Great Examples of Faith

Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see.

Hebrews 11:1 (NLT)

Examine Your Heart

Think about your personal relationship with God. How do you imagine God? Do you see God as loving? That he cares about your life? That He is forgiving? Do you see God as your friend?

Prayer

"God, I offer myself to Thee—to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!" (Third Step Prayer, Alcoholics Anonymous, page 63)

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STEP 4

We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the LORD. **Lamentations 3:40**

Engage

Step 4 is an action step, one that the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous describes as “vigorous.” It says it is a “personal house-cleaning which many of us had never attempted.” So many of us look for the easier, softer way, but by doing Step 4, we strengthen that decision we made in Step 3—our decision to turn our will and our lives over to God’s care. Unless we make a “strenuous effort to face, and be rid of, the things in ourselves which have been blocking us,” our decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God will “have little permanent effect.” (Alcoholics Anonymous, pages 63-64)

Many of us may assume that if we stop our addictive or compulsive behavior, all of our problems will be solved. Unfortunately, this isn’t true. By stopping these behaviors, we did solve problems directly related to addiction, but then we see that other problems persisted: Character defects! These may include, but are not limited to:

- Procrastination
- Resentments
- Anger
- Rage
- Dishonesty
- Irresponsibility
- Selfishness
- Pride
- Envy
- Greed
- Isolation
- Fear
- Moral or sexual misconduct

These problems that stem from our character defects do not go away just because we quit using or focusing on others. Alcohol, drugs, gambling, overeating, compulsive spending, negative relationships—these things are just symptoms. We have to get to the root cause of our condition. Why? Because our disease is not just physical; it also affects us emotionally, mentally and spiritually. We cannot change ourselves simply by changing our external behavior. In order to continue recovering, and develop spiritually and emotionally, we must face even our worst secrets.

The spiritual principle for Step 4 is **courage**. The purpose of Step 4 is to identify our character defects; to find the root cause of our behavior, why we act the way we do, and to get to the bottom of our character defects. If we do not, they will eventually block us from lasting recovery. As we choose to move forward in recovery, working each of the 12 Steps, we open ourselves to being transformed by God into entirely new people—the people He created us to be. The purpose of Step 4 is not for us to experience humiliation and punishment. The purpose is so we can clean house, be changed from the inside-out, and experience freedom.

Key Verses for Step 4

For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. **Jeremiah 29:11 (NLT)**

This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. **Joshua 1:9 (NLT)**

Examine Your Heart

1. Is there anything standing in the way of you taking a moral inventory, such as pride or fear?
2. If you’ve completed your inventory, share your experience.

Prayer

Father, please help me to put aside my fears in working Step 4, and instead fill me with courage to come face-to-face with myself. Help me to be honest as I look at my character defects, my resentments, and the role I play in the circumstances. Be near me so that I am not alone as I work on my fearless moral inventory. Amen.

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STEP 5

We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. **James 5:16**

Engage

In Step 5, we admit to God, to ourselves, and to another person the exact nature of our wrongs that we've committed as a result of our character defects. The spiritual principal for Step 5 is **integrity**. The AA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions states that "scarcely any Step is more necessary to longtime sobriety and peace of mind than Step 5." You may be afraid to work this step—that's understandable. After all, who wants to talk about what we did wrong? Who wants to talk about character defects? Who wants to tell someone else our inner-most secrets? But know that the harder you work in this step, the more your efforts will be rewarded.

In working Step 4 and writing our inventory, we trap the shameful part of our past. We face and admit it in Step 5. How tragic would it be if we wrote all of this down and then just shoved it in a drawer? These defects grew during our years of darkness in addiction or while we suffered with an addict. The Narcotics Anonymous Basic Text says that "these defects grow in the dark...but they die in the light of exposure." Only when our defects are brought into the light, when we expose them, can we be healed. This is why we must admit the exact nature of our wrongs, not only to God and to ourselves but also to another person. Don't let yourself use the excuse that "God already knows all this stuff." You cannot afford to make this mistake. Although He already knows, the admission must come from our own lips and be told to another to be truly effective.

The AA Big Book says this about Step 5: "Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone at perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel nearness to God. We may have had certain spiritual beliefs before, but now we begin to have a spiritual experience." Do not fear Step 5. You will not be humiliated or rejected for sharing your past. Trust God. When you walk through your fear, you open yourself to the possibility of experiencing relief and compassion. Step 5 gives us the chance to have a different kind of relationship with ourselves, with others, and with God. We might come into this step condemning ourselves, but be compassionate—you are valuable and you are worth it. You'll develop self-acceptance and self-forgiveness. Having compassion for yourself opens you to the great promises of recovery.

Key Verses for Step 5

Hypocrites! For you are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy—full of greed and self-indulgence! First wash the inside of the cup and the dish, and then the outside will become clean, too.

Matthew 23:25-26 (NLT)

You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. **John 8:32 (NLT)**

Examine Your Heart

1. What does Step 5's spiritual principle of integrity mean to you?

Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

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STEP 6

We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up. **James 4:10**

Engage

How can we become entirely ready to give up all our defects? What does it mean to have God remove them? What will life be like without them? It might sound like Step 6 is asking you to open up and let go of everything at once. But take another look—it only asks that you become ready, that you become willing to be open to change, willing to let go of patterns, habits, personal traits that we seem to repeat over and over that cause our lives to be unbalanced. The spiritual principle for Step 6 is **willingness**.

An example of willingness is when we were active in our addiction or compulsive behaviors—destructive patterns we repeated over and over, even when we knew it was hurting us. It took us time to realize the damage these patterns were causing, but we did—and when we were ready, we let them go.

Step 6 addresses the issue of our willingness to have our defects of character we identified in Step 4 and admitted in Step 5 removed. After all the work we put into Steps 4 and 5, it seems at first that Step 6 will be quick and easy. Not much is required as far as action goes, but a lot is required both emotionally and spiritually.

The Life Recovery Bible (first edition, page 715) says this about Step 6: “If we have sincerely practiced the previous steps, we have probably found enough pain inside ourself to break our heart. Facing the fact that brokenness is part of the human condition can be crushing. But if we have arrived at this point, it is probably a sign that we are ready for God to change us.”

Step 6 requires us to look deeply inside ourselves, that we become more honest and thoughtful about our patterns and behaviors. Step 6 will help us understand ourselves in new ways and prepare us for the remaining Steps of our recovery and really, the rest of our lives.

Key Verse for Step 6

We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. **Romans 6:6 (NLT)**

Examine Your Heart

1. What are the defects of character you’ve identified through Steps 4 and 5 that need to be removed?
2. What does it mean to be “entirely ready?”

Prayer

God, thank you for removing my fear and for showing me the truth about myself. Father, I need your help to become willing to let go of the things in me which continue to block me off from You. Please grant me Your grace, Lord, and make me willing to have these defects and shortcomings removed. Amen.

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STEP 7

We humbly asked Him to remove all our shortcomings.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. **1 John 1:9**

Engage

Humility is Step 7's spiritual principle. "The attainment of greater humility is the foundation principle of each of the 12 Steps. For without some degree of humility, no alcoholic can stay sober at all. Nearly all of us have found, too, that unless we develop much more of this precious quality [humility] than may be required just for sobriety, we still haven't much chance of becoming truly happy. Without humility, we cannot live to much useful purpose, or, in adversity, be able to summon the faith that can meet any emergency." (The Alcoholics Anonymous Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions "AA 12 and 12", page 70)

To be humble or to have humility means you're not prideful, arrogant, or pretentious. You don't think you're better than everyone else; you've been brought down a notch, so to speak. Bill Wilson, co-founder of AA, explained humility in this way: "As long as we placed self-reliance first, a genuine reliance upon a Higher Power was out of the question." (AA 12 and 12, page 72) So as long as we think we're "number one," how will we ever have room within ourselves to rely on God? Humility is not something to be resisted, but accepted or even embraced. Humility is putting God's agenda ahead of our own.

We first look at humility in Step 3 when we made the decision to turn our will and our lives over to God's care. Working Step 3 is a great example of spiritual humility because it was when we made a decision to let God run the show. The moment when we finally conceded that we're not in control, GOD is. With Step 7, we have an opportunity to put the decision we made in Step 3 into practice by asking God to do something specific for us—to remove our defects of character, our patterns, our habits, and our personal traits that we continue to cling to that cause our lives to be unbalanced. A great example of a character defect is when we were active in the addiction or toxic behavior that kept us in bondage, we had a pattern that we repeated over and over, even when we knew it was hurting us. It took time to realize this, but we did. And when we were ready, we asked God to remove it and we let it go.

By asking God humbly to remove our defects of character, we are saying, "God, Thy will, not mine, be done." In doing this, we are opening ourselves up to allow God to work in us, to remove these defects in His time (not ours) and continue to develop us into the people He made us to be. Being humble is being open to the will of God; however that will might be expressed to us.

Key Verses for Step 7

Since God chose you to be the holy people He loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. **Colossians 3:12 (NLT)**

Pride ends in humiliation while humility brings honor. **Proverbs 29:23 (NLT)**

Examine Your Heart

What does humility mean to you?

Prayer

"My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do Your bidding. Amen." (AA Big Book, page 76)

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STEP 8

We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

Do to others as you would have them do to you.
Luke 6:31

Engage

Step 8 is about improving personal relationships. Step 8's spiritual principle is **compassion**. We look at how we have dealt with people in the past and how we harmed them. Just like in the steps before this when we identified where our personal lives were out of balance, in Step 8 we look for imbalances in our relationships—with family, friends, partners, exes, neighbors, bosses, co-workers, or anyone else.

Is there ongoing bitterness, animosity, fear or hostility in our relationships? Who do we resent or avoid? Who have we embarrassed, threatened, or frightened? Where have we purposely or carelessly made someone unhappy? Are there people that we want to relate to in a different way? Do we owe amends or an apology to certain people, or do we simply need to make peace or make things right with another person? In Step 8, we need to look at where we have caused harm as well as where we need to clear the air and create healthier relationships.

Unfortunately, we did hurt people when we were active in our addiction. When an addiction is the center of our lives, other people suffer. When we're hurting, we hurt others, and there are countless ways we may have done this. In our desire for more sex, alcohol, drugs, love, pills, or food, we're liable to do just about anything to maintain our supply—and that may include lying, cheating, stealing, and being deliberately irresponsible or unreliable. Sometimes we were verbally or physically abusive when we were hung-over or strung out, or just plain frustrated when we didn't get what we wanted.

While it might be easy to pinpoint harms we caused while active in addiction and compulsive behaviors, don't forget harms you've caused since choosing to live your life in recovery. Just because we are living in recovery doesn't make us perfect people. Even though we have found a new way to live, all of us, at one time or another, act out on old behaviors and character defects, which may result in us hurting other people.

Now that we have a sense of the kinds of harm we may have caused, we can start writing our list.

Key Verses for Step 8

Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will in all you do and He will show you which path to take." **Proverbs 3:5-6 (NLT)**

Examine Your Heart

1. Why must we be willing to make amends to all those we have harmed? Why can't there be any exceptions?
2. In Step 8, our willingness to make amends is without exception. Is there anyone on your list with whom you have not become willing to make amends?

Prayer

Father, I pray that you will remove any fears I may have in writing my list of those I have harmed. Please help me to practice honesty in writing my list and to have compassion for others to whom I have caused harm. Please help me be willing to make amends to everyone. Amen.

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- ● ● **STEP 9**
- ● ● **We made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.**

Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. **Matthew 5:23-24**

Engage

Step 9 is the second half of Step 8. It takes the willingness we expressed in Step 8 to make amends and turns it into the action of making them. The spiritual principle for Step 9 is **justice**. Step 9 focuses on the specific amends we need to make for the harms we have caused others. We have to clean up our side of the street and repair the damage we have done.

Let's take a look at the word *amends*. Another word for amends is *reparation*. Reparation is the act of making amends for a wrong. It means an action taken to repair something. Reparation is an appropriate word for what we are trying to do in Step 9. It's not enough to just say sorry. Saying sorry isn't making an amends. Sorry means feeling sorrow or regret or to be remorseful. And while an apology is good and very necessary, it's not enough to just apologize. An apology is an expression of regret for a wrong, but an amend is different. It means to change for the better, to improve, to repair, to elevate, to lift, to rise. Making an amend is not just saying you're sorry. To make an amend is to repair the damage. It's saying you're going to strive to be different, you're going to change the way you act, and you'll begin trying to live the way God would want you to.

Step 9 can be a difficult, humbling step, but it can also be extremely rewarding. The promises in the Big Book are said to come true with working Step 9:

"We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves." – Alcoholics Anonymous (The Big Book), pages 83-84

Key Verses for Step 9

But if you suffer for doing good and endure it patiently, God is pleased with you. For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow in His steps. He never sinned, nor ever deceived anyone. He did not retaliate when He was insulted, nor threaten revenge when He suffered. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly. He personally carried our sins in His body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. **1 Peter 2:20-24 (NLT)**

Examine Your Heart

1. What does the phrase "except when to do so would injure them or others" mean?
2. Are you ready to do whatever is necessary for you to properly take this Step?

Prayer

God, with regard to the amends I need to make, give me the strength, courage, and direction to do the right thing, no matter what the personal consequences may be. Help me to repair the damage I may have caused others and begin living in a way that honors You. Amen.

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STEP 10

We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! **1 Corinthians 10:12**

Engage

The Big Book says on page 85, "We are not cured of alcoholism." Isaiah 64:6 says, "We are all infected and impure with sin." Because we are all sinful by nature, even after all the work we have done to get this far in our recovery, we always have the chance to return to our former selves. Continuing in the Big Book on page 85, it states "What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition. Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God's will into all of our activities. 'How can I best serve Thee – Thy will (not mine) be done.' These are thoughts which must go with us constantly." This is how Step 10 comes to play a role in your recovery.

The spiritual principle behind Step 10 is **perseverance**. Defined, perseverance is a continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition. When we work Step 10, we learn how to practice taking a daily personal inventory and realize the importance of making it a part of our recovery life. With continued practice of this Step, we'll begin to recognize when we are in the wrong in any given situation, giving us the opportunity to own up to our wrongs. In Step 10, we continue to grow in understanding of ourselves as people living our lives in recovery and its effectiveness in our daily lives. Or, more simply put, in Step 10 we strive to persevere.

With Step 10, we monitor our character defects and their consequences through a daily inventory, taking prompt or immediate corrective action as needed to keep our slate clean and our character defects in check. We use Step 10 to create and maintain a continuous awareness of what we're feeling, thinking, and even more importantly, what we're doing.

Key Verses for Step 10

"Overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. . . Nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord." **Romans 8:37-39 (NLT)**

Examine Your Heart

Practice Step 10 in your small groups. Here is an example of a simple, daily, personal inventory:

- Have I reaffirmed my faith in a loving, caring God today?
- Have I sought out guidance from God today?
- Has God given me anything to be grateful for today?
- Have I been worrying about yesterday or tomorrow?
- Did I allow myself to become obsessed about anything?
- Have I set myself up for disappointment?
- Have I been kind and loving toward all?

Prayer

God, I thank You for everything You did for me today and all that You have done in my life. I ask You to remove any of my selfishness, dishonesty, fear, and resentments. God, I pray that you give me strength and courage to make any amends I need to make. I ask that You continue to show me that I can lean on You and I pray that You will continue to guide me on how I can live my life better. Amen.

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STEP 11

We sought, through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and power to carry that out.

Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.
Colossians 3:16

Engage

The spiritual principle of Step 11 is **spirituality**. Step 11 suggests that we both pray and meditate to improve our conscious contact with God. Prayer is talking to God, and meditation is listening to Him. Just like any human relationship we have, we can talk and express ourselves to another. But how well would that relationship work if we only spoke to the person and then walked away without listening to what they had to say? When we combine prayer with meditation, we maximize the chance that we will improve our conscious contact with God.

In the Big Book on page 83, it says, “The spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it.” And on page 85, it says, “It is easy to let up on the spiritual program of action and rest on our laurels. We are headed for trouble if we do, for alcohol is a subtle foe. We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent upon the maintenance of our spiritual condition. (It doesn’t say we have a daily reprieve contingent upon our abstinence!) Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God’s will into all of our activities. ‘How can I best serve Thee – Thy will (not mine) be done.’ These are thoughts which must go with us constantly.” The key word here? Constantly.

It’s safe to say that every single one of us in this room has been transformed in some way—whether today is your 1st day in sobriety or you’ve been sober for years, we can see that transformation has taken place. We’re not the people we once were. But our powerlessness over our addictions that nearly destroyed us will return if we do not work on constantly maintaining our contact with God. And in Step 11, we carry that goal of maintaining contact even further: we seek to continually improve the conscious contact with God that we have established in the work we’ve done in the previous steps. Our recovery depends on the constant maintenance of our spiritual condition.

Key Verses for Step 11

And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. **Colossians 3:15-16 (NLT)**

Let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God. **Romans 12:2 (NLT)**

Draw close to God, and God will draw close to you. **James 4:8 (NLT)**

Examine Your Heart

1. How often do you pray and meditate?
2. What would it mean for you to improve your conscious contact with God?

Prayer

Father, we ask that you guide and direct our thinking throughout our day. We pray that we turn to you whenever we face indecision, anxiety, or fear, so that you will show us your will. We pray that we remain in conscious contact with you so that we will better know your will for our lives. Amen.

Quest Curriculum

180°

- ● ● **STEP 12**
- ● ● **Having had a spiritual experience as the result of**
- ● ● **these steps, we tried to carry this message to others**
- ● ● **and practice these principles in all our affairs.**

Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore that person gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. **Galatians 6:1**

Engage

Step 12 can essentially be broken down into three parts:

- The spiritual experience(s) that result from working these steps
- Carrying the message of what God and this 12-Step program has done for us to others
- Practicing these spiritual principles in every part of our lives

Step 12's spiritual principle is **service**. Did you know the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous devotes an entire chapter to Step 12? In the first paragraph of chapter 7 (working with others), it says: "Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. Carry this message to other alcoholics! You can help when no one else can." This connection opens the door for us to share our message.

There are many ways to practice service: going to meetings, talking in meetings, leading, sponsoring, volunteering, fellowship, driving people to meetings, service work, talking to people—whether they are in recovery or not—about your life in recovery including your relationship with God. This is what we are promised in doing this part of Step 12: "Life will take on new meaning. To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends—this is an experience you must not miss." (The Big Book, page 89)

In regard to practicing these principles in all our affairs, "these principles" are the spiritual principles that come to life in the 12 steps that we've read about through this series: honesty, hope, faith, courage, integrity, willingness, humility, compassion, justice, perseverance, spirituality, and service. When living life in recovery, we should ask ourselves, "Can I actually carry the spirit of this program into my daily life?" Whatever our pasts, the challenge we have in Step 12 is to transfer our practice of these principles into the entirety of our lives today. It means we have to make a sincere and disciplined effort to practice these principles—to be honest, to learn what it means to be humble, to practice prayer and meditation, to examine ourselves daily, and to be of service to others. It means we are seeking to know and trust God's will for us, acknowledging and recognizing our character defects, admitting our mistakes and making amends, taking responsibility for what we can change and accepting the things that we can't. By practicing these principles, we begin to become the people God made us to be.

Key Verses for Step 12

It is more blessed to give than to receive. **Acts 20:35 (NLT)**

So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up. **Galatians 6:9 (NLT)**

Examine Your Heart

1. In what ways are you practicing Step 12?
2. Why is it important that we carry this message to others?

Prayer

Dear God, having had a spiritual experience, I must now remember that "faith without works is dead." The founders of this spiritual program knew that practical experience shows that nothing will so much ensure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. So, God, please help me to carry this message to others! Provide me with the guidance and wisdom to talk with others because You uniquely created me to help when no one else can. Amen.

Serenity Prayer

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time; accepting hardships as a pathway to peace; taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it; trusting that you will make all things right if I surrender to your will; so that I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with you forever in the next. Amen.

The 12 Steps & Their Biblical Comparisons

STEP 1

We admitted we were powerless over our addictions and compulsive behaviors—that our lives had become unmanageable.

I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. **Romans 7:18**

STEP 2

We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose. **Philippians 2:13**

STEP 3

We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. **Romans 12:1**

STEP 4

We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the LORD. **Lamentations 3:40**

STEP 5

We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. **James 5:16**

STEP 6

We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. **James 4:10**

STEP 7

We humbly asked Him to remove all our shortcomings.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. **1 John 1:9**

STEP 8

We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

Do to others as you would have them do to you. **Luke 6:31**

STEP 9

We made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. **Matthew 5:23-24**

STEP 10

We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! **1 Corinthians 10:12**

STEP 11

We sought, through prayer and meditation, to improve our conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and power to carry that out.

Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly. **Colossians 3:16**

STEP 12

Having had a spiritual experience as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others and practice these principles in all our affairs.

Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore that person gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. **Galatians 6:1**

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