

THE

Life Recovery™

WORKBOOK

A Biblical Guide through the 12 Steps

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and

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with

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and

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The Life Recovery Workbook: A Biblical Guide Through the Twelve Steps

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The profiles in this workbook are composite characteristics of persons who have had the courage to work the steps on various issues in their lives and on their own addictive behaviors. Names, ages, and situations have been modified to protect their anonymity.

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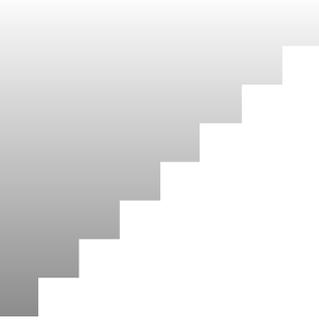
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The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous

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 awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Steps

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our problems and that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our wills and our lives over to the care of God.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove these defects of character.
7. We humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry it out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Steps used in *The Life Recovery Workbook* have been adapted with permission from the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.



INTRODUCTION

He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8, NIV)

This workbook is about transformation: from death to life, from addiction to recovery. It is about walking humbly, righteously, and mercifully with God while accepting and doing his will. In our compulsions and addictions, we have opposed God's will by hurting ourselves, our bodies, and our loved ones. We have been separated from God and from other people. The Twelve Steps are a path to finding that humble walk that leads us out of self-centeredness and closer to God's heart.

We will be examining the Twelve Steps individually to consider the challenging spiritual lessons that allow us to live free of bondage every day. Each step has a new task for us, but none of the steps is meant to stand alone. For successful recovery, they are meant to be worked in order. Each step prepares us for the next one as we develop greater humility and openness to God.

Although the path of recovery involves hard and sometimes painful work, it is worth the effort. God will meet us on this path as we become willing to take each step toward new life. As we apply ourselves, we lose our old coping mechanism of excessive consumption and experience spiritual growth. Honesty, humility, and courage are components of the vital faith that can allow us to face any circumstance, difficulty, or feeling with grace and strength.

STARTING AND LEADING A GROUP

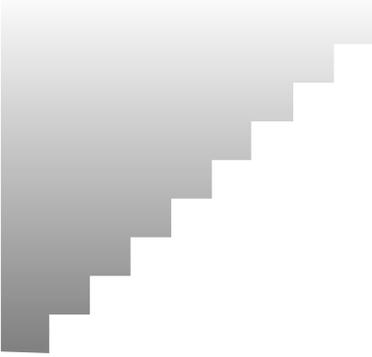
Recovery is best experienced in the context of a group. Two or more willing people can form a powerful bond as they study and work these steps together. Instantly, your struggles, problems, and hang-ups become a blessing to the group. As you open up, everyone else will feel more free to share from their own lives.

Being the leader of a group is actually quite simple. You can find many books on how to lead a small group, but here's a simple and effective way to do it:

1. Find a location in your home, a church, workplace, or school, and obtain permission (if necessary) to form the group.
2. Put up a few flyers announcing the time and place, calling it a support group, recovery group, or Twelve Step group.
3. Show up early, arrange the chairs, make some coffee, and welcome people as they arrive.
4. Start when you say you will start by opening in prayer and by reading the Twelve Steps and the correlating Scriptures.
5. Ask if anyone would like to share for three or four minutes. Don't allow others to "fix" the speaker, and if he or she goes on too long, be sure to enforce the time limit.
6. Make sure everyone has a copy of the workbook. Ask them to study Step 1 for discussion at the next meeting.
7. End when you say you will end by reciting the Lord's Prayer.
8. Be sure that everyone knows where to get a workbook and a *Life Recovery Bible*, if they don't already have one.
9. E-mail me—Stephen Arterburn at sarterburn@newlife.com—and tell me how it's going.
10. Feel good that you are allowing God to use you.

Please remember that working the steps is an art, not a formula. Most often, it is an individualized process.

God be with you on this journey. We pray that you will find healing, serenity, and peace of mind.



STEP 1

PROFILE

After seventeen years of partying and drinking, Barry decided that the only way to handle life was to stay drunk. For the past year, he had kept an iced case of beer in the trunk of his car at all times. He couldn't understand why his wife wanted a divorce, why his kids were distant and angry with him, or why his life was always so chaotic and stressful. He had made repeated attempts to control events, his wife's behavior, his kids, and his job, but he always ended up in a crisis after a heated, tumultuous argument that left him feeling bitter. Drinking was the only way for him to de-stress and find composure.

One night, after Barry had been drinking all afternoon and into the evening, his wife became fed up with his disappearing into the bottle, and she contemptuously announced that she was leaving him. Though the particulars of the fight were hazy to him, Barry woke up the next day full of shame and fear. His pain, loneliness, and aggravation became unbearable. Life with alcohol didn't seem worth continuing, but he wasn't sure that he was able to live without it. His previous attempts to quit had left him restless, irritable, and disgruntled. With a beer in one hand, he called the Alcoholics Anonymous hotline to look for help. They told him that there was hope and recommended that he attend meetings.

When Barry arrived at his first meeting, the chairman asked

for the topic to be Step One: *We admitted we were powerless over alcohol and that our lives had become unmanageable.* As members shared their experiences, Barry was stunned to identify with most of their stories. He began to recognize his powerlessness over alcohol, and that by continually using alcohol to seek relief, he had allowed his life to become unmanageable. He understood their stories of painful experiences while under the influence, and the resulting hopelessness. His other amazing discovery was that others in the room were not only sober, but content. Recovery seemed like a positive option, instead of the drudgery he had imagined.

Barry learned that powerlessness did not mean helplessness, and that he could take actions such as attending meetings, having a sponsor, reading recovery literature, and drawing close to God. As he took action on what he was able to do, he could admit his powerlessness over alcohol.

After he had been sober for a while and worked the subsequent steps, his overall life did improve. Barry learned that he was powerless over more than alcohol, and that the consequences of his years of drinking were not magically removed. The relationship with his wife fell apart because his drinking had caused her so much pain that the bond between them had been destroyed. His children continued to hold resentments toward him, and his relationships with them were compromised. However, to stay sober, Barry had to accept his powerlessness over their responses and to accept responsibility for his behaviors that had provoked them.

STEP ONE

We admitted we were powerless over our problems and that our lives had become unmanageable.

The recovery journey begins when we confront the very first word in Step One: *We*. This immediately challenges the loner/ isolationist in us when we are in our addictions and dependent

on people and substances. Although we would be more comfortable with the word *I* and would prefer to get better alone, only *we* can recover. The Twelve Step program guides us into community, where all involved are a part of each other's recovery. The Twelve Steps are worked and lived in a group; independence is deadly for any addict.

Actually, spiritual transformation for anyone begins in community. When Jesus began his ministry, he created a group. When we look at the church in the book of Acts, we find groups meeting in homes. Living in open and honest community appears to be necessary for spiritual growth—we have to accept help from others in order to recover from whatever addiction or codependency issues we have.

We admitted we were powerless. Admitting that something or someone has beaten us and is more powerful than our own will confronts our pride, so we keep on acting out in our dependency/addiction, trying to prove that we *can* control it. By attending meetings and listening to other people's stories, we become more open to the possibility of recovery. Our pride must be shattered, a little at a time, because we will not recover without an admission of powerlessness.

Our very human nature rebels at the idea of powerlessness, which signifies our inability to escape our life of dependency/addiction on our own strength. We must let go of image seeking and pride and tell the truth about our demoralized condition. Step One contains a potent paradox: by telling the truth about our complete powerlessness over addiction, we receive the power of choice in return.

To jump into recovery waters with both feet, we must go even deeper. Not only must we admit and accept our powerlessness over our dependencies and addiction, but we must also concede that our lives are unmanageable. This strikes a second blow to our pride and self-sufficiency. When under the influence of addictive thinking, a person believes, "I can handle anything. I can fix this by myself, without anyone else having to be

involved.” We have wanted others to believe that we “have it all together” and are self-contained. We continue in the delusion that there *should* be something we can do on our own, especially to clean up our own lives.

However, addiction leads to inefficiency on our jobs, dissatisfaction in our relationships, and quite often, to a sense that life is not worth living. Our emotional pain underscores the reality of our inability to manage our lives. Our loner, pull-myself-up-by-the-bootstraps mentality must give way to joining the “we” of recovery. We have to be rid of the “just Jesus and me” belief system that leads to more isolation and shame. When we realize that even God is in community (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), we become aware of the fact that human beings were created to be connected to others. The rebel within us must now get off the throne long enough to accept the need for help from both God and others. Then we will find that God is willing to meet us in our unmanageable lives.

The meditations for Step One include some examples from Scripture of people struggling with powerlessness. Naaman had position and power in the military that blinded him to his powerlessness (see 2 Kings 5:1-15). He began to demand things from life, thinking that he was special because of his position. We may do this as well, both at work and at home. We may have an inflated sense of importance because of our ministry. We may demand things from our families or coworkers based on *our way*. Like Naaman, we will find that this type of pride that resists input and direction from others leads to isolation. Only God can deal with this rebellion in our hearts. The consequences of addiction are sometimes the only way by which God can break through to us.

Sometimes we arrive at powerlessness and unmanageability by losing everything, as Job did. Being in recovery and trying to walk a spiritual path does not mean that we will be spared our share of snags and obstacles. In these times, recovery can appear to be hopeless and not worth the work. The rebel in us that wants

control will counsel, “This is just too hard. Your troubles must mean that God doesn’t like you.” At this point, we need a group of people to continue pointing us to God no matter what happens. We need people who will nurture hope even in the most difficult places. As we hit bottom and face our powerlessness over all of life, we need encouragers. We need to be reminded of Jesus’ saying that “if you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it” (Luke 9:24). This is another way of describing powerlessness.

By exploring our powerlessness, we will have to confront and oppose negative ideas that tell us that being powerless means being a victim. By coming to the end of our own power, we develop enough humility to hear the voice of God and do his will.

The apostle Paul—before his conversion and transformation, when he was still known as Saul—could not explore powerlessness at all. He was intoxicated by the power he could wield, even if it placed him in opposition to God’s plan for his life. Yet, God pursued Saul, despite his power-hungry, murderous state of mind, to call him to a new direction, a totally transformed purpose. So that he could stop persecuting the gospel and start preaching it, God made him totally blind and dependent on others to lead, feed, and shelter him. He had to accept powerlessness and unmanageability in order to be used by God in powerful and amazing ways.

We must also first accept our powerlessness and inability to manage before we can be freed from addiction and become a channel for God in ways we could never imagine. We are so schooled in the thought that we can do anything we put our minds to that it is almost impossible to envision the power of God in us, doing what we have not been able to do to this point. God in us, shining through human vessels, gives us the ability to recover, to accept powerlessness, and to accept unmanageability. We are then opened to a life powered by God rather than by our dependencies, our addictions, or our fallible selves.

When God's power lives in us, we can be pressed by troubles, perplexed by life, and haunted by our addictions/dependencies, and at the same time experience peace in trouble, hope in perplexing situations, and a lifting of the compulsion to act out. When we admit our powerlessness, God's power flows in to fill us and accomplish what we could never do on our own.

QUESTIONS FOR STEP ONE

No-Win Situations *Genesis 16:1-15*

1. What feelings do I experience as I acknowledge people in my life who have power (such as supervisors, spouse, religious leaders, and sponsors)?

2. What do I try to escape from? What do I feel trapped by?

3. How do I escape my feelings, such as anger, boredom, fatigue, or loneliness?

4. When things do not go my way, or when I am in a no-win situation, what is my reaction (with relationships, work, promotions, kids who question or rebel, traffic, drivers in front of me, people talking on cell phones in public places, financial difficulties, people who hurt or disappoint me, or God, who seems to be silent)?

5. If I could, how would I change my response?

Dangerous Self-Deception *Judges 16:1-31*

1. What is the longest time I have been able to stop addictive behaviors or using addictive substances?

2. What are some of the reasons I use for starting my behaviors or substance abuse again?

3. What are the things I think I can control? How do I lie to myself, and about what?

4. What is so scary about telling the truth?

5. As I explore powerlessness, what blind spots have I discovered?

6. What are the results of pride in my life?

A Humble Beginning 2 Kings 5:1-15

1. What is the difference between humiliation and humility in my life?

2. How do I regard myself as being a little more important than other people?

3. What makes me *think* I am in control of anything?

4. How do I try to influence or control God or his representatives?

5. When have I placed expectations on other people or God?

6. When have my attitudes shown that I believe I know better than God?

7. Why is it difficult for me to follow another's instructions?

Hope Amidst Suffering *Job 6:2-13*

1. What kind of people do I hang around with and trust—people who criticize, or people who encourage truth?

2. What emotions can I identify when I am at the bottom?

3. What have I done in the past to deal with pain or sadness?

Like Little Children *Mark 10:13-16*

1. What happened in the past that still provokes fear in me today?

2. When do I feel the most cared for?

3. What do I see in my life that reveals God's care for me?

A Time to Choose *Acts 9:1-9*

1. When I continue to pursue my own agenda without asking God for direction, what happens in my life?

2. Are there areas of my life in which God may have to use extreme measures before I will listen for direction? Which areas?

3. What will it take for me to listen to God?

The Paradox of Powerlessness *2 Corinthians 4:7-10*

1. These are examples of when I have demonstrated acceptance of my own powerlessness and God's powerfulness:

2. How do I respond to trouble?

3. How do I respond to being perplexed?

4. What do I do when it seems that God or someone else has abandoned me?

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Our temptation now is to think that we have *finished* the Twelve Steps. The reality is that the steps are never really *done* because we never quit growing emotionally or spiritually. By practicing the Twelve Steps, we have a path for life and a connection with God that yields greater humility and reverence for his grace and power.

You never have to wonder how to carry this message of transformation to others. It happens when you integrate the Twelve Step principles into every area of your life. You don't have to loudly proclaim the message; your changed life speaks for itself. Attending weekly meetings and working the steps are only meaningful if they result in a remarkable life that is noticeably different than before—without the same destructive habits and patterns. The message is carried further and better by a kind tongue than by articulate lips. So carry the message of hope and transformation as you love others with all you have and all you are.

We conclude with this blessing and encouragement from Peter:

May God give you more and more grace and peace as you grow in your knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord. By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires. In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone. (2 Peter 1:2-7)

Prayer for Recovery *Let me focus my will today on my eagerness to do the will of God (through working the Twelve Steps) and not to "chase evil desires [addiction]."*



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