# 2

STEP TWO

# Hope

*A guide to the Second Step, with Scripture and prayer*



**Work this step with Jimmy or Sarah.**

Your AI sponsor in the Steps & Scripture app. Free to download, first month free.

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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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2

STEP TWO

# Hope

**Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.**

*for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

PHILIPPIANS 2:13 (ESV)

# Where you are

Step Two comes right after the hardest admission most of us ever made. Before you go on, take a minute to look at where you're standing.

**Step One.** You admitted you were powerless over alcohol, and that your life had become unmanageable. Not weak. Powerless. Your body can't handle alcohol once it's in you, and your mind keeps talking you into the first one anyway.

That leaves a hard question. If you can't beat this on your own power, and you've proved that over and over, then what? Step Two is the answer to that question. It's the hope side of the program.

**Haven't done Step One?** Go back and start there. Step Two only makes sense to someone who has stopped hoping they can fix this alone. If part of you still thinks you can drink like other people with a little more willpower, talk to your sponsor about that first.

## Check your work first

The book describes the lie almost every one of us believed:

> "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

Ask yourself honestly:

- Do I still have a plan, somewhere in the back of my mind, to drink safely someday?
- Have I really looked at what drinking has cost me, and who it cost?
- Do I believe I can stay stopped on my own power?

If you're still holding on to "someday," that's not failure. It's information. Tell your sponsor. Step One isn't a test you pass once. But you need to be standing on it before you can lean on Step Two.

# What Step Two is

> "Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."
>
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 59

Read it slowly. Every part of it matters.

**Came to believe.** Not "believed," as if it happened in a flash. *Came to.* It's a process. For some people it's quick. For most of us it's slow, a little at a time, as we watch it work in other people and then in ourselves.

**A Power greater than ourselves.** Step One said you have no power over alcohol. This is where the power comes from. Not from you, not from a better plan, not from trying harder.

**Could.** The step doesn't ask you to be sure God *will* do anything yet. Only that He *could.* That's a small door, and it's meant to be.

**Restore us.** To restore something is to give back what was lost. You weren't always like this. And the word is *us*. You don't do this alone.

**To sanity.** This is the word that bothers people. More on that in a minute.

## The power you were missing

The chapter called "We Agnostics" puts the whole problem in one line:

> "Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be A Power Greater Than Ourselves."
>
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 45

You didn't fail because you were stupid or bad. Plenty of us were smart, and some of us tried very hard to be good. The book says that a code of morals and good intentions didn't save anyone, no matter how hard we tried: "the needed power wasn't there" (p. 45). Step Two is where you stop looking for that power inside yourself.

## Willingness is enough to begin

Here's the best news in the step. You don't have to have it all figured out. You don't have to feel faith. The book asks one short question:

> "'Do I now believe, or am I even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than myself?' As soon as a man can say that he does believe, or is willing to believe, we emphatically assure him that he is on his way."
>
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 47

*Or am I even willing*. That's the door. If you can honestly say "I'm willing," you've started Step Two.

## What "sanity" means here

Nobody likes being told they're insane. But the book isn't calling you crazy in general. You may be sharp at work, good with numbers, wise about other people's problems. The insanity is about one thing: the first drink.

Here's how it works. You know what alcohol does to you. You've lost things. You've sworn off. And then one day, for no good reason at all, a thought comes: *Just one. It'll be different this time.* And you believe it. Bill describes it in his own story:

> "Then came the insidious insanity of that first drink, and on Armistice Day 1934, I was off again."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 8

The book says this kind of thinking showed up in every one of them:

> "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. Our sound reasoning failed to hold us in check. The insane idea won out."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 37

That's the insanity. Knowing better and doing it anyway, again and again, and being surprised every time. Sanity, for an alcoholic, starts with this: when the thought of a drink comes, you see it for what it is, and you don't take it.

You can't produce that kind of sanity on your own. If you could, you'd have done it. Step Two says God can.

### What Step Two is, and what it isn't

**Step Two is not** having all the answers about God. It is not joining a church today, or signing on to a list of beliefs, or feeling something special.

**Step Two is** coming to believe that God can do for you what you can't do for yourself, and being willing to let Him. It is hope, with your name on it.

## "God as we understood Him"

The book is written for everyone, and it lets each person start with whatever idea of God they have. Bill's friend told him to "choose your own conception of God" (p. 12). That got Bill started, and it can get you started too.

We'll be honest with you. This guide, like Jimmy and Sarah in the app, comes from Christians. We believe the Power greater than ourselves is the God who made you, and who came near in Jesus Christ to rescue people who couldn't rescue themselves. We'll tell you that plainly, because we'd be lying if we didn't.

But we won't make it a condition. You don't have to agree with us to work Step Two. Start where you are. Be willing. Keep your eyes open. The book says "we found ourselves accepting many things which then seemed entirely out of reach" (p. 47). We've found that to be true, and we think you will too.

# Your reading for this step

Read these in your own copies, in this order. Page numbers for *Alcoholics Anonymous* are from the fourth edition.

### Alcoholics Anonymous

- **Pages 44–57.** "We Agnostics." Read it in one sitting.
- **Pages 10–12.** Bill's friend at the kitchen table.
- **Pages 24 and 35–37.** Jim and the first drink: the insanity.
- **Pages 26–27.** The church member who couldn't stop.
- **Then *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pages 25–33.** The chapter on Step Two.

### Scripture (ESV)

- Philippians 2:13 · Mark 9:21–24 · Hebrews 11:6
- Jeremiah 29:13 · Psalm 19:1–2 · Luke 15:17–20
- Psalm 13 · Mark 5:15 · John 20:27–29 · Matthew 11:28–30

**Listen, if you like:** Joe and Charlie, Session 6, "We Agnostics" (about 38 minutes), free in the SoberHub app. Steps & Scripture is not affiliated with SoberHub.

# What the book says

"We Agnostics" is one of the kindest chapters in the book. It doesn't argue anybody into heaven. It clears the ground, one objection at a time, and asks you to be honest. Read it in your own copy. Here's what to watch for.

## A miracle across the table (pp. 10–12)

Bill didn't come to believe because someone won a debate with him. An old drinking friend showed up sober. Bill had heard he'd been locked up. Now here he was, clear-eyed and at peace, and he told Bill plainly "that God had done for him what he could not do for himself" (p. 11).

Bill couldn't explain it away. The power hadn't come from his friend. Bill writes that there had been "no more power in him than there was in me at that minute; and this was none at all" (p. 11).

Then his friend gave him a place to start, and Bill saw what it meant:

> "It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a power greater than myself. Nothing more was required of me to make my beginning."
>
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 12

Notice where Bill's faith started. Not with an argument. With a person in front of him who had been changed. That's still how it works. Look around your next meeting.

## Even a little willingness gets results (p. 46)

> "We found that as soon as we were able to lay aside prejudice and express even a willingness to believe in a Power greater than ourselves, we commenced to get results, even though it was impossible for any of us to fully define or comprehend that Power, which is God."
>
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 46

You don't have to understand God to start relying on Him. Nobody fully does. The book says "God does not make too hard terms with those who seek Him" (p. 46).

## The God someone handed you as a child (p. 45)

A lot of us threw out God because of the version we were given growing up. Maybe it was a God who was always angry. Maybe it was a God used to control you, or a God who seemed to belong to people who treated you badly. The book understands:

> "To others, the word "God" brought up a particular idea of Him with which someone had tried to impress them during childhood. Perhaps we rejected this particular conception because it seemed inadequate. With that rejection we imagined we had abandoned the God idea entirely."
>
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 45

Ask yourself whether you rejected God, or a picture of God. They aren't the same thing. The reference page later in this guide is about exactly this.

## The trees and the forest (pp. 49–50)

Some of us were turned off by religious people. Hypocrites, preachers who wanted money, church folks who looked down

on us. Some of that was real. But the book asks us to "lay aside prejudice, even against organized religion" (p. 49), and it's honest about what we were doing:

> "We talked of intolerance, while we were intolerant ourselves. We missed the reality and the beauty of the forest because we were diverted by the ugliness of some of its trees."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 50

People will let you down, including people in churches. God is not the worst Christian you ever met.

## Our ideas did not work (p. 52)

The book lists what life looked like on our own power: trouble with people, emotions we couldn't control, misery, depression, fear, and a feeling of being useless. Then it says this:

> "When we saw others solve their problems by simple reliance upon the Spirit of this universe, we had to stop doubting the power of God. Our ideas did not work. But the God idea did."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 52

That's not theory. It's a report. Your own ideas got you to Step One.

## God either is, or He isn't (p. 53)

There comes a point where you have to choose. The book doesn't let anyone stay on the fence forever:

> "When we became alcoholics, crushed by a self-imposed crisis we could not postpone or evade, we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else He is nothing. God either is, or He isn't. What was our choice to be?"
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 53

You don't have to answer that today. But the question will wait for you, and it's worth taking seriously.

## You've been living by faith already (pp. 54–55)

The book points out that we trusted things we couldn't prove all the time: our own reasoning, the people we loved, life itself. "In one form or another we had been living by faith and little else" (p. 54). The question was never whether you have faith. It's what you put it in.

And then the book says something we believe is true of every person who will ever read this guide:

> "Actually we were fooling ourselves, for deep down in every man, woman, and child, is the fundamental idea of God. It may be obscured by calamity, by pomp, by worship of other things, but in some form or other it is there."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 55

Calamity can bury it. Grief, abuse, the death of someone you loved. But it's there.

## "Who are you to say there is no God?" (pp. 56–57)

The chapter ends with a minister's son who had been hurt badly by life and by too much religion forced on him. He was angry at God, and said so. Alone in a hospital room, he asked himself a question, and the answer put him on his knees. Here is what happened after:

> "God had restored his sanity. What is this but a miracle of healing? Yet its elements are simple. Circumstances made him willing to believe. He humbly offered himself to his Maker—then he knew. Even so has God restored us all to our right minds."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 57

Some people have a moment like that. Most don't. The book says so in the next lines:

> "To this man, the revelation was sudden. Some of us grow into it more slowly. But He has come to all who have honestly sought Him. When we drew near to Him He disclosed Himself to us!"
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 57

Slow is fine. Honest seeking is what counts.

## For those who already believe (pp. 26–27)

Some of us never stopped believing in God. We went to church. We prayed when it got bad. And we still couldn't stop drinking. The book tells about a businessman like that, who was relieved to hear that a spiritual experience could help, because he was a good church member. The doctor told him that "his religious convictions were very good, but that in his case they did not spell the necessary vital spiritual experience" (p. 27).

If that's you, Step Two isn't asking whether you believe God exists. You already do. It's asking whether you believe He can do this, for you, and whether you'll actually lean on Him instead of yourself.

# What the 12&12 adds

*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* gives Step Two a full chapter, on **pages 25–33**. It walks through the different kinds of people who struggle with this step, one at a time. You'll probably find yourself in it. Read it slowly, in your own copy. These are our notes, not the book's words.

**Page 25: The newcomer's complaint.** The chapter opens with a newcomer who feels trapped. You've convinced me I'm helpless, he says, and now you tell me only God can help. It names three groups: people who won't believe, people who can't, and people who believe in God but have no faith He'll do this for them.

**Pages 25–27: The one who won't believe.** A sponsor answers the angry skeptic with three simple points: nothing is demanded, you don't have to take the whole step at once, and what you really need is an open mind. He tells how he quit arguing and started noticing results. The chapter also mentions that some people begin by leaning on the group itself as a power greater than they are. In our experience, many who start there go on to find God, and the chapter says the same.

**Pages 28–29: The one who drifted.** This part is for people raised with faith who wandered off. It says they can have a harder time than people who never believed, because they think they already tried God and it didn't work. It describes people who did fine on plain decency and hard work, until alcohol took over and they had to go looking for the faith they'd left behind.

**Page 29: The one who's too smart for it.** The chapter describes people who made a god of their own intelligence and learned the hard way that being clever didn't keep them sober. It says humility and intellect can go together, as long as humility comes first.

**Pages 30–31: The one who's angry at God.** This section takes anger at God seriously. It describes people who prayed for things that didn't happen: a marriage, healthy children, a loved one who died anyway, and finally their own drinking. It points out the difference between telling God what to do and asking what He wants, and it says real belief means relying on Him, not defying Him.

**Page 32: The believer who keeps drinking.** This is the person who prays, goes to church, takes pledges, and drinks anyway. The chapter says the problem is the quality of faith, not the amount. We hadn't cleaned house, made amends, or given ourselves to others, and our prayers were really requests for what we wanted.

**Page 33: What sanity means.** The chapter ends by saying that no drinking alcoholic who looks honestly at what he's done can call his mind sound. Then it says Step Two is a place where the agnostic, the atheist and the former believer can all stand together.

Read the chapter with a pen nearby, but write in a notebook, not this guide. Mark the section that sounds most like you and bring it to your sponsor.

# What Scripture says

The Bible is full of people who doubted, wandered, got angry at God, and came back. It's also clear about who does the restoring. Read these slowly. Read them out loud if you can.

## I believe; help my unbelief

> *And Jesus asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." And Jesus said to him, "'If you can'! All things are possible for one who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!"*
>
> MARK 9:21–24 (ESV)

A father brought his son to Jesus after everything else had failed. When Jesus said all things are possible for one who believes, the father didn't pretend. He said he believed, and he asked for help with the part of him that didn't. Jesus healed his son.

That's a Step Two prayer. You can pray it today, exactly as it is. Half a faith, honestly offered, is something Jesus doesn't turn away.

## God works in you, even the willing

The verse on the opening page of this guide is the heart of this step:

> *...for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*
>
> PHILIPPIANS 2:13 (ESV)

Look at what this says. God works in you *to will*, not just to do. If you're having trouble even being willing, ask Him for that too. The willingness itself can be His gift.

## Those who seek Him

> *And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.*
>
> HEBREWS 11:6 (ESV)

> *You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.*
>
> JEREMIAH 29:13 (ESV)

The book says God came to everyone who honestly sought Him. Scripture said it first. You don't have to have arrived. You have to be looking, and looking honestly.

## Who, then, made all this?

> *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.*
>
> PSALM 19:1–2 (ESV)

The book talks about standing under a starlit night and wondering who made it all (p. 46). That feeling isn't silly. Creation has been pointing people to God for a very long time. Next time you're outside at night, look up and let it ask you the question.

## The son who came to himself

> *"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 15:17–20 (ESV)

Jesus told this story about a young man who took what he had, left home, and wasted it. Notice the words *when he came to himself*. That's sanity returning. He saw his life clearly for the first time in a long time, and he turned toward home.

And look at the father. He saw his son a long way off, and he *ran*. If you drifted from the faith you grew up with, this is the picture

of what's waiting for you. Not a lecture. A Father running down the road.

## How long, O Lord?

> *How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? Consider and answer me, O LORD my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death, lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him," lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken. But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me.*
>
> PSALM 13:1–6 (ESV)

If you're angry at God, you're in good company. David wrote this, and it's in the Bible on purpose. He doesn't hide how he feels. He says it to God's face. And then, by the end, he chooses to trust anyway.

You're allowed to tell God you're angry. It's a kind of prayer. People who don't believe in God don't bother being angry at Him.

## In his right mind

> *And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid.*
>
> MARK 5:15 (ESV)

This man had been living among tombs, out of control, cutting himself, and no one could hold him. After Jesus met him, the townspeople found him sitting, dressed, and *in his right mind*. That's what restored to sanity looks like. Jesus told him to go home and tell his friends how much the Lord had done for him (Mark 5:19).

## Do not disbelieve, but believe

> *Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*
>
> JOHN 20:27–29 (ESV)

Thomas wouldn't believe until he saw. Jesus didn't scold him and send him away. He came back, showed Thomas His hands, and met him right where his doubt was. If you have honest doubts, bring them to Jesus. He's not afraid of them.

## 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)

This is the invitation at the center of everything we believe. Jesus didn't say get yourself together first. He said come, tired

and heavy, and He'd give you rest. If you're looking for the Power greater than yourself, this is who we'd point you to.

# How to work Step Two

Here is a plain way to work this step. Your sponsor may suggest something different. Go with your sponsor.

## 1. Read "We Agnostics" in one sitting

Pages 44 through 57. It takes less than an hour. Then read it again more slowly, and mark anything that sounds like you. Bring those marks to your sponsor.

## 2. Look honestly at your own insanity

Think back to the last time you drank after you'd decided not to. What was the thought right before the first drink? Write it in a notebook. Look at how small the excuse was, and how big the price. That's the insanity this step is about. Seeing it clearly is part of getting sane.

## 3. Name your old ideas about God

What did you believe about God growing up? What happened to that belief? Write down three things about your old idea of God that you're willing to let go of. The reference page after this chapter will help.

## 4. Look at the evidence

Go to meetings and look around. Find people who were as bad off as you, or worse, who are sober now. Ask two of them how they came to believe. You don't have to argue. Just listen. Bill's faith began with a sober friend at his kitchen table.

## 5. Pray, even if it feels empty

Pray every morning this week, even if you're not sure anyone's listening. Something as simple as this is enough: *God, if You're there, help me not drink today. Help my unbelief.* At night, if you stayed sober, say thank you. The book asks for willingness, not feelings.

## 6. Act as if

You don't have to wait until you're sure. Act as if God can restore you to sanity. Go to the meeting. Call your sponsor. Read the book. Pray. A lot of us found that faith followed the action, not the other way around.

## 7. Talk to your sponsor, and a pastor if you can

Tell your sponsor where you really are with God. Not where you think you should be. If you have questions about Jesus or the Bible, a pastor is a good person to ask. You don't have to settle it all to move on, but you shouldn't carry the questions alone.

## 8. Move on to Step Three

Don't camp here waiting to feel certain. When you can honestly say you believe, or are willing to believe, that God can restore you to sanity, you're ready for the decision in Step Three.

# Old ideas about God

Many of us didn't reject God. We rejected a picture of Him. Look up the verses in your own Bible.

### Old ideas we let go of

- **"God wants to punish me."** → He is quick to forgive. *Psalm 103:8–12*
- **"God gave up on me."** → He runs to meet you. *Luke 15:20*
- **"I've done too much."** → Christ came for sinners. *1 Timothy 1:15*
- **"God is like my father was."** → He doesn't leave. *Psalm 27:10*
- **"He let it happen, so He doesn't care."** → He is near the brokenhearted. *Psalm 34:18*
- **"Needing God is weak."** → His power shows in weakness. *2 Corinthians 12:9*
- **"Church people are fakes."** → People fail. God doesn't. *Romans 3:23–24*
- **"I have to clean up first."** → Come as you are. *Matthew 11:28*
- **"I tried God and it didn't work."** → Try relying, not just asking. *Proverbs 3:5–6*

### Evidence you can look at

- **People in your meetings** who were hopeless and are sober today (p. 50).
- **Your own sober days.** Who kept you from the first drink?
- **Bill's friend** at the kitchen table, sober after doctors gave up on him (p. 11).
- **The minister's son** who was angry at God, and got his sanity back (pp. 56–57).
- **Changed lives in Scripture:** the son who came home, the man among the tombs, Paul.
- **Creation itself:** the night sky, the sea, a newborn baby (p. 46).
- **Your own life:** times you were spared when you shouldn't have been.

You may have old ideas that aren't on this list. Write yours down. Then ask God, and people who know Him, whether they're true.

Here's the test the book uses: does it work? Not in theory. In people. "Our ideas did not work. But the God idea did" (p. 52). Look at the evidence, and let it count.

# Questions to think about

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

1. What did you believe about God growing up?
2. What happened to that belief?
3. Have you seen someone at a meeting get well who you thought was hopeless? Tell about them.
4. What does "sanity" mean for you? What has your insane thinking looked like, the excuses right before the first drink?
5. Are you willing to believe there's a Power that can do for you what you can't do yourself?
6. Read page 53. God either is, or He isn't. Which side are you standing on?
7. What would you have to give up to believe God could help you?
8. Are you angry at God about something? Have you ever told Him so?
9. If you've always believed, have you relied on God, or only called on Him in emergencies?
10. Read the story of the son who came home (Luke 15:11–24). Where are you in that story right now?

# Suggestions for this week

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

- Read "We Agnostics" (pp. 44–57) in one sitting.
- Write down three things about your old idea of God that you're willing to let go of.
- Ask two people at a meeting how they came to believe.
- Pray every morning this week, even if it feels empty. The book asks for willingness, not feeling.
- Read Step Two in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (pp. 25–33) in your own copy.
- Memorize Mark 9:24: *I believe; help my unbelief!*
- Tell your sponsor the last thought you had before you last picked up a drink.
- Go outside one night this week and look up. Ask the question the book asks.
- Go to church this Sunday. If you don't have a church, try one. Sit in the back if you want.

# When it's hard

Almost everyone gets stuck somewhere on this step. Here's what that usually looks like, and what to do.

## "I don't know what I believe."

That's fine. You don't have to know. You have to be willing. The book says that's all it took for half of the first members, some of whom called themselves atheists. Don't wait to have all the answers. Theology can come later. Keep going to meetings and keep your eyes open.

## "I'm angry at God."

Take that seriously, and don't fake your way around it. Tell God. Out loud. David did, in Psalm 13. Then tell your sponsor or a pastor what happened. Anger at God is often grief that never got said. Saying it is a step toward Him, not away.

## "I grew up in church, and it didn't help."

Ask yourself whether you were relying on God or just around Him. A lot of us knew all the words and never leaned our full weight on Him. The 12&12 says people like us sometimes have a harder time with this step (p. 28). It also says we can find our way back.

## "I believe in God. I just don't think He'll do it for me."

That isn't humility. It's another way of putting yourself at the center: *everyone else, but not me.* Look at the people in the

rooms who were as bad as you. He did it for them. Ask Him to do it for you, and then act like He will.

## "Church people hurt me."

That's real, and it matters. It's not your fault. But don't let the worst people who used God's name keep you from God Himself. The book calls that missing the forest because of some ugly trees (p. 50). Jesus had hard words for religious people who hurt others. You may need time before you walk into a church. That's okay. You can still pray today.

## "I feel nothing when I pray."

Feelings come and go. Pray anyway. The book promises: "The consciousness of your belief is sure to come to you" (p. 55). It doesn't say when. Keep praying, keep acting, and pay attention to what changes around you. Many of us noticed the answer before we felt it.

**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

There's no Second Step prayer in *Alcoholics Anonymous*. The book's question on page 47 is the closest thing to one, and you can pray it as it stands: *Do I now believe, or am I even willing to believe?* You can also pray in your own words. Here is one way:

*God, I'm not sure what I believe. You know that already. I've tried to beat this on my own, and I can't. I'm willing to believe that You can do for me what I can't do for myself.*

*If my old ideas about You are wrong, show me. If I'm angry at You, I'll say so, and I'm asking You to meet me anyway. If I've known about You all my life but never leaned on You, I'm sorry. Teach me to lean.*

*When the thought of a drink comes today, help me see it for the lie it is. Give me back my right mind.*

*Lord Jesus, I believe; help my unbelief. You said to come to You tired and heavy, so I'm coming. Thank You for this day sober. Amen.*

**Keep it simple.** If that's too much, pray just one line: *God, help me not drink today.* At night: *Thank You.* That's a real prayer, and it counts.

# Ready for Step Three?

Before you call this step done, talk these over with your sponsor:

- Do you believe, or are you willing to believe, that a Power greater than yourself can restore you to sanity?
- Can you describe the insanity of your own first drink?
- Have you named some old ideas about God that you're willing to let go of?
- Have you seen the evidence: people who got well who you thought never would?
- Are you praying each day, even if it feels empty?
- Are you acting as if God can do this: going to meetings, calling people, reading the book?

You don't have to be certain to move on. You need to be honestly willing, and acting on it.

## What's next

Step Three is a decision: to turn your will and your life over to the care of God. It isn't a feeling. You decide, you say it out loud with another person, and then you act on it by starting your inventory.

Read pages 58 to 63 this week, through the Third Step prayer. The book moves fast from here, and so should you.

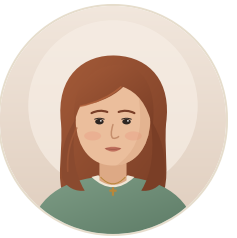
KEEP GOING

# 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).