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STEP ONE

Honesty

A guide to the First Step,
with Scripture and prayer



Work this step with Jimmy or Sarah.
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Steps & Scripture Step Guide: Step One, Honesty
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This guide points you to *Alcoholics Anonymous* (4th edition) and *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. Quotations from *Alcoholics Anonymous* are from its 1939 first edition, which is in the public domain; page numbers are from the fourth edition. *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* is © Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. This guide gives its page numbers only, so read it in your own copy.

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If you are in danger, call or text 988, or call 911. If you have been drinking heavily and stopped, and you are shaking, sweating, confused, seeing things, or have had a seizure, go to the ER today.

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STEP ONE

Honesty

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

For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.

ROMANS 7:18 (ESV)

Where you're starting

If this is your first step, welcome. You don't have to have anything figured out to read this. You don't have to be sure you're an alcoholic. You only have to be willing to look honestly at what drinking has done, and keep reading.

Most of us came to this step tired, ashamed and a little scared. Some came because a judge, a doctor or a family member pushed. Some came on their own, after one more morning they couldn't explain. However you got here, you're in the right place.

Before you stop drinking, read this. If you have been drinking heavily every day, see a doctor before you stop. Stopping suddenly can be dangerous. If you are shaking, having a seizure, or seeing or hearing things that aren't there, go to the ER or call 911 now. Getting safely off alcohol is a medical job. The steps come after, and they'll still be here.

The book agrees. Even the first members, who believed in a spiritual answer, said they "favor hospitalization for the alcoholic who is very jittery or befogged" (p. xxvi). Bill himself went into a hospital to get off alcohol for the last time, because he "showed signs of delirium tremens" (p. 13). There is no shame in getting medical help. It's often the first right thing to do.

What this guide is

This is a guide to read, not a workbook to fill in. It walks you through Step One the way the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* lays it out, with Scripture alongside. Page numbers for *Alcoholics Anonymous* are from the fourth edition, so you can find them in your own copy.

It doesn't replace a meeting, a sponsor, a church or a doctor. It's meant to send you to all four.

What you need

- **A copy of *Alcoholics Anonymous*.** Any edition works, but the page numbers here match the fourth.
- **A Bible.** The verses in this guide are from the English Standard Version.
- **A notebook.** For your own thoughts, not for anyone to grade.
- **A meeting.** Go this week, even if you just sit in the back.
- **One person.** Someone in recovery you can call. If you don't have anyone yet, get a phone number at your next meeting.

Already sober a while? Step One still matters. Many people who relapse say they never really took it. Read this guide as if it's your first time, and see what you find.

What Step One is

> "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 59

That's the step. It has two halves, and both have to be true.

We admitted. Not "we were told." Not "we suspected." We admitted it, to ourselves first and then to other people.

We were powerless over alcohol. Not over everything. Over alcohol. Once you start, you can't reliably stop. And when you've stopped, you can't reliably stay stopped.

Our lives had become unmanageable. This is the part we fight hardest. Maybe you still have the job, the house, the family. Unmanageable doesn't always mean ruined. It means you can't run your own life well.

The step the book calls first

The chapter "More About Alcoholism" says plainly where recovery begins:

> "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, P. 30

Fully concede to our innermost selves. Not a half-admission you'll take back on Friday. Something you know, deep down, when you're alone.

Why it comes first

Every step after this one rests on it. The book sums up what its first chapters are meant to show:

> "(a) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives. (b) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism. (c) That God could and would if sought."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 60

Step One is (a). Steps Two and Three are (b) and (c). Start where the book starts.

What Step One is not

Step One is not a verdict on what kind of person you are. It's a diagnosis. A doctor who tells you that you have diabetes isn't calling you bad. She's telling you what's wrong, so you can get treatment.

Powerless is not the same as worthless

Powerless means you can't beat alcohol on your own power. Your body reacts to it differently, and your mind keeps going back to it.

Worthless means you have no value. That is a lie, and it's not part of this step.

God made you, knows you, and sent His Son for you. You can be powerless over alcohol and still be loved, still be useful, and still have a future. Step One is where that future starts.

Your reading for this step

Read these in your own copy, in order. They describe the problem. The solution comes later. Don't skip ahead.

Alcoholics Anonymous

- **The Doctor's Opinion, pages xxv–xxxii.** The body and the mind of the problem. Read it twice.
- **Bill's Story, pages 1–16.** Everything one man tried, and how he got free.
- **There Is a Solution, pages 17–29.** The real alcoholic, and why the answer is spiritual.
- **More About Alcoholism, pages 30–43.** The obsession and the first drink. Mark every line that sounds like you.
- **Then *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pages 21–24.** The chapter on Step One.

Scripture (ESV)

- Romans 7:15–25 · Proverbs 23:29–35 · Psalm 32:3–5
- Luke 15:14–20 · John 5:5–9
- 2 Corinthians 1:8–10 · Matthew 11:28–30

Listen, if you like: Joe and Charlie, Sessions 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7, from "The Doctor's Opinion" through "How It Works—Steps One and Two" (a little over four hours in all), free in the SoberHub app. Steps & Scripture is not affiliated with SoberHub.

What the book says

Alcoholics Anonymous spends its first four chapters on one thing: helping you see the problem clearly. It describes two parts, a body and a mind. Read these pages in your own copy.

The body is different (pp. xxvi–xxviii)

The members asked the doctor to write because they wanted you to hear it from a medical man. He confirmed what they had found:

> "the body of the alcoholic is quite as abnormal as his mind."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. XXVI

They wrote that they weren't satisfied with being told they drank only because they couldn't cope with life. They believed their bodies were sick too. The doctor called it an allergy:

> "We believe, and so suggested a few years ago, that the action of alcohol on these chronic alcoholics is a manifestation of an allergy; that the phenomenon of craving is limited to this class and never occurs in the average temperate drinker."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. XXVIII

A "phenomenon of craving" is the thing that happens after the first drink. Other people have one or two and lose interest. You have one, and something switches on that wants more, and more again. The doctor's conclusion was blunt:

> "These allergic types can never safely use alcohol in any form at all"
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. XXVIII

That's the body. It's why you can't drink like other people, and why "just one" doesn't stay one. Don't worry about the science. Ask yourself whether it describes what happens to you.

The mind keeps going back (pp. xxviii–xxix)

If the body were the whole problem, you could just never take the first drink. But the doctor describes a second part. Sober, the alcoholic isn't at peace:

> "They are restless, irritable and discontented, unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by taking a few drinks"
>
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, PP. XXVIII–XXIX

Then the cycle:

> "After they have succumbed to the desire again, as so many do, and the phenomenon of craving develops, they pass through the well-known stages of a spree, emerging remorseful, with a firm resolution not to drink again. This is repeated over and over, and unless this person can experience an entire psychic change there is very little hope of his recovery."
>
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. XXIX

Read that slowly. Restless. A drink for relief. The craving. The spree. Remorse and a promise. And then around again. If you've lived that circle, you're not alone. Most people who read this book have.

More than will power (pp. xxix–xxx)

The doctor admits that even good medicine wasn't enough:

> "One feels that something more than human power is needed to produce the essential psychic change."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. XXIX

He also says something that may take a weight off you. The men he treated weren't always running from their problems:

> "These men were not drinking to escape; they were drinking to overcome a craving beyond their mental control."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. XXX

On the same page he names the only relief he knows: not drinking at all (p. xxx).

Bill tried everything (pp. 5–8)

Bill's Story is the problem in one man's life. He was smart, driven and successful. Then:

> "I began to waken very early in the morning shaking violently."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 5

He decided he was done, and he meant it. A short time later:

> "Shortly afterward I came home drunk. There had been no fight. Where had been my high resolve? I simply didn't know. It hadn't even come to mind."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 5

A doctor explained to him that alcoholics lose their will over drinking even when it's strong in everything else. Bill was relieved. He thought understanding the problem would fix it:

"Surely this was the answer—self-knowledge" (p. 7). It wasn't. He drank again, and ended up back in the hospital:

> "I had met my match. I had been overwhelmed. Alcohol was my master."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 8

That's Step One, before it had a number. Not "I've been drinking too much." *I had met my match.*

The way out began with an admission (p. 11)

When an old friend, sober himself, came to see Bill, he told Bill something simple. Read it as a promise:

> "God had done for him what he could not do for himself."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 11

His friend had admitted complete defeat first. So did Bill. The admission wasn't the end of his story. It was where the good part started.

The real alcoholic (p. 21)

"There Is a Solution" describes three kinds of drinkers. The moderate drinker can take it or leave it. The hard drinker may drink too much, but given a strong enough reason, he can stop or slow down. Then there's the real alcoholic:

> "He may start off as a moderate drinker; he may or may not become a continuous hard drinker; but at some stage of his drinking career he begins to lose all control of his liquor consumption, once he starts to drink."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 21

Read the rest of pages 21–22 in your own copy. The man who's fine at everything except drinking. The man who hides bottles. Notice how much of it fits.

Something happens (pp. 22–23)

The book asks the question everyone around you has asked:

> "why is it he takes that one drink?"
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 22

And it gives half the answer:

> "We are equally positive that once he takes any alcohol whatever into his system, something happens, both in the bodily and mental sense, which makes it virtually impossible for him to stop."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, PP. 22–23

Then the turn. If the alcoholic never took the first drink, the craving would never start. So the book says:

> "Therefore, the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than in his body."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 23

No defense against the first drink (p. 24)

> "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 non-existent."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 24

The book says that at the moment of decision, the memory of last time doesn't come to mind with enough force to stop us:

> "There is a complete failure of the kind of defense that keeps one from putting his hand on a hot stove."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 24

You wouldn't touch a hot stove after burning yourself. But you've picked up the drink after it burned you. That's not stupidity. It's the illness.

The great obsession (p. 30)

"More About Alcoholism" opens with the sentence many of us underline first:

> "The idea that somehow, someday he will control and enjoy his liquor drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 30

That's the mind. Not a craving for a drink right now, but a belief that won't die: *next time will be different*. Then the bad news, said plainly:

> "Over any considerable period we get worse, never better."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 30

All the things we tried (pp. 30–31)

The book lists the ways we tried to control it. Beer only. Never alone. Never in the morning. Only at parties. Switching drinks. Swearing off with a solemn oath. Taking a trip. Not taking a trip. Read the whole list on page 31 and count how many you've tried.

Earlier, on page 30, it says:

> "We are like men who have lost their legs; they never grow new ones."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 30

It also offers you a test, if you're still not sure. Try to drink and stop on purpose, more than once, and be honest about how it goes. Many of us didn't need to run the test. We'd already run it for years.

The baffling part (p. 34)

> "This is the baffling feature of alcoholism as we know it—this utter inability to leave it alone, no matter how great the necessity or the wish."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 34

No matter how great the wish. You may want to stop more than anything. That still isn't enough. Wanting it is good. It just isn't power.

Jim, the milk and the whiskey (pp. 35–37)

Jim knew he was an alcoholic. He'd been in an asylum. He had a family he loved and a job he needed. One day he stopped for a sandwich and a glass of milk, and the thought came that a little whiskey in the milk couldn't hurt on a full stomach. The book's verdict:

> "Whatever the precise definition of the word may be, we call this plain insanity."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 37

And then it says this is true of every one of us:

> "But there was always the curious mental phenomenon, that parallel with our sound reasoning there inevitably ran some insanely trivial excuse for taking the first drink."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 37

Fred, who knew better (pp. 39–42)

Fred was a successful accountant with a good marriage. After one stay in the hospital, he was sure he understood himself well enough never to drink again. Then on a business trip, at the end of a perfect day, he ordered a cocktail with dinner without thinking twice. Later he said:

> "I saw that will power and self-knowledge would not help in those strange mental blank spots."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 42

Fred hadn't lost everything. He still had his family, his job and his good name. He was a real alcoholic anyway.

The defense has to come from God (p. 43)

The chapter ends with the sentence the whole section has been building toward:

> "Once more: the alcoholic at certain times has no effective mental defense against the first drink. Except in a few rare cases, neither he nor any other human being can provide such a defense. His defense must come from a higher Power."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 43

That's the bad news and the good news in one paragraph. You can't defend yourself. God can.

What the 12&12 adds

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions gives Step One a short chapter, on **pages 21–24**. Read it in your own copy. Here is what to look for as you read. These are our notes, not the book's words.

Page 21: Nobody wants to admit defeat. Every part of us fights the idea of being powerless. But the chapter turns that around: the admission we dreaded becomes the solid ground everything else stands on. Without it, it says, sobriety stays shaky. If you've stopped before and started again, ask whether you ever fully admitted it.

Page 22: Self-confidence doesn't work here. Many of us came expecting to be taught to believe in ourselves. The chapter says that when it comes to alcohol, self-confidence is a liability, not a help. It describes the problem as two-sided: an obsession of the mind that drives us to drink, and a sensitivity of the body that makes sure the drinking destroys us.

Pages 22–23: You don't have to lose everything. At first only the most desperate cases could accept this step. Later, people who still had jobs, families and health saw it in themselves, by looking back honestly at how long they'd really been out of control. Once you've heard the truth about this illness, the chapter says, every drink after comes with a doubt.

Page 24: Why hitting bottom matters. The rest of the steps ask for things no comfortable drinker wants to do: honesty, confession, amends, prayer, helping others. Most of us only become willing when we see our lives depend on it. Being beaten is what makes us teachable.

What Scripture says

The Bible is honest about people who can't fix themselves. It is also full of God meeting them right there. Read these slowly, out loud if you can.

The good I want, I do not do

The verse on the opening page of this guide comes from a longer passage. Read the whole thing:

> *For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.*
>
> ROMANS 7:15–25 (ESV)

This is the apostle Paul. Not a drunk, as far as we know, but a man who knew what it was to want one thing and do another. *I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate*. That's the alcoholic's life in one sentence.

Notice what Paul doesn't say. He doesn't say, "So I'll try harder." He asks, *Who will deliver me?* And he answers: *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!* Step One is the question. The rest of the steps, and the gospel, are the answer.

I must have another drink

> *Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who tarry long over wine; those who go to try mixed wine. Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. In the end it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder. Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart utter perverse things. You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, like one who lies on the top of a mast. "They struck me," you will say, "but I was not hurt; they beat me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake? I must have another drink."*
>
> PROVERBS 23:29–35 (ESV)

Three thousand years ago, someone described a hangover, a blackout and the next drink in seven verses. Look at the last line. *They struck me, but I was not hurt; they beat me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake? I must have another drink*.

That's the obsession. The pain was real, and the first thought on waking was still the bottle. If that's you, the Bible isn't surprised.

When I kept silent

For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.

PSALM 32:3–5 (ESV)

David says that hiding his sin wore him down, body and spirit. The moment he stopped hiding it and told God, forgiveness came. Step One is the beginning of that kind of honesty. You stop pretending, first to yourself, then to God, then to another person.

He came to himself

> *And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants."' And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him."*
>
> LUKE 15:14–20 (ESV)

The younger son ran out of money, then out of friends, then out of options. He ended up feeding pigs and wanting their food. Then *he came to himself.* That's Step One. He saw his situation as it really was, and he got up.

Look at what happened next. While he was still a long way off, his father saw him, ran to him, and kissed him. He hadn't cleaned himself up first. He just came home.

Do you want to be healed?

> *One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be healed?" The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me." Jesus said to him, "Get up, take up your bed, and walk." And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath.*
>
> JOHN 5:5–9 (ESV)

The man had been sick for thirty-eight years. Jesus asked him a strange question: *Do you want to be healed?* The man started explaining why it hadn't worked: no one to help him, someone always getting there first.

Many of us have a list of reasons too. Jesus didn't argue with his. He healed him. But the question still matters. Do you want this? Not just want the pain to stop, but want to be made well, whatever that takes?

So that we would not rely on ourselves

> *For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.*
>
> 2 CORINTHIANS 1:8–10 (ESV)

Paul says he and his friends were so far beyond their own strength that they despaired of life. Then he says why: *to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.*

Being beaten isn't the end. Sometimes it's how God gets our attention. You've relied on yourself for a long time. Step One is admitting that didn't work.

Come to me

> *"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*
>
> MATTHEW 11:28–30 (ESV)

Jesus doesn't call the strong and the put-together. He calls people who are worn out and weighed down. If you're tired of fighting this, He is talking to you. Step One is setting down the load you couldn't carry anyway.

How to work Step One

Step One is mostly about seeing, not doing. But seeing takes work. Here is a plain way to go about it. If you have a sponsor, go with your sponsor.

1. Get safe

If you've been drinking heavily every day, see a doctor before you stop. If you're shaking badly, having a seizure, or seeing or hearing things, go to the ER now. Nothing else in this guide matters more than that.

2. Go to a meeting

Go this week, and go again. You don't have to talk. Listen for people who sound like you, and get two or three phone numbers before you leave.

3. Read the first four chapters

Read the Doctor's Opinion, Bill's Story, There Is a Solution and More About Alcoholism, in order. Use a pencil. Mark every line that sounds like you. Don't try to argue with it. Just mark it.

4. Write your drinking history

In a notebook, write one or two pages. Keep it plain and honest:

- **Your first drink.** How old were you? What did it do for you?
- **When it got worse.** When did you start needing it, hiding it, or planning around it?

- **What you tried.** Every rule you made to control it, and how long each one lasted.
- **What it cost.** Money, jobs, health, trust. Name the people.
- **Your last drink.** What happened right before it?

You're writing this so you can see the pattern with your own eyes.

5. Look for both parts

Go back through what you wrote. Find the body: times you meant to have one or two and couldn't stop. Find the mind: times you were sober, drank anyway, and couldn't say why.

6. Say it out loud

Tell someone. Your sponsor, someone from a meeting, your pastor. Say it plainly: *I'm an alcoholic. I can't stop on my own.* Many people say it at a meeting for the first time and feel the weight lift.

7. Pray

You don't need the right words. Tell God the truth. Something like this:

> **A first prayer**
>
> *God, I can't do this. I've tried, and I can't. I'm tired. I'm asking You to help me. Show me what to do today. Amen.*

8. Don't drink today

Not forever. Today. Tomorrow, do it again.

The two parts of the problem

Keep this page where you'll see it. When you start telling yourself it wasn't that bad, read it again.

The body: the allergy and the craving (pp. xxvi–xxx, 21–24)

- Once you start, something switches on that wants more.
- "Just one" rarely stays one.
- You can't predict how much you'll drink, or how it will end.
- Other people can stop after two. You can't, not reliably.
- The only answer the doctor knew was not to start at all.

The mind: the obsession (pp. xxviii, 23–24, 30, 35–43)

- Sober, you're restless, irritable and discontented.
- You remember the drink as relief, and forget what came after.
- You believe next time will be different.
- A small, silly reason shows up for the first drink, and wins.
- Knowing all this doesn't stop it. That's the "blank spot."

The cycle

Restless and uneasy → the first drink for relief → the craving takes over → the spree → remorse and a promise → restless again.

The body keeps you drinking once you start. The mind gets you to start again. That's why you need help with both, and why the help has to come from God (p. 43).

Signs you've lost control

The book says to diagnose yourself (pp. 31, 44). These aren't a test to pass. They're questions to answer honestly.

- When you honestly wanted to quit, could you quit entirely?
- Once you started, could you control how much you drank?
- Have you made rules about drinking and broken them?
- Have you promised someone you'd stop, and drunk anyway?
- Have you hidden drinking, or hidden bottles?
- Have you drunk at the worst possible moment, when something important was on the line?
- Have you woken up and not remembered how the night ended?
- Have you needed a drink in the morning to steady yourself?
- After a stretch of not drinking, did it get bad again fast?

If you answered yes to some of these, read page 44 in your own copy. The book says that if you can't quit when you honestly want to, or can't control how much once you start, you are probably alcoholic.

Questions to think about

These aren't for writing in this guide. Think them over, pray about them, write in a notebook if it helps, and talk them through with your sponsor. Jimmy and Sarah ask some of the same questions in the app.

1. Tell the story of the last time you drank. What happened right before the first one?
2. How have you tried to control your drinking? Only beer, only weekends, never before five? How did it go?
3. Once you start, can you reliably stop when you meant to? Give an honest example.
4. When you've quit before, what was your thinking like right before you started again?
5. What has drinking cost you? Name the people.
6. Read page 30, the start of More About Alcoholism. Where do you see yourself in it?
7. Do you believe you can stay stopped on your own power? Why or why not?
8. What do you feel when you're sober for a few days? Restless, irritable, discontented? Something else?
9. What's the difference between being powerless and being worthless? Which one have you been telling yourself?
10. Read Romans 7:15–25. Where do you see yourself in Paul's words?

Suggestions for this week

Pick one at a time. You don't need to do all of them.

- If you've been drinking heavily every day, see a doctor before you stop.
- Read the Doctor's Opinion and More About Alcoholism. Mark every line that sounds like you.
- Write a one-page drinking history: the first drink, when it got worse, what you've lost, and every attempt to control it.
- Go to a meeting and say, out loud or to yourself, that you're an alcoholic.
- Go to at least three meetings this week, and get three phone numbers.
- Call one of those numbers before you need to. Just to say hello.
- Read Step One in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (pp. 21–24) in your own copy.
- Memorize Romans 7:18: *For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.*
- Go to church this Sunday. If you don't have a church, try one.
- Ask someone at a meeting to be your sponsor, or ask how they found theirs.

When it's hard

Almost everyone pushes back on this step somewhere. Here's what that usually sounds like, and what to do.

"I'm not that bad."

Maybe you still have your job and your family. So did Fred (pp. 39–42). The book was written for people who've lost everything and people who haven't yet. The question isn't how much you've lost. It's whether you can stop and stay stopped. Read More About Alcoholism again, slowly.

"I can stop any time. I've done it before."

Stopping isn't the hard part. Staying stopped is. Look at what happened after each time you quit. The man on pages 32–33 stayed dry for twenty-five years, then drank, and was dead in four. Going a while without a drink doesn't prove you're not an alcoholic.

"I'm a terrible person."

Step One isn't about how good or bad you are. It's about alcohol. Shame says *I am worthless.* Step One says *I am powerless over this.* Those aren't the same. Paul called himself a wretched man, and in the next breath he thanked God for rescuing him (Romans 7:24–25). You can do both too.

"I should be able to do this myself."

That's the great obsession talking, in a different outfit. If will power could fix it, it would have by now. Being strong at other

things doesn't make you strong against alcohol. Bill was smart and determined, and alcohol still beat him (p. 8).

"If I admit it, I've given up."

You're giving up a fight you were losing. That's not quitting. It's surrender to the right side. Every person you've seen get well at a meeting started here.

"I don't believe in God, or I'm angry at Him."

You don't have to have that settled to take Step One. Step One is only about the problem. Step Two is about the answer. For now, be honest about the drinking. Bring your doubts and your anger to a sponsor or a pastor. God can handle them.

If you want to drink, call someone before you do anything else. Your sponsor, someone from a meeting, your pastor. Get to a meeting today. If you are in danger, call or text 988, or call 911.

A prayer for this step

Alcoholics Anonymous doesn't give a prayer for Step One. The step is an admission, and the prayer that fits it is an honest one. You can use your own words. Here is one way:

Lord, I've been trying to run this on my own, and I can't. I've made promises and broken them. I've told myself next time would be different, and it never was.

I admit it. I'm powerless over alcohol, and my life has become unmanageable. I've hurt people I love. I've hurt myself.

But You know me, and You still call me to come. I'm not asking You to make me strong enough to handle it. I'm asking You to do for me what I can't do for myself.

Keep me from the first drink today. Put people in my path who can help, and give me the courage to call them. Thank You that I'm not too far gone for You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

A short version for the hard moments: *Lord, I can't. You can. Help me.* Say it as many times a day as you need to.

Ready for Step Two?

Before you move on, talk these over with your sponsor:

- Can you say, in your own words, that your body and your mind are both part of the problem?
- Do you believe you can't beat this on your own power?
- Have you read the first four chapters of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, through page 43?
- Have you written your drinking history, and talked it over with someone?
- Have you said out loud, to another person, that you're an alcoholic?
- Are you going to meetings, and do you have phone numbers to call?

You don't have to feel ready for everything. You only need to have honestly admitted the problem.

What's next

Step Two moves you from *I can't* to *God can*. It's about hope. You'll read "We Agnostics," and you'll be asked whether you're willing to believe that a Power greater than yourself can restore you to sanity.

You don't have to believe all of it yet. Being willing is enough to begin. The book promised, on page 43, that the defense you can't give yourself can come from God. Step Two is where you start finding out.

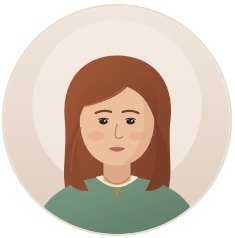
KEEP GOING

Talk it over with Jimmy or Sarah

Steps & Scripture is a Christian Twelve Step app for iPhone and Android. Your sponsor, Jimmy for men or Sarah for women, is an AI who knows *Alcoholics Anonymous* and the Bible. Your sponsor walks the steps with you, one conversation at a time, and keeps pointing you to meetings, a human sponsor, your church, and the phone.



Jimmy



Sarah

Download on the App Store

Get it on Google Play

Free to download. First month free, no card. For adults 18 and older. Jimmy and Sarah are AI. They are not people, and they say so.

IF TODAY IS A BAD DAY

Get help now

If you are in danger or thinking about hurting yourself: call or text **988**, the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, or call **911**.

Withdrawal can kill. If you have been drinking heavily and stopped, and you are shaking, sweating, confused, seeing things, or have had a seizure, go to the ER today. If you drink heavily every day, talk to a doctor before you stop.

If you want to drink

- Call someone before you pick up. Your sponsor, someone from a meeting, your pastor.
- Get to a meeting today, early, and stay late.
- Ask: am I hungry, angry, lonely or tired? Deal with that first.
- Play the tape forward. Walk past the first drink to tonight, tomorrow morning, and who you'll have to tell.
- Pray. Even "God, help me" counts.

The SAMHSA National Helpline is free and open 24/7: 1-800-662-4357.

THE PROGRAM

The Twelve Steps

1. **We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.**
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
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.
12. Having had a spiritual experience as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

1939 wording (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 59).