

Working



The Steps



A Christ-Centered 12-Step Recovery Group
addressing addictions and those affected by them

WORKING THE STEPS

RECOVERY is a process, not an event!

Just because we have taken certain steps toward recovery doesn't mean that we will ever "graduate" into a state of perfection, no longer needing to work on ourselves. It's a lifetime program!

The 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous* have proven to be tools toward a victorious way of life, producing deliverance one day at a time, particularly in those of us who struggle with alcoholism, drug dependency and crippling compulsions. One reason these steps work so well is due to their simplicity. Another reason these steps work so well is because they came directly out of God's Holy Word – the Bible!

Even though we describe these 12 Steps of living as being "simple" it takes surrender, acceptance, rigorous honesty, commitment and tenacity along with plenty of courage in order to actually "work" them! These steps of recovery produce healing, but only if we put one foot in front of another and WORK them, with God's help!

We begin with Step 1, where it is suggested that with complete abandon we let go and let God, admitting our own powerlessness. This may sound easy to some, but for those of us who have lived life in a desperate attempt to appear to be "in control" of a substance or compulsion, we may suddenly feel stripped of our cozy façade and fearful of facing life on life's terms. The prospect of taking eleven more "simple" steps in this process of getting well may seem like a tall order. Just when we don't think we can go through with it, we find that it is possible, when we are willing to take one step at a time, walking hand in hand with our Savior, Jesus Christ! He can do for us what we are powerless to do for ourselves!

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STEP 1: "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol that our lives had become unmanageable."
See 2 Corinthians 1:9



"Hitting bottom" is painful, especially when we have spent a lifetime covering up our problems in order to appear successful and serene, particularly in a church setting! A person who has been using drugs and/or alcohol to "socialize" but eventually uses in order to just feel normal has crossed an invisible line into addiction. This can be a lonely, frightening place! Loving someone who is addicted is like loving two people - the drunken one and the sober one (confusing!) It usually takes a painful crisis for any of us to realize our need for help. As long as we think we can handle it (drugs, alcohol, loved one's addictions) we just stay on a roller coaster of denial. Once we "give up" (surrender) – that's when God steps in and does for us what we can't do for ourselves.

STEP 2: "Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity." (Jesus)
See Proverbs 28:26



We had lost hope that things could ever change. Our prayers seemed to stop at the ceiling. Getting to a place of believing that our "higher power" (Jesus Christ) can really help us out of the "impossible" pit of despair of our addiction or obsession with another person is a giant step. This takes the kind of power that only He can provide. "Restored to sanity" assumes that we've been insane! Most of us resent hearing this, having believed that the problems were due to something or someone else. Rigorous honesty causes us to admit that our lives have become pretty insane, and drugs, alcohol or our obsession with another's behavior usually has been involved. Addiction itself is recognized as a form of insanity, because we continue to use or drink even though we are destroying our lives. Even when we find some temporary sobriety, we may experience a "slip" back into the same course of destruction. Our Lord has the power necessary to heal us and restore our focus to some peace and serenity we never thought possible, no matter how bad it's been.

STEP 3: "Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him."

See Proverbs 3:5-6



When we take an honest look at our powerlessness and turn our lives over to God's care (Steps 1&2), that is when He can actually do something about our dilemma ... when we are willing to trust Him. "Letting go and letting God" can be tough, quite similar to jumping off a cliff! Trusting our lives into God's care and asking for His will instead of ours may not have been even considered. What if we don't like His will for us and it doesn't fit into our plans? Are we willing to trust Him anyway? Has what we've tried to do before to solve our problems ever worked? Is it time to let Him have His way, no matter if it's not our way? What have we got to lose?

STEP 4: "Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves."

See Lamentations 3:40-41

Digging out a written inventory of our life sounds like a whole lot of hard work! We may take an occasional peek into our past, and it usually just makes us feel guiltier! So we may think any "inventory" we might do would have to be fearful. This step talks about a "moral" inventory. When a store takes stock of its inventory, it counts every single item, both good and bad. This means that besides all our negatives, we need to consider our positives too, careful not to miss anything!

STEP 5: "Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs."

See James 5:16

So now it's all out on paper, even our most sordid secrets! It can be overwhelming to consider both the good and bad aspects of our lives all at once! At first it can be difficult to discover any assets, and our liabilities cause us to feel intense shame. We would rather hide most of it from God, even ourselves, and especially from another human being! Examining the exact nature of our wrongs and admitting them can be a huge relief! When we can release all of our problems to God, He can handle it! Through Christ's shed blood on the Cross, we are forgiven! When we finally get honest with ourselves, we begin the road to recovery. When we get the courage to "let it go" in the direction of another trusted human being, the chains of bondage are broken!

STEP 6: "Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character."

See James 4:7-10

Giving up some of our pet character defects can be hard when we have hung onto them for so long. Now that we have taken a written inventory and had our souls cleansed by confession to God and another trusted person, we begin to sense a new freedom and growth we never dreamed possible. We begin to believe that it is worth the risk to take this next step of preparation to allow God to rid us of those things which have held us back from being all He intended us to be. We can't accomplish this on our own – it takes God's power to effectively "clean house" even to the most remote corners of our soul. Removal of all our defects may seem like major surgery!

STEP 7: "Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings."

See 1John 1:9

We know if we ask God for anything in Jesus' Name, He will hear and answer us. We may not be accustomed to portraying a "humble" attitude, so this may seem strange at first. True humility doesn't mean meek surrender to an ugly, destructive way of life – it means surrender to God's will. We may think that if our shortcomings are removed we may lose our identity altogether! But having walked through Steps 1-6 we've begun to experience so much peace that we are willing to continue on, asking God to unload all those defects from the darkest crevices of our being. We begin to experience a new lightness, a new life, a breath of fresh air! We are freed up to be who we really are – made in His own image!

STEP 8: "Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all."
See Matthew 5:23-24

Not another writing assignment! Now it's up to us to clear up the wreckage of the past. In order to do this we need to list every person we have wronged – let go of our resentments (every one), and become willing to make amends to them all, including our worst enemy! How can this help us? By releasing us from the grip of our past – clearing the record – erasing the slate – starting over (kind of similar to the way God forgives US!).

STEP 9: "Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others."
See Mark 11:24-25

Saying "I'm sorry" is difficult enough with people we love. Making amends to everyone we have harmed takes courage and God's direction. Sometimes we get a strange reaction from these people – they might not even remember the incident, or would prefer to keep the relationship hostile. It's important too, that we're careful about revealing information that might harm someone in our attempt to make things right. The important point is that we will experience a healing in this process, if we are willing to follow this step. More often than not a joyful reunion occurs with the people with whom we build bridges and healing takes place. This experience is well worth any risk involved!

STEP 10: "Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it."
See Psalm 19:12-13

We've only just begun! We now need to keep repeating the process of taking a candid look at our lives and writing mini-inventories! Now that our record has been cleared by Christ, we need to keep it obstacle-free in order to keep the joy flowing. Our newfound serenity can't afford any more resentment. When we realize we err, admit it promptly and ask forgiveness, the freer we will be.

STEP 11: "Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out."
See Proverbs 2:3-5

In order to put God's power to work in our lives, we need to seek the Lord in regular prayer – also listening for His guidance day by day. Taking time to do this may be difficult to fit into our busy schedule, but being on good speaking terms with God can make all the difference in how our day goes! It can determine whether or not we will use or drink today! It may decide how we will react to the people we're worried about today. We may have long lists of "wants" but seeking His will for us, whatever that might be, is putting our lives in the palm of His almighty hand. Asking for power to carry out His will in our lives keeps us in tune with Him, and on track in this process of recovery.

STEP 12: "Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs."
See 1 Peter 3:15

Our eyes have been opened! We seem to see things in a different perspective, as God shines His light upon our daily path. The 12 Steps have taken us through some hard places but have released us from bondage and restored our lives! Just when we thought we had no hope, God stepped in when we asked Him to, and did the most impossible miracles of all time! We become so excited about the changes that we are compelled to share this message of hope with others who are still struggling! And we put these principles to work in our lives, over and over again. They WORK – when we work them!



Overcomers Outreach gives people in traditional 12-Step support groups a way back to the church of their choice.

Overcomers Outreach provides a vehicle for people in the church to find additional help in traditional 12-Step groups.

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