

# Twelve Steps to Recovery

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## STEP 12: AN AWAKENING

**Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps; we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.**

The founders of AA discovered that “nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics.” In short, they believed true recovery was not complete until they

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loved others enough to share the message of hope. The last step in recovery is not so much a lifestyle free from substance abuse as it is a lifestyle characterized by genuine love for others, especially those still in addiction.

Several things need to be emphasized before discussing the practical activities involved in working with working with others. First, we need to understand that our job is simply to try to carry this message to others. We are not responsible to convince them, persuade them, or somehow change them. Our task is simply to give them the message by our own personal testimony. Remember, it is God who does the changing, not us.

Second, the message we share with others is our own experience of recovery. This involves a certain transparency and honesty about our own story, not merely theoretical discussion or, worse yet, “preaching or evangelizing”. The key is to identify with the one we seek to serve. We want

to confront with the goal of restoration rather than condemnation. We want to comfort them with the same comfort we have received; and we want to support them in their weakest effort to seek recovery.

Learning to work with others effectively is something that all people

in recovery need in order to maintain their own recovery. The biblical concept is really nothing more than the new commandment Jesus left us on the night before his crucifixion; “love one another as I have loved you”. While there are many ways to fulfill this command to love others, the instructions given in the big book serve as an excellent example of what Jesus had in mind. The practical advice given in the chapter entitled, *Working with Others*, is a good outline of how to love someone without being religious. It also illustrates how real love is radically different than co-dependency. In a very real way the twelfth step is simply fulfilling our real purpose in life to, “be of maximum helpfulness to others”.

**The practical activities involved in working with working with others:**

- 1. We are to carry this message to others, not somehow change them.**
- 2. We want to comfort them with the same comfort we have received.**

## RELATIONAL MINISTRY

One of the most relevant scriptures to the twelfth step is found in the instruction Paul gave the Galatians concerning how they were to help

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others.

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. – Galatians 6:1,2

Working with those caught in addictions is best described as a relational ministry of restoration. The goal is restoration, not condemnation. To reach this goal we must meet certain objectives outlined in the verses above. First, we must

**The goal is restoration, not condemnation:**

- 1. Be sure we are led by the Spirit of God**
- 2. Restoration involves a sustained commitment**
- 3. Operate within the "Spirit of Meekness."**
- 4. Continue to examine our own motives.**
- 5. Spend our resources on their problems and issues.**

be sure we are being led by the Spirit of God do confront and restore the one overtaken by addiction. Simply knowing that one is in trouble with their addiction does not automatically mean we are to confront or seek to restore that one. We need to be sure that God is leading us to relate to the one in trouble. There are many who need help, but not many want help. To save them and ourselves

a lot of trouble and wasted time, we must be sure that God has directed us to do more than simply forgive and pray for them. This is what is meant by, "you who are spiritual". That is, you who are led by the Spirit to restore rather than condemn.

the goal of restoration involves a sustained commitment. It requires a radical change in thinking on the part of the one who is being restored, and that change usually takes some time. Although it is God who does the changing, He uses caring people to confront, comfort, and support those who are being changed. Such a commitment to be used of God to relate to others is not to be taken lightly, but should be made only by the personal leadership of the Spirit.

Second, it is important to keep in mind that

A third objective we must consider when restoring others is best described as the "spirit of meekness". This means that we remain open to the teaching and promptings of the Spirit of God rather than rely upon our own knowledge or experience alone. Meekness literally means, "being teachable" so that we are not viewed as the "expert who knows it all". A spirit of meekness will go a long way in establishing the trust and loving rapport needed to effectively restore another.

The fourth objective is stated as, "considering thyself lest ye also be tempted". This simply means that we are continually examining our own motives to be sure that we are relating in grace (faith, hope, and love) rather than law (fear, guilt, and pride). We can do and say the same things out of two very different motives. The motives of grace will do much to minister the one we are trying to restore, but the motives of law will undermine the restoration process. Believing the gospel for ourselves (i.e. that we are worthy whether others change or not), we have the hope (joyful confidence) we need to continue to love those we serve with the love of Christ. We must continually guard against the fleshly motives of fear of failure and rejection, guilt that leads to self-condemnation and a critical spirit, and the false pride of "helping" others to make ourselves look good.

Finally, we must continually "bear one another's burdens" by spending our resources on

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their problems and issues. This does not mean that we become co-dependant, but that we are willing to spend our time and energy on comforting them and helping them learn to believe the gospel for themselves. Using our selves as an example, we may help them to identify the many false assumptions they hold concerning their own worth as persons. We continually reinforce their personal security and significance apart from their poor track record or the opinion of others by patiently reminding them of all that God has done to make them worthy. Sooner or later God will “click the light on” in their mind, and the process of restoration has begun. Using the twelve steps we ourselves have taken, we are able to share the gospel in a most practical and relevant way. Our joy will be full when we have the opportunity to share with others what God has and is doing for us, whether they ever change or not. Remember, our job is just to tell them the good news, God’s job is to make it real.