



LESSON THREE

STEP TWO

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

When we enter AA, we are told that we must surrender completely to the fact that by ourselves we can do nothing to control our lives, in regard to drinking. This is often humiliating. In Step Two the humiliation goes further. We are told that we must surrender to a Higher Power to get help. This is extremely hard for two reasons. First, it's hard for us to give up our sick ego. Second, this business of a Higher Power brings up the idea of a God, and many of us won't or can't believe in God. Where do we go from there?

Some of us might confuse our talk about God or a Higher Power with religion. Let us clear this up. We never talk religion in AA, although those who fully embrace AA will sometimes seek out or return to a religion they feel comfortable with. We *do* talk about spiritual values. The difference between religion and spiritual values is most evident. Religion is belonging to a certain organized society that believes in a set number of doctrines with specific obligations to fulfill. Spirituality is something personal: one's own set of nonmaterialistic values. A person can be religious but not spiritual or vice versa.

Let us look at the words in Step Two.

Came... The first word means a slow process. It does not have to happen all at once. When we drink the first things that go are our spiritual values. They have to. Otherwise, we would have to stop drinking. When we get to AA we are spiritually bankrupt.

When we stop drinking it is our spiritual values that will be the last to

return. Our physical condition improves first. Then our mental condition improves. Finally, our spiritual values return. We came—we came to—we came to believe.

...to believe... This brings up the question of faith or belief in God or a Higher Power. Everyone who enters AA can find himself or herself in one of three groups:

1. THERE ARE THOSE WHO WON'T BELIEVE IN A HIGHER POWER.

These usually are the belligerent types. They are their own source of power. Their sobriety is no more than a never-ending painful endurance test. We respect their opinion and ask them to respect ours also. We are not about to enter into theological debate about the existence of God since everyone has his or her own concept of a Higher Power. All AA suggests to these people is that our experience shows there is an easier and less painful way of doing it.

2. THERE ARE THOSE WHO ONCE HAD FAITH IN GOD, BUT FOR SOME REASON OR OTHER THEY HAVE LOST IT.

By far most people are in this group. They may have had religion forced on them in their youth and now rebel against it. There are many that have had personal tragedy in their lives and conclude that belief in God is useless. There are those who asked God for help with their drinking but received no response, thus abandoning God. These people usually become indifferent toward God or bitter. They want things their way and would only accept solutions when they could see them. Closed minds cannot see alternatives. When unreasonable demands were not met they began to pout.

3. FINALLY, THERE ARE THOSE WHO STILL BELIEVE IN GOD, BELIEVE THEY ARE FAITHFUL IN THEIR RELIGIOUS PRACTICES, BUT ARE STILL HAVING TROUBLE.

God does not seem to help them. They are good churchgoers. They pray, take pledges, and so on—but to no avail. Here the quality of faith should be examined rather than the quantity of religious practices. A superficial, emotional, or romantic approach to faith is of little value.

...*sanity*...Sanity means *soundness of mind*. Insanity, not mental illness, is to repeat the same behavior over and over, each time expecting a different result. This was our pattern of drinking, the reasoning behind all those broken promises, not even noticing as our lives fell apart around us. We lost contact with reality so slowly we didn't notice it.

The purpose of this Step—to re-examine our faith—is humility. To be humble is to be teachable. As old-timers in the program often say, “We never stop learning. We will always be a student in our program. We remain teachable. We continue to open our minds to accept and our hearts to understand.”

KEY IDEA 1

Wherever alcohol has been involved, we have been strangely insane.

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SUGGESTION FOR SELF-STUDY OR GROUP DISCUSSION

We define *sanity* as soundness of mind. Give examples of believing, from your experience, that insanity is doing the same thing over and over each time, expecting a different result.

KEY IDEA 2

Dodging the truth only results in distorted thinking and opposition to help from a Power greater than ourselves.

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SUGGESTION FOR SELF-STUDY OR GROUP DISCUSSION

Having an “open mind” is not being defensive or having reservations. One of our most often used slogans is HOW—Honesty, Open-mindedness, Willingness.

KEY IDEA 3

Our sick personalities find a sure source of power and healing in *God*, as we *understand Him*.

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SUGGESTION FOR SELF-STUDY OR GROUP DISCUSSION

We no longer feel threatened. We are less trapped by grandiosity and perfectionism. This allows us to be human and learn from our mistakes. We are no longer so victimized that we have to be right all the time. We repeat a simple prayer, “Accept me as I am, so that I may learn what I can become.”

KEY IDEA 4

The important thing is that we believe in It.

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SUGGESTION FOR SELF-STUDY OR GROUP DISCUSSION

What we choose as a Higher Power is not important as long as we believe that It can help us. One of the basic reasons why we are told to believe in a Power greater than ourselves is so we stop trying to play God.

KEY IDEA 5

Faith in a Higher Power is a basic law of recovery.

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SUGGESTION FOR SELF-STUDY OR GROUP DISCUSSION

When something of value is taken from us we need something of equal or greater value to take its place. Faith is a good replacement for FEAR—Frustration, Ego, Anxiety, and Resentment.

KEY IDEA 6

Use of the word *sanity* offends our false pride.

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SUGGESTION FOR SELF-STUDY OR GROUP DISCUSSION

Alcohol enabled us to lead false lives. We now have to admit that we were phonies. Our acceptance of our alcoholism is not passive but based in reality and truth.

KEY IDEA 7

It might be suicidal to disagree with any part of it, so resolve to be open-minded and accept the Twelve Steps in their entirety.

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SUGGESTION FOR SELF-STUDY OR GROUP DISCUSSION

Do I have another chance at recovery or will another drinking bout find me dead? Open-mindedness will prevent selfishness and reduce the possibility of painful resentments by not allowing us to be intolerant or form prejudices.

KEY IDEA 8

We believe and know from experience that a Power greater than ourselves can remove this obsession, straighten the twisted thinking, and restore the alcoholic to sane thought and behavior.

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SUGGESTION FOR SELF-STUDY OR GROUP DISCUSSION

Our way didn't work. We have proof from the people who have gone before us that the program does work. There is something bigger than ourselves that we must believe in and trust completely for our sanity, peace of mind, and happiness.

KEY IDEA 9

This encourages deception over our real mental health and fitness; it breeds a superior feeling of false security.

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SUGGESTION FOR SELF-STUDY OR GROUP DISCUSSION

To drink the way we did, we had to rationalize and justify what we were doing. The only way to do this was to distort reality. We thought our journeys outside reality brought us peace and serenity. When we returned to reality we found harshness and pain. So it went, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year. Run, escape, pain. Run, escape, pain.

KEY IDEA 10

Sobriety, sanity, security, and peace of mind are within our reach.

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SUGGESTION FOR SELF-STUDY OR GROUP DISCUSSION

Our alcoholism wouldn't let us escape anymore, even when we tried using more heavily. All that was left of our lives was pain and insanity. Our program shows us that reality isn't a problem, but trying to escape reality is.

KEY IDEA 11

In spite of all knowledge, some of us willfully continue in self-centeredness.

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SUGGESTION FOR SELF-STUDY OR GROUP DISCUSSION

Rather than relate our feelings to the outside world, we make the outside world fit our feelings. This is a program to be lived. This is a program of positive action. We trust and believe that the changes asked of us are necessary and good for us.