

Desperate for God

Lordship, Repentance and Discipleship through 12-Step Sponsorship

Series outline

- Week 1 – Overview of Twelve-Step Sponsorship
- Week 2 – Lordship: I Can't, God Can, and I'm Gonna Let Him (Steps 1-3)
- Week 3 – Repentance I: See If There Is Any Offensive Way in Me (Steps 4-5)
- Week 4 – Repentance II: Two Parts of Change (Steps 6-7)
- Week 5 – Repentance III: Amends (Steps 8-9)
- Week 6 – Discipleship: Lead Me in the Way Everlasting (Steps 10-12)

Review – Origins of the Twelve Steps

- The Oxford Group's Spiritual Practices
 - Absolute reliance on and surrender to God through the Holy Spirit (→ Steps 1-3)
 - Dutiful confession of sin to each other (→ Steps 4-5)
 - Intentional and spoken surrender of that sin (→ Steps 6-7)
 - Restitution to all whom they had wronged (→ Steps 8-9)
 - Listening to, accepting, and relying on God's guidance, and carrying it out in everything they did or said, great or small (→ Steps 10-12)
- Bill W. and Alcoholics Anonymous
- Other addiction recovery groups with "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions"
- Secularism vs. Twelve Step groups in the Church
 - Do the Twelve Steps work when not in the context of Jesus as Higher Power?
 - When people come to CR, why do we give them the Twelve Steps before they make a profession of faith?

Review – "Working Your Program"

- Twelve Steps at the core (steps in order, one at a time)
- Sobriety must be defined before starting
- Sponsorship is essential

Step One

We admitted we were powerless over our addictions and compulsive behaviors, that our lives had become unmanageable.

Scriptural Basis

Romans 7:15-24

¹⁵For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. ¹⁷So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. ¹⁹For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. ²⁰Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

²¹So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. ²²For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, ²³but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

²⁴Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"

- What are some things you know about the author that make it surprising that he would write something like this?
- Is it morbid or weak to dwell on our powerlessness? What other excuses might people have for avoiding thinking about the weaknesses and failures of their lives?

I John 1:5-10

⁵This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. ⁶If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

- What do the metaphors of light and darkness stand for in this passage?
- Compare verses 7 and 9. What happens if we admit our brokenness? How specific do we need to be?
- Compare verses 8 and 10. Do you think there is any intentionality in the verb tense? (cf. Rom. 7:19)

The Goals of Step One

- Admit powerlessness and unmanageability
- Not simply a casual admission; we must be absolutely convinced

How do we get there?

1. Prove powerlessness through history
 - a. Bullet point chronological list – NOT prose
 - b. Have I been able to make the desired changes for good in my life?
 - c. Look for failed efforts to change
 - d. Look for escalation

2. Prove unmanageability through cost
 - a. Bullet point list(s) – NOT prose
 - b. Can I get what I want out of life?
 - c. Types of costs – actual costs and opportunity costs
 - i. Monetary costs
 - ii. Time costs
 - iii. Health costs
 - iv. Relationship costs
 1. with other people
 2. with God
 - v. Job or promotion opportunities; productivity opportunities; ministry opportunities
 - vi. Opportunities that greater physical health would have provided
 - vii. Opportunities that greater monetary means would have provided
 - viii. Opportunities that more time would have provided

3. Bring your case to court
 - a. Write a prosecutorial closing argument – NOW use your lists to write some prose
 - i. Not too emotional, please, just the facts of the case; we're just trying to make a decision here
 - ii. Not sentencing; don't beat yourself up (we thought self-flagellation was the ultimate motivation, but it turns out that only works on the small stuff, and isn't really good for me anyway)
 - b. Narratives and our perception of reality
 - i. Language forces better thinking
 - ii. "That made sense until I said it out loud."
 - iii. Community and accountability
 - c. Doesn't have to be too detailed if the details are embarrassing, but needs to be detailed enough to be convincing

How do we know once we're there?

- Epiphany – you come to understand that powerlessness over your sinful state is not just a theological truth, but you see how it has played out in your life in some destructive way that is worthy of real grief
- Hopelessness – if you're really convinced of these things, and you haven't gone on to step two yet, you're going to be pretty agitated

Step Two

We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Scriptural Basis

Romans 7:24-25

²⁴Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!..."

- What is deliverance from this body of death? Justification? Sanctification?
- In verse 24, where is Paul looking for deliverance?
- In verse 25, where does he find deliverance?

Matthew 19:23-26

²³And Jesus said to his disciples, 'Truly I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.' ²⁵When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, 'Who then can be saved?' ²⁶But Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'"

- What is the kingdom of heaven? What is it to be saved? Are these in the realm of justification or sanctification?
- What kind of person will enter the kingdom of heaven only with difficulty? Are you this kind of person?
- What does money do to us that makes it difficult for a rich person to be saved?

The Goals of Step Two

- Believe that the only hope of solving my problem is outside of myself
- Believe that solving my problem has something to do with living in the truth (sanity)
- Believe that God (or some higher power, for the unbeliever) could and would restore me to sanity, if God (/higher power) were sought

How do we get there?

1. Complete Step One
2. Join a recovery group where you can listen to battle stories
3. For the atheist or agnostic, or anyone who is struggling significantly in their relationship with God, talk it through with your sponsor, your pastor, or friends, and write about it in a journal.

How do we know once we're there?

- Our beliefs are in line with the goals of the step

Step Three

We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God.

Scriptural Basis

Proverbs 3:5-6

⁵Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
And do not lean on your own understanding.
⁶In all your ways acknowledge him,
And he will make straight your paths.”

Romans 12:1

¹I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”

The Goals of Step Three

- Become willing to follow God's will, especially when it contradicts self-will.
- Become willing to work the rest of the Steps.

How do we get there?

1. Complete Steps One and Two
2. Write in a journal and talk with your sponsor about the reservations you have about taking Step Three.
3. Ponder the alternatives. John 6:66-68 ⁶⁶After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. ⁶⁷So Jesus said to the twelve, 'Do you want to go away as well?' ⁶⁸Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life...'"
4. Notice the "care of God"
5. Rewrite the Step Three prayer

“God, I offer myself to Thee To build with me & to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy love & Thy way of life.”

How do we know once we're there?

- We do the work, without hesitation, and to the best of our ability.
- If we are not there yet, or when our willingness wavers, we need to remind ourselves of our desperate state (by reviewing Step 1), and pray desperately for God to change our hearts.