9

STEP NINE

Discipline

A guide to the Ninth Step,
with Scripture and prayer



Get ready with Jimmy or Sarah.

This step is done with a person: a human sponsor, pastor or priest. Your AI sponsor in the Steps & Scripture app helps you prepare. Free to download, first month free.

Steps & Scripture Step Guide: Step Nine, Discipline
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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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Discipline

Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

MATTHEW 5:23–24 (ESV)

Where you are

You've done a lot of quiet work to get here. Most of it happened on paper, in prayer, and in one long talk with another person. Step Nine is where it goes out the door. Before you start, look back at the road behind you.

Step One. You admitted you were powerless over alcohol, and that your life had become unmanageable.

Step Two. You came to believe that a Power greater than yourself could restore you to sanity.

Step Three. You made a decision to turn your will and your life over to the care of God.

Step Four. You wrote it down. Resentments, fears, sex conduct, other harms. In every entry, you looked for your own part.

Step Five. You told another human being the exact nature of your wrongs.

Steps Six and Seven. You became ready, and you humbly asked God to remove your shortcomings. You prayed "Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding" (p. 76).

Step Eight. You made a list of every person you harmed, and you became willing to make amends to them all.

Now you go.

Work this step with a human sponsor. Jimmy and Sarah can help you think and practice, but they can't sit across from you, and they don't know the people on your list. **Before any amends that involve money owed, the law, an affair, a former partner, or anything that could hurt someone else, talk it over with a human sponsor or pastor first.** Not after. First.

Haven't done Step Eight? Stop here and go back. Step Nine works from the list. Without a list, you'll pick the easy names, skip the hard ones, and call it done. Talk to your sponsor about where to pick up.

Check your list first

Before you go to anyone, take your Step Eight list out and look at it with your sponsor. Ask yourself honestly:

- Is everyone I harmed on this list, including the ones I'd rather forget?
- Next to each name, have I written the harm in one plain sentence?
- Have I marked the ones that involve money, the law, an affair, a former partner, or other people who could get hurt?
- Am I willing to go to all of them? If not, which ones am I still praying about?

If the list isn't ready, that's not failure. It's information. Finish it with your sponsor before you knock on any doors.

What Step Nine is

> "Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 59

Read it slowly. Each part matters.

Made direct amends. Amends means making it right, not just saying sorry. *Direct* means you go yourself. Face to face where you can. Not through a friend, not with a text, not by hoping they notice you've changed.

To such people. The people on your Step Eight list. All of them. Not just the ones who will take it well.

Wherever possible. Some people have died. Some can't be found. Some you are not allowed to contact. The book has an answer for each, and you'll find it in this guide.

Except when to do so would injure them or others. This is the one limit. Not *except when it would embarrass me*. Not *except when it would cost me*. Except when it would hurt *them*, or someone else.

What amends is, and what it isn't

An apology and an amends

An apology says *I'm sorry.* It's about how you feel.

An amends says *I was wrong. Here is what I did. What can I do to make it right?* Then you do it, and you live differently from then on.

Most of the people on your list have heard you say sorry before. Probably many times. Maybe the morning after. They didn't need more words then, and they don't now. The book is blunt about it:

> "A remorseful mumbling that we are sorry won't fill the bill at all."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 83

Why it matters so much

You might wonder why the book asks this. Isn't it enough to stay sober and be nicer from now on? The book says no. It says the point of amends is to clear away the wreckage so you can be useful:

> "Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past. We attempt to sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will and run the show ourselves."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 76

And it ties this step to your sobriety. When we go to someone we've wronged, the book says we tell them "that we will never

get over drinking until we have done our utmost to straighten out the past" (p. 77). That's not a line. It's the truth. Unfinished business is one of the things that takes people back to the bottle.

This is not about feeling better

You will feel better after most amends. But that's not the point, and if it becomes the point, you can do real damage. Step Nine is about the other person. If an amends would take a weight off your chest and drop it on theirs, it isn't an amends. Your sponsor will help you tell the difference.

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 76–78.** Repairing the damage; the man you hated; your side of the street.
- **Pages 78–80.** Creditors, crimes, and two men who made hard amends.
- **Pages 80–83.** Affairs, and making it right at home.
- **Pages 83–84.** People you can't reach, and the promises. Read them out loud.
- **Then *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pages 83–87.** The chapter on Step Nine.

Scripture (ESV)

- Matthew 5:23–24 · Luke 19:1–10 · Numbers 5:6–7
- Romans 12:17–18 · Romans 13:7–8 · Matthew 18:21–22
- 2 Corinthians 5:17–18 · Joel 2:25–26

Listen, if you like: Joe and Charlie, Session 12, "Into Action—Steps Eight and Nine" (about 39 minutes), free in the SoberHub app. Steps & Scripture is not affiliated with SoberHub.

What the book says

Steps Eight and Nine take up about eight pages of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, from page 76 to page 84. That's more space than any other step gets in "Into Action." It's practical, specific and honest. Read it in your own copy before you go to anyone.

If you don't have the will (p. 76)

You may not want to do this. Almost no one does. The book doesn't scold you. It tells you what to do about it:

> "If we haven't the will to do this, we ask until it comes. Remember it was agreed at the beginning we would go to any lengths for victory over alcohol."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 76

Pray for willingness. Then pray again. It comes.

Don't lead with religion (p. 77)

The book warns against walking into someone's office and announcing that you've found God. To a person still hurting from what you did, that can sound like one more excuse. The book calls it "leading with the chin" (p. 77). What they want to see is simple:

> "He is going to be more interested in a demonstration of good will than in our talk of spiritual discoveries."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 77

That doesn't mean you hide your faith. The book says that when it will do some good, we are "willing to announce our

convictions with tact and common sense" (p. 77). Let your changed life speak first.

Going to the person you can't stand (p. 77)

Some people on your list hurt you too. Maybe more than you hurt them. The book knows that, and it still says go:

> "It is harder to go to an enemy than to a friend, but we find it much more beneficial to us. We go to him in a helpful and forgiving spirit, confessing our former ill feeling and expressing our regret."
>
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 77

And when you get there, you keep to your own part:

> "We are there to sweep off our side of the street, realizing that nothing worth while can be accomplished until we do so, never trying to tell him what he should do. His faults are not discussed. We stick to our own."
>
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, PP. 77–78

No *but you also*. No waiting for them to apologize first. If they bring up their part, you can listen. You didn't come to collect.

What usually happens (p. 78)

You may be afraid it will go badly. Sometimes it does. Usually it doesn't. The book says that "In nine cases out of ten the unexpected happens" (p. 78). Old feuds end. People wish you well. And if someone throws you out?

> "It should not matter, however, if someone does throw us out of his office. We have made our demonstration, done our part. It's water over the dam."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 78

Your job is to show up and make it right. How they respond is up to them and God.

Money and creditors (p. 78)

> "Most alcoholics owe money. We do not dodge our creditors."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 78

The book says to tell them the truth, including about the drinking, and to work out the best arrangement you can. Then it says why this matters so much:

> "We must lose our fear of creditors no matter how far we have to go, for we are liable to drink if we are afraid to face them."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 78

Notice what the book does *not* say. It doesn't say pay everyone everything tomorrow. It says don't hide, be honest, make a plan you can keep, and keep it.

Crimes and the law (pp. 78–80)

The book takes on the hardest cases head on: money taken from an employer, a padded expense account, a court

order you ignored. It says you have to be willing to face whatever comes:

> "We may lose our position or reputation, or face jail, but are willing. We have to be. We must not shrink at anything."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 79

Then, right away, it adds a guardrail. Other people are almost always involved:

> "Therefore, we are not to be the hasty and foolish martyr who would needlessly sacrifice others to save himself from the alcoholic pit."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 79

The book tells of a man who owed his first wife alimony and had a warrant out for his arrest. Turning himself in would have looked brave. But in jail he couldn't support either family. So he wrote to her, admitted his faults, sent what money he could, and said he was willing to go to jail if she insisted. She didn't.

And it sets a rule for anything that could pull other people down with you:

> "Before taking drastic action which might implicate other people we secure their consent. If we have obtained permission, have consulted with others, asked God to help, and the drastic step is indicated we must not shrink."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 80

Consent. Counsel. Prayer. Then courage. In that order.

The man who ruined his rival (p. 80)

Read this story in your own copy. While drinking, a man took money from a business rival, denied it, and used the lie to destroy him. Making it right could cost his own family their good name and their income. He talked it over with his wife and his partner first. Then he decided:

> "He saw that he had to place the outcome in God's hands or he would soon start drinking again, and all would be lost anyhow."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 80

He stood up in church and told the truth. Not every amends needs to be that public. But some wrongs are that big, and the book doesn't pretend otherwise.

Affairs and domestic troubles (pp. 80–82)

The book speaks plainly about unfaithfulness. It was written to husbands in 1939, but what it says applies to anyone, man or woman. If your spouse doesn't know about an affair, should you tell them?

> "If we are sure our wife does not know, should we tell her? Not always, we think."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 81

If they know something happened, you admit your fault. But you don't hand over a name or a list of details that will only feed pain and jealousy. The book says to tell your spouse "that we have no right to involve another person" (p. 81). And:

> "It is better, however, that one does not needlessly name a person upon whom she can vent jealousy."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 82

The book also says no outsider can judge every marriage, and that some cases call for complete frankness. Its advice is that each of you "might pray about it, having the other one's happiness uppermost in mind" (p. 82).

Never decide this alone. Whether to tell, what to tell and when to tell can wreck a marriage or help save it. Before you say a word about an affair, talk it over with a human sponsor or pastor. Not the AI. A person who can pray with you and knows you.

Making it right at home (pp. 82–83)

Some of us think that staying sober is enough for the family. The book says no. It puts it this way: "The alcoholic is like a tornado roaring his way through the lives of others" (p. 82), and then tells of a farmer who climbs out of his storm cellar, looks at his ruined house, and says he doesn't see anything wrong. Sobriety stops the wind. It doesn't rebuild the house.

> "Yes, there is a long period of reconstruction ahead. We must take the lead."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 83

The book says to sit down with the family and talk honestly about the past, being careful not to criticize them. Then live it out, day after day:

> "The spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it."
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 83

And don't preach at them. "Our behavior will convince them more than our words" (p. 83).

People you can't reach (p. 83)

Some wrongs can never be fully set right. The book says not to worry about those if you can honestly say you would right them if you could. For people you can't see in person, the book's answer is simple: "Some people cannot be seen—we send them an honest letter" (p. 83). And it says some amends can wait for a good reason, but we don't delay if we can avoid it.

Then, as you go, the book asks you to be sensible, tactful and considerate, and to stay humble without crawling (p. 83). You're not there to grovel. You're there to make it right.

Without causing more harm (p. 69)

Back in the Fourth Step, when the book talks about sex conduct, it sets the same limit you see in Step Nine:

> "We must be willing to make amends where we have done harm, provided that we do not bring about still more harm in so doing."
>
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 69

Willing, always. Careful, always. Those two belong together.

What the 12&12 adds

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions gives Step Nine a short chapter, on **pages 83–87**. It's full of practical wisdom about timing and judgment. 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 83: Four kinds of people on your list. The chapter names the qualities this step needs: good judgment, timing, courage and prudence. Then it sorts the list. Some people you go to as soon as your sobriety feels steady. Some you can only partly repay, because telling everything would hurt them. Some should wait. And some you'll never be able to reach in person.

Pages 83–84: Home comes first, and gently. The chapter says amends to the family starts the day you begin. A general admission is enough at first. You don't need to retell every terrible night right away. It warns that you can't buy your own relief by putting the cost on someone else.

Page 84: At work. The chapter suggests a short wait at work until you're steady, then an honest talk and a plan to repay what you owe. It warns about two traps: a warm welcome can make you hungry for more praise, and a cold one can make you want to argue or give up.

Page 85: The danger after the first few. After some easy amends, you may feel so relieved that you want to stop. The chapter names the excuses we invent to skip the hard ones, and the habit of saying "not yet" forever. Being careful and being evasive can look alike. Be honest about which one you're doing.

Page 85: Frank and generous. Once your changed life has started to show, the chapter says to talk plainly with those you hurt most, even people who don't know what you did, unless telling them would truly harm them. No groveling. But no holding back.

Page 86: The one limit, and two hard examples. The only reason to hold back is when full disclosure would seriously hurt the person or others. The chapter's examples: dumping the details of an affair on a spouse who doesn't know, and confessing stolen company money in a way that wrecks your family. In cases like these, it says to talk with those who'd be affected, take it to your sponsor or spiritual adviser, pray, and be ready to do the right thing whatever it costs.

Page 87: Fear is not a reason. The chapter closes by asking you to be sure you aren't delaying because you're afraid. The heart of the step is being ready to take the consequences of what you did, while caring for the people around you at the same time.

Read the chapter with a pen nearby, but write in a notebook, not this guide. Mark anything that sounds like a name on your list, and bring it to your sponsor.

What Scripture says

The Bible doesn't use the word *amends*, but it's full of the idea. God cares about broken relationships, and He cares about making things right. Read these slowly. Read them out loud if you can.

Leave your gift and go

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

> *So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.*
>
> MATTHEW 5:23–24 (ESV)

Jesus says reconciliation comes before worship. Not instead of it. *Before* it. If you remember someone you've wronged while you're in church, the next right thing is to go to them. Don't wait for the perfect moment. *First* be reconciled.

Zacchaeus pays it back

> *And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."*
>
> LUKE 19:8–10 (ESV)

Zacchaeus was a tax collector who had cheated his own people. When Jesus came to his house, he didn't just say sorry. He named what he'd done and promised to pay it back four times over. Notice the order: Jesus came to him first. The amends came out of grace. It didn't earn it.

Restitution, and then some

> *"Speak to the people of Israel, When a man or woman commits any of the sins that people commit by breaking faith with the LORD, and that person realizes his guilt, he shall confess his sin that he has committed. And he shall make full restitution for his wrong, adding a fifth to it and giving it to him to whom he did the wrong."*
>
> NUMBERS 5:6–7 (ESV)

Long before Zacchaeus, God's law said the same thing. Confess the wrong. Pay back what you took. Add something extra. Amends isn't just about clearing your conscience. It's about the person you hurt getting back what they lost.

As far as it depends on you

> *Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.*
>
> ROMANS 12:17–18 (ESV)

So far as it depends on you. That's Step Nine. You can't control how people respond. You can only do your part. Some will forgive you. Some won't. Either way, you went, and that part is done.

Owe no one anything

> *Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed. Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.*
>
> ROMANS 13:7–8 (ESV)

Paul is plain about debts. Pay what you owe. If you can't pay it all at once, make an honest plan and keep it. And the one debt you never finish paying is the one you owe everyone: love.

Seventy times seven

> *Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven."*
>
> MATTHEW 18:21–22 (ESV)

Some of the people on your list hurt you too. Before you go, you may need to forgive them. Jesus doesn't set a limit. That doesn't mean what they did was fine. It means you let God settle the account, so you can walk in with clean hands and a clear heart.

The ministry of reconciliation

> *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.*
>
> 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17–19 (ESV)

God made peace with you through Christ before you ever made one amends. Now He gives you a part in that same work. When you go to make things right, you're not just cleaning up your past. You're showing people what God does with a broken life.

The years the locusts ate

> *I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent among you. "You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame."*
>
> JOEL 2:25–26 (ESV)

You can't get back the years you lost to drinking. God can do something with them anyway. This is the hope underneath the promises you'll read at the end of this guide.

How to work Step Nine

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

1. Sit down with your sponsor and your list

Go through your Step Eight list with your human sponsor, name by name. For each one, decide together: go now, go later, write a letter, make it a living amends, or don't contact. Mark every name that involves money, the law, an affair, a former partner, or anyone else who could get hurt. Those wait until you've talked them through.

2. Pray before each one

Before every amends, pray. The book suggests asking for the strength and direction "to do the right thing, no matter what the personal consequences may be" (p. 79). Ask God to keep you honest, to keep you from defending yourself, and to bless the person you're going to see.

3. Start where you can

Start with one you can do this week. Each amends makes the next one easier. But don't let the easy ones become a way to avoid the hard ones.

4. Plan what you'll say

Keep it short. Something like this:

A simple way to say it

I'm working on my recovery, and part of that is making things right with people I've hurt. I was wrong when I ____. I'm not here to explain it or excuse it. Is there anything I can do to make it right?

Then stop talking and listen. If they're angry, don't defend yourself or argue. Practice it out loud first, with your sponsor, or with Jimmy or Sarah in the app. Then go in person when you can, somewhere they're comfortable, not in front of others. If they say no, respect it.

5. Make restitution

If you took money or property, pay it back, or make a plan to. If you damaged something, fix it or replace it. If you told lies about someone, set the record straight with the people you told. An amends without restitution, when restitution is possible, isn't finished.

6. Change the behavior

The best amends is a changed life. If you lied, tell the truth. If you neglected your kids, show up. Words open the door. What you do afterward is the amends.

7. Call your sponsor afterward, and keep a record

Every time, tell your sponsor how it went, so you don't carry a hard one alone. Then mark it in a notebook or in the app: done, in progress, or living amends. Some will take years. What matters is that every name is moving.

Kinds of amends

Keep this page handy. Talk over every name on your list with your sponsor, and match it to the kind of amends that fits. The verses are for looking up in your own Bible.

Direct amends (pp. 76–78)

In person, face to face. The first choice, whenever it won't hurt them or others. Admit the wrong, don't make excuses, ask how to make it right, and listen. *Matthew 5:23–24*

Restitution (p. 78)

Paying it back. Money owed, things taken or broken, credit you stole, lies you told. Pay it back, fix it, or make an honest plan and keep it. Set the record straight with anyone who heard the lie. *Numbers 5:6–7 · Luke 19:8*

Letters (pp. 79, 83)

When you can't go in person. For people who live far away, won't see you, or have died. Write honestly and simply. If they've died, some people read the letter aloud to their sponsor, or at the grave. Your sponsor will help you decide. *Romans 12:18*

Living amends (pp. 82–83)

A changed life, every day. For family, and for anyone you can't repay directly. Show up, keep your word, be patient. It never really ends. *1 John 3:18*

Partial or indirect amends (pp. 69, 79–82)

When the whole truth would hurt someone else. Admit your fault without naming others or adding painful details. Sometimes the amends is something you do quietly, like giving to someone in need, doing good to the family of someone you hurt, or serving in a way that helps people like the one you harmed. *Proverbs 3:27*

No contact

When contact would hurt them. Someone who asked you never to reach out, a former partner who would be frightened or hurt, or anyone covered by a court order. Here the amends is staying away and living right. Never break a court order to make an amends. *Romans 13:10*

Your sponsor may sort these differently. What matters is that every name gets prayer, a plan, and a decision you made with someone else, not alone.

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. Which amends is easiest? Start there.
2. Which amends are you most afraid of? What exactly are you afraid will happen?
3. What exactly will you say? Have you practiced it out loud?
4. How might they respond? What will you do if they're angry?
5. Could any of your amends hurt someone else? Who have you talked it over with?
6. Is there someone on your list you still need to forgive before you go?
7. What do you owe, in money or property? What's an honest plan to pay it back?
8. Who at home needs a living amends? What would that look like this week?
9. Are you putting off any amends out of fear, and calling it "waiting for the right time"?
10. After an amends: how did it go? What did you learn about yourself?

Suggestions for this week

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

- Sit down with your human sponsor and go through your amends list, name by name.
- Practice each planned amends out loud before you go.
- Before any amends that involve money owed, the law, an affair or a former partner, talk it over with a human sponsor or pastor.
- Make one direct amends this week.
- Mark each one done, in progress, or living amends.
- Make a written plan for any money you owe, and send the first payment, even if it's small.
- Do one thing at home this week that shows you've changed, without being asked and without pointing it out.
- Read pages 76–84 of *Alcoholics Anonymous* out loud.
- Read Step Nine in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (pp. 83–87) in your own copy.
- After your first few amends, read the promises (pp. 83–84).
- Memorize Romans 12:18: *If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.*
- Go to church this Sunday. If you don't have a church, try one.

When it's hard

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

"I'm too scared."

Of course you are. Almost everyone is. Fear is not a reason to wait, and it's not a sign you aren't ready. Pray, call your sponsor, and go anyway. The book says that in most cases, the unexpected happens. Most people are kinder than you fear.

"They hurt me more than I hurt them."

Maybe so. That's their side of the street. You're there to sweep yours. Forgive them first, in prayer, before you go. Then go, and don't bring up their part. If they want to talk about it, listen. You didn't come to settle the score.

"They didn't accept it."

That's all right. You can't control how someone responds. You went, you were honest, you offered to make it right. The book says that if someone throws you out, you've done your part. Keep praying for them. Keep the door open. Sometimes people come back years later.

"I can't pay it all back."

Few of us can, at least not right away. Tell them the truth about what you can do, make a plan you can keep, and start. A small payment every month says more than a big promise you break.

"Telling the whole truth would hurt someone."

Then don't tell it alone. This is exactly where you stop and talk with your human sponsor or pastor before doing anything. *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* warns against buying your own relief at someone else's expense (p. 84). But be honest with yourself too. "It would hurt them" can become a hiding place for "it would hurt me." Your sponsor can help you see which it is.

"I keep putting it off."

Look at your list and pick one name. Call your sponsor and tell them who and when. Then do it before the week is out. Putting it off doesn't make it easier. It makes you sicker.

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.

The promises

Read these after your first few amends. Keep this page where you'll see it.

> "If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before half through! We are going to know a new freedom and happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves."
>
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, PP. 83–84

> "Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us—sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them."
>
> ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, P. 84

Notice where they are in the book. The promises come in the middle of Step Nine, not at the start. They're what people find while they're doing the work. *Before half through.* Not before they begin.

A prayer for this step

The book doesn't give a Ninth Step prayer. It tells you what to ask for: the strength and direction to do the right thing, whatever it costs (p. 79). Here is one way to pray before you go:

Before an amends

Lord, I'm about to see ____. You know what I did, and You know I'm afraid. Give me the right words, and help me say only what I need to say. Keep me from excuses and from blaming. Help me listen. Whatever happens, let it be Your will, not mine. Bless them, and bring some good out of this. In Jesus' name. Amen.

And one for the whole step:

Father, You made peace with me before I ever came to You. Thank You for that.

I've hurt people. Some of them I loved, and some I barely knew. I can't undo what I did. But I can go, I can tell the truth, and I can try to make it right. Give me the courage to do it, and the wisdom to know when not to.

Where I owe money, help me pay. Where I lied, help me set it straight. Where I can't go, show me another way. At home, make me patient and kind, day after day.

Keep me from using this step to make myself feel better at someone else's cost. Keep me honest about my fear. And when I'm done, let me be useful to You and to the people around me.

Thank You for this day sober. Thy will, not mine, be done. Amen.

Ready for Step Ten?

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

- Has every amends been made, started, or become a living amends?
- Did you talk the risky ones over with a human sponsor or pastor first?
- Have you made a plan for every debt, and are you keeping it?
- Are you living differently with your family, day by day?
- Is any name still on the list because you're afraid?

You don't have to be finished with every amends to move on. Some will take years. You need to have made a real start, have a plan for the rest, and be willing to keep going.

What's next

Step Ten turns all of this into a daily habit. You'll keep watching for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment and fear, and when you're wrong, you'll admit it quickly. The book says we "make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone" (p. 84). That's how you keep the list from growing again.

The book moves straight from the promises to Step Ten. Read page 84 again, and keep going.

KEEP GOING

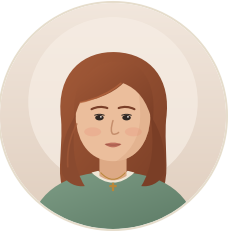
Talk it over with Jimmy or Sarah

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.

Step Nine itself is done with a person, not the app. Jimmy or Sarah can help you get ready for it.



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).