

STEP ONE

*We admitted we were powerless over alcohol –
that our lives had become unmanageable.*

Principle	Theme	Action	Defect	Result
Honesty	Powerlessness; I Can't	Surrender/ Abstinence	Denial/ Dishonesty/ Irresponsibility	Physical Sobriety

PRAYER

- God, here I am and here are all my troubles. I've made a mess of things and can't do anything about it. You take me, and all my troubles, and do anything You want with me (pg. 504 B.B.).
- Today I ask for help with my addiction. Denial has kept me from seeing how my life is unmanageable. I need to learn and remember that I have an incurable illness and that abstinence is the only way to deal with it.

REWARD - HOPE instead of desperation.

NOTES

- STEP SIMPLIFIED: *Alcohol will kill me*
- Pre-AA STEP: *I believed I could control my drinking, and that I was master of my own life.*
- HOW TO WORK THE STEP:
 - o **BB p.30**, lines 1-4.
 - o (a) name the problem; (b) admit defeat {**THE STEPS WE TOOK, p. 21**}
- "*The only step you have to work perfectly*"
- Steps 1, 2, and 3: "Get Right with Higher Power".
- POWERLESS IS THE PROBLEM (the sense of IMPENDING DOOM)
- Nature of alcoholism:
 - o Physical Allergy - YOU CAN'T DRINK
 - o Mental Obsession - YOU CAN'T QUIT
- Men and women drink essentially because they like the effect produced by alcohol. . . They are restless, irritable and discontented, unless they can again experience... taking a few drinks. . . . Unless this person can experience an entire psychic change there is very little hope of his recovery. . . something more than human power is needed to produce the essential psychic change.* {**BB, p. xxvi – xxvii**}

PROMISES

- We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness {**BB, p. 83 – 84**}.
- There is a solution {**BB, p. 25**}.

REFERENCES: - BB - The Doctor's Opinion p. xxiii - xxx
- Bill's Story p. 1 - 16
- There Is A Solution p. 17 - 29
- More About Alcoholism p. 30 - 43

Step One

*“We admitted we were powerless over alcohol –
that our lives had become unmanageable.”*

- a) *Bill & Dr. Bob did not establish a philosophy of monastic spirituality. They wanted to stay alive, and they wanted to enjoy it. Through trial and error, they, with other alcoholics, established a purely pragmatic set of actions to accomplish that. They acted on every idea, from everybody, alcoholic or not. Kept what worked, threw out what did not. They came up with 12 steps to take for living without alcohol and beginning to accept and enjoy life.* {unknown}
- b) *Few people like to admit complete defeat. But alcohol warps the mind so thoroughly, we do not see reality, nor do we think straight in reacting to it. Sober, most people would admit they could not beat Mike Tyson in the ring; that the damage done, even trying, would not be worth ever being in the ring with him. Why do we ignore similar evidence in our experience with alcohol, and keep trying to drink, believing there will be no bad effects this time? If you do what you have done, you get what you got - again.* {unknown}
- “If nothing changes, nothing changes”* {THE STEPS WE TOOK, p. 20}
- c) *It is very difficult to get healthy if you don't know you are sick. You are not likely to take any cure. Same is true if you ignore, or deny, that anything is wrong. How many sober people do you know, who will not repair a broken window, even in winter? How many ignore a crumpled car fender? Who would think it “not so bad” to have a fence post down after a car hit it? Is it so bad to miss or be late for an important event in your child's life, or for your spouse, or a negotiation with your boss or customer? Most people who don't drink want to avoid those things, or fix them.* {unknown}
- d) *Humility will cure denial. Humility simply recognizes the real world situation and our position in it. For one to say, “I am an alcoholic”, recognizes the fact that they want to drink alcohol, even when they can't predict what will happen when they do. Quantity and frequency of drinks are irrelevant (as is for how long one has been a drinker). The criteria is always - what effect did it have? Most people do not come to AA from a position similar to Donald Trump or Ted Turner. Humiliation is self-degrading you, lower than you are. Humility is telling yourself, and the world, your real strengths and weaknesses without apology, Not being able to run a 10 sec flat 100 yards, make \$6 million in the market in one week, or constantly have a below par score-card in golf, is not damning or embarrassing; just an objective fact.* {unknown}
- e) *All journeys - long/short/easy/hard - start with the first step. Without that, we can only stay where we are. There are 12 Steps to real sobriety. They are numbered for a serious reason. They are in the order, proven by experience, necessary to have stable sobriety and a chance to live happy, joyous and free lives. No serious harm is done by trying some of the steps out of order, but, it will be necessary to visit and try them again, in order, when we have enough dry time and good advice to learn that there is more to each step than we thought at first. And we may return to all of them again & again.* {unknown}
- f) *Some of us never stop doing it hourly, every waking moment, because we have a tendency to forget. It is deadly to forget. So, we keep practicing the first step by talking with our fellow AAs. Always.* {unknown}
- g) *...conventional wisdom says to admit defeat [/surrender/retreat] is some kind of failure... [but] successful military commanders ...knew how to surrender or retreat. Custer didn't, MacArthur did.*
{THE STEPS WE TOOK, p. 23}
- h) *Who's boss -- them or the alcohol? (The above qualification should pretty much answer the first half of the step)...That our lives had become unmanageable, not only our drinking -- all phases of our existence were and are unmanageable. It stands to reason that if we can't manage our lives and we are acting in a manner that is not very sane (unmanageability is not sane living) then we have to take...[Step Two] {Clarence Snyder 1944 - A.A. Sponsorship Pamphlet}*

Proverbs Chapter 23 Verses 29-35 (Ex. of Alcoholism):

Pro 23:29 Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes?

Pro 23:30 Those who linger over wine, who go to sample bowls of mixed wine.

Pro 23:31 Do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly!

Pro 23:32 In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper.

Pro 23:33 Your eyes will see strange sights and your mind imagine confusing things.

Pro 23:34 You will be like one sleeping on the high seas, lying on top of the rigging.

Pro 23:35 "They hit me," you will say, "but I'm not hurt! They beat me, but I don't feel it! When will I wake up so I can find another drink?"

Big Book

1. Doctor's Opinion:

- a. *the body of the alcoholic is quite as abnormal as his mind...any picture which leaves out the physical factor is incomplete.* (xxiv)
- b. *some form of moral psychology was of urgent importance* (xxv)
- c. *the action of alcohol...is a manifestation of an allergy... These allergic types...have lost their self-confidence, their reliance on things human* (xxvi)
- d. *Men & women drink essentially because they like the effect produced by alcohol...They are restless, irritable & discontented, unless they can again experience... taking a few drinks... Unless this person can experience an entire psychic change there is very little hope of his recovery. . . something more than human power is needed to produce the essential psychic change.* (xxvi - xxvii)
- e. *they cannot start drinking without developing the phenomenon of craving. . . The only relief we have to suggest is entire abstinence.* (xxviii)
- f. Testimony to having seen the effect of the Program. (xxix)

2. There Is A Solution:

- a. It takes an ex-drinker to get through to an alcoholic
- b. *We feel that elimination of our drinking is but a beginning.* (19)
- c. "Real" alcoholics vs problem drinkers are contrasted. Alcoholics act like "normal" people when they stay away from drink. Make excuses, and don't know why they take the first drink. Are obsessed with drinking "normally" someday, somehow. (22-23)
- d. *The fact is that most alcoholics, for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice in drink. Our so-called will power becomes practically nonexistent . . . We are without defense against the first drink. . . consequences [seldom occur and if they do] they are hazy and readily supplanted with the old threadbare idea that this time we shall handle ourselves like other people. There is a complete failure of the kind of defense that keeps one from putting his hand on a hot stove . . . How often have some of us begun to drink in this nonchalant way. . . ?* (24)
- e. The story of Bill's work with Carl Jung: Dr. Jung has only seen recovery when there are ". . . vital spiritual experiences. To me these occurrences are phenomena. They appear to be in the nature of huge emotional displacements and rearrangements. Ideas, emotions, and attitudes which were once the guiding forces of the lives of these men are suddenly cast to one side, and a completely new set of conceptions and motives begin to dominate them." (27)
- f. Agnostic convictions are no great obstacle to a spiritual experience (29)

3. More About Alcoholism:

- a. Working this step: *We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. This is the first step in recovery. The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed. We alcoholics are men and women who have lost the ability to control our drinking.* (30)
- b. Progressive illness
- c. Can't make a normal drinker out of an alcoholic. (31)
- d. Go try some controlled drinking (31)
- e. You don't have to drink a long time to be gravely affected. (33)
- f. Insanity; Mental states that precede a relapse: (a) trivial excuse; (b) its owed me (due to misfortune or fortune); (c) the blank spot (self-knowledge avails us nothing). (35-43)
- g. The jay walking metaphor for repeating insane behavior (37-38)
- h. He told himself he came to the hospital to rest his nerves. (39)
- i. *The discovery that spiritual principles would solve all my problems.* (42)

12x12

1. *Only through utter defeat are we able to take our first steps toward liberation and strength. Our admissions of personal powerlessness finally turn out to be firm bedrock upon which happy and purposeful lives may be built.* (21)
2. Sponsors: *...self-confidence...was a total liability...we were victims of a mental obsession...no amount of human willpower could break* (22)
3. At first only the most desperate were helped, but this has changed, and it was *necessary to raise the bottom* (22-23)
4. Fatal progression...try some more controlled drinking...*when one alcoholic planted in the mind of another the true nature of his malady, [he] could never be the same again.* (23)
5. Why all this insistence that every A.A. must hit bottom first? The answer is that few people will sincerely try to practice the A.A. program unless they have hit bottom.

Steps We Took

1. Step 1 is about being powerless...“I can’t fix it” (19)
2. The principle of the first step: “Deny Thyself” (Jesus) (19)
3. What makes us insane: (a) self, esp. self-will and self reliance; (b) blindness to reality (19-20)
4. Self-will:
 - a. We try to get the wrong method to bring the right results by doing it harder...we persist because we want to be in control ... “If nothing changes, nothing changes” (20)
 - b. Humans are meant to rely on each other and on God (20)
5. Blindness:
 - a. We can’t imagine an alternative (21)
 - b. There’s no way in our short life we can pick up the knowledge we need to run our life (21)
6. Step 1 process: (a) name the problem; (b) admit defeat (21)
7. *If we have a situation that we need to change and we are trying to accept it, we are just making it worse.* (22)
8. Greatest truth in Serenity Prayer is “*Grant me wisdom to know the difference*” (22)
9. *God’s will never enters where self-will dominates...admitting powerlessness shuts off self-will.* (23)
10. Conventional wisdom says to admit defeat/surrender/retreat is a weakness, but *successful military commanders knew how to surrender or retreat...Custer didn’t, MacArthur did.* (23)
11. *What is the first thing you do when you want to get a new car? ... You give up on the old one.* (24)
12. *When we tell God how we want something fixed, we really haven’t given up or turned the problem over.* (24)
13. *Everything in my life...has been built on what I thought was the worst thing in my life: my alcoholism.* (25)
14. *This step has to be taken 100%.* (25)

Language of the Heart

- Anonymity: pg 13-20; 315-321
- Honesty: pg 259-264
- Fear: pg 265-269; 342-345
- Acceptance: pg 269-272
- Willpower: pg 272-274