



# Recovery Ministry

## Step One: Powerlessness and Unmanageability

**iFOLLOW**

Working with Jesus

The iFollow Discipleship Series

## About the iFollow Discipleship Series Pastor's Edition

### Categories

The iFollow Discipleship Series is designed to be used in congregations to assist people in their pursuit of God. This assumes that individuals are in unique places in their journey and there is no perfect set of lessons that everyone must complete to become a disciple—in fact discipleship is an eternal journey. Therefore the iFollow curriculum is a menu of milestones that an individual, small group, or even an entire church can choose from. The lessons can be placed in three general categories: **Meeting with Jesus** (does not assume a commitment to Jesus Christ); **Walking with Jesus** (assumes an acceptance of Jesus Christ); and **Working with Jesus** (assumes a desire to serve Jesus Christ).

### Components

Each lesson has a presenter's manuscript which can be read word for word, but will be stronger if the presenter puts it in his/her own words and uses personal illustrations. The graphic slides can be played directly from the Pastor's DVD or customized and played from a computer. There are also several group activities and discussion questions to choose from as well as printable student handouts.

### Usage

The lessons are designed to be used in small groups, pastor's Bible classes, prayer meetings, seminars, retreats, training sessions, discussion groups, and some lessons may be appropriate sermon outlines.

### Credits

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# Recovery Ministry: Step One

## Powerlessness and Unmanageability

*This is the second of eleven units on running a 12 Step addiction recovery ministry.*

### Learning Objectives

1. Review the needs of the mentoring relationship as it relates to Step One.
2. Learn specific skills and assignments to help the mentee accomplish this essential first step to freedom
3. Remember H.O.W. the method works for Step One.
4. Recheck the six attitudes and actions.
5. Learn the specific goals of Step One.

### Content Outline

1. Introducing Step One
2. Recap H.O.W. for Step One
3. Backup assignments
4. Review the Six Attitudes and Actions
5. Step One Summary and Goals

### Background Material for the Presenter

Each of the 12 Steps takes about four weeks to complete—about nine to 12 months for the entire process. But each mentee will move through the program at their own pace. A mentee may move more quickly or slowly through the Steps depending on the level of commitment and honesty, the amount of time dedicated to homework, number of outside commitments, etc. It is up to you as the mentor to determine whether or not the mentee is ready to move to the next Step. Each Step has a “Goals” section to help you decide on the mentee’s readiness to move on.

This unit introduces Step One. The assignments are broken down into four week-long sections. You can give fewer assignments during that week if the mentee needs

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more time, or give more assignments if the mentee is effectively completing the work with the appropriate level of commitment and emotion—the four-week breakdown is just a guideline. Using the H.O.W. method will help you to determine a mentee’s state of mind and readiness to take the next Step in recovery.

## Remember H.O.W. it works

**H=Humility**—Humility is foundational to recovery. Admitting one’s need is the only way a person can receive help from God for their problems. This is especially true in Step One, the foundational Step without which the other eleven would be pointless.

**O=Ownership**—Acknowledging our problem is also primary to recovery. Owning our actions and attitudes, past and present, and accepting the fact that we are the only ones who can change who we are on the inside, is key to any lasting change.

**W=Willingness**—Willingness is the third key to the door of progressive victory over addiction. Willingness is our response to the challenge to face any obstacle; complete any task set before us; to do whatever it takes to achieve freedom from addiction.



When these three keys come together in the life of a mentee who has been attending meetings for some weeks, it means they have confessed their need to take the first Step, convincing you they are truly ready to begin the long, hard road to recovery.

Some things to watch for are:

1. Are they open to correction? Do they welcome information that will help them grow despite how “bad” they look in light of the information?
2. Are they beginning to be able to express that fresh insights have affected them, causing a change in attitude or action? Being able to repeat the key concepts of the Step work they are doing is irrelevant if there is no evidence of a change in spirit or action, though at this stage changes may either be slow and difficult, or may be too fast. Some addicts leap into a sobriety program the same way they leapt into their dependencies, with unrealistic ideas of how quickly they can change, and reinforcing their incorrect belief that they can be in control. The Steps become a different kind of crutch they want to use. This is common at this stage. Watch for the first signs that they are learning that they are still addicts.
3. Have they faced the facts about their problem? This will not be as much as they will later. However, they are now beginning to accept personal responsibility for their actions and attitudes. Some obvious indications of “deferred responsibility” include:

“I found myself doing ...” This indicates they think they “had no control” over themselves. It just happened to them.

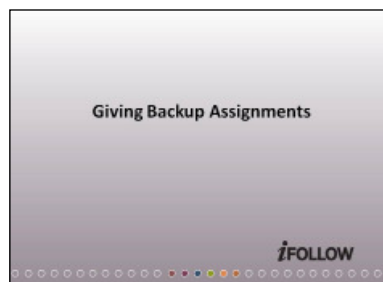
“I did that, but they did ...” This indicates they are unwilling to accept personal responsibility without reservation. The mentor may see a fair amount of this in the early stages.

Watch for serious attempts at action. We vote with our feet. It is not enough to give intellectual assent to the fact that we need to change. If there is no matching action, there is no willingness to move out of the hole we have dug for ourselves.

## Giving Backup Assignments

What if you have given your mentee the primary assignments and still don't perceive your mentee is ready to proceed to the next Step? Pray for wisdom. God knows exactly what they need, and He will tell you what you need to do. Be creative. Of all human beings, you probably have the best picture of the mentee's current state of mind. (Isn't that a scary thought?) Look for areas and issues the mentee seems to be avoiding. That probably means they are unwilling or unable to surrender there.

We have found in these cases a steady diet of Bible study on the perceived problem, either word or character studies, will reveal the problem. By sending them to God, they tap into the Source they need in order to see the problem themselves. God dispenses His wisdom freely. If they are willing, God can provide them with humility, and ownership. He does stuff like that.



It is important not to rush the program. There is no time limit. God works with us and through us right where we are. We shouldn't try to move on until He is done with us. Continue to pray for wisdom and ask questions. If you continue to reflect the truth to them, they will be drawn to it like a moth to a candle. Faced with the bankruptcy of our souls, even the hard work of recovery looks good.

In any assignments you give, whether primary or backup, the emphasis should remain on honesty and action. The mentee should not sermonize, quote the readings back to you or, analyze the finer points of recovery as a third person narrative. The mentor should see honest reflection—"what this means to me"—in all the writing the mentee does. After all, you can read the books, too. The mentor should look for what the mentee got from the assignment, and what they intend to do about it.

If necessary, you may go back to Handouts included in the first unit and repeat or adapt certain backup assignments.

## Recheck the Six Attitudes and Actions

These six attitudes and actions are hard enough to initiate. They are much harder to maintain, in the drama and minutiae of daily life and with the enemy of our souls pulling out all the stops to make us fall back into old, unhealthy patterns. Mentor and mentee should sometimes return and recheck the Six Attitudes:

1. *Stop all addictive behavior.* And stay stopped.

2. *Be teachable.* As the 12 Step slogan goes, “Ya gotta wanna.” As Hebrews 13:17 says: “*Be responsive to your pastoral leaders. Listen to their counsel. They are alert to the condition of your lives and work under the strict supervision of God. Contribute to the joy of their leadership, not its drudgery. Why would you want to make things harder for them?*” (The Message)

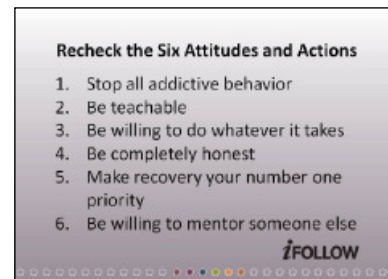
3. *Be willing to do whatever it takes.* Be willing to do it again and again. Nothing changes if nothing changes. God will indeed change you. But first you have to decide if you are willing to pay the price.

4. *Be completely honest.* Remember how the “rigorous honesty” of the 12 Steps created both terror and hope when you first came into the program. As you sit in meetings and hear others share openly about both successes and failures, as you have begun to talk about your failures, your temptations, and your sin, without being shamed or ostracized, has the hope begun to outweigh the terror?

5. *Make recovery your number one priority.* Make it your number one priority today **and** tomorrow.

If you want long-term sobriety and freedom from the pain that has driven you all your life, you will need to let God thoroughly change you from the inside out. You will need to learn a whole new way of living. That process takes time. It simply won't work to try to squeeze your recovery in on top of everything else and hope for the best. The mentoring commitment involves attending the weekly group meetings and the mentoring meeting, as well as daily phone calls to an accountability partner, and reading and writing assignments that can average about an hour a day. This first Step will take a month or longer, and there are eleven more to follow. It is wise not to make any major changes in your life circumstances for the next 12 months in order to have maximum time and energy for your recovery work. Make recovery work your number one priority. If there is ever a conflict between your recovery work and your jobs or your family or church activities, then for the next year, your recovery has first priority. If you are married, talk these things over with your spouse, for the time demands of the program and mentorship will affect him or her as well. Reflect on Jesus' words in Matthew about what it means to be His disciple: “*For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but who ever loses his life for my sake shall find it.*” (Matthew 16:25) Your very life is at stake.

6. *Be willing to mentor someone else.* Not yet, but keep it on the horizon. It will give you



hope. Yes, you will find serenity, and you will be able to lead another through this thorny path because you will know just how hard it is. A common trait addicts share is deep self-centeredness. Once you've done the work of getting your heart in order, mentoring another helps keep the focus off yourself and puts you in active service to others. And you "re-work" the Steps for yourself as you guide another through them.

## Step One

**We admit we are powerless over our addictions—that our lives have become unmanageable.**

Step One asks us to admit defeat. Step One asks us to face the bankruptcy of our lives and acknowledge that we are unable to restore ourselves. We find in Step One that we are out of our league; we find that we do not possess what it takes to save ourselves. The problem can't fix the problem.

Goals: In order to move on to Step Two, the mentee must:

1. Be able to define the bottom line.
2. Complete the boundaries exercises and be able to explain strategies for staying sober.
3. Complete Step One questionnaire and share it with the group.
4. Stop all addictive behavior.
5. Complete all assignments on time.
6. Demonstrate a teachable spirit, a willingness to participate and make the 12 Step program a priority.
7. Demonstrate that denial is largely broken.
8. See the scope of the problem and stop minimizing it.
9. Accept responsibility for choices made and quit blaming others.
10. Acknowledge and demonstrate appropriate emotions: despair, hopelessness, out of ideas for how to recover, feeling like the situation is impossible.

This document is designed to be a resource for the mentor. Portions of these pages are to be copied and given to the mentee—the individual the mentor is working with. The individual working the Steps should not work ahead. The pace of progress is at the mentor's discretion. The intent of weekly assignments is to move through the process in a thorough manner, not missing any detail. Moving too quickly through the assignments puts one at



risk of missing something which may lead to relapse. Remember not to give all portions of a handout at once. Some are complete, Handout 1, for instance. Others, such as Handout 2, are too much for a newly recovering addict to take in at once. Let your prayer and your knowledge of the person guide you as to which parts and how much you give at one time.

In addition to the various assignments, a daily phone call schedule must be set up as well as a weekly meeting time to go over homework and give new assignments. These appointments must be met without fail.

Recovery is all about the journey; our goal is progress, not perfection. As in the parable of the Good Samaritan, the fallen need a hand up, healing and a ride back to Recovery Town. Our goal is health, nothing more and certainly nothing less. Never forget that this person is the Lord's, not "mine;" that I don't know in my own wisdom what is best; that even when I disagree with this individual or am disappointed in his or her work, I must not judge, or view this one as "bad" or inferior. I ask God for the grace to see this one through His infinitely patient eyes, as a person in process, who I pray will make it through to the end. Above all, our God is the God of the Second Chance.

## Handouts in this Package

1. The "Powerless and Unmanageable 5 and 5" Exercise
2. The Step One Questionnaire
3. Step One Assignments Schedule



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## Additional Resources

- AA Services (2002). *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. New York City: AA World Services, Inc.
- AA Services (2001). *Alcoholics Anonymous Big Book Fourth Edition*. New York City: Works Publishing.
- Andrews University Department of Social Work (1997). *Helping Hurting Members*. Lincoln, NE: AdventSource.
- Cannon, Carol (1993). *Never Good Enough*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association.
- Gates, Hal (1995). *Regeneration Manual*. Silver Spring, MD: American Health and Temperance Association.
- Kearney, Joseph (2008). *A Christian 12 Step Recovery Program*. Orlando, FL: Recovered Through Christ, Inc.
- McQ., Joe (1990). *The Steps We Took*. Atlanta: August House Publishers, Inc.
- Miller, Keith (1992). *A Hunger for Healing: The Twelve Steps as a Classic Model for Christian Spiritual Growth*. New York City: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Miller, Keith (1992). *A Hunger for Healing Workbook*. New York City: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Shoemaker, Samuel; Pittman, Bill and B., Dick (1994). *Courage to Change: The Christian Roots of the 12-Step Movement*. Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell Company.
- Williams, Don (2004). *12 Steps with Jesus*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books.

## Websites

- Adventist Regeneration Ministries is an official ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church sponsoring 12 Step groups in local churches, schools and community service centers: [www.adventistregenerationministries.org](http://www.adventistregenerationministries.org)
- Alcoholics Victorious is a national network of groups that use the 12 Steps in the framework of Evangelical Christian theology: [www.alcoholicsvictorious.org](http://www.alcoholicsvictorious.org)
- Bridge to Recovery is a private, supporting ministry of Seventh-day Adventists recognized by the Health Ministries Department of the North American Division and a member of ASI: [www.bridgetorecovery.com](http://www.bridgetorecovery.com)

Christian Recovery International is a website listing many national networks of Christian 12 Step groups, recovery ministries and resource organizations around the world helping the Christian community become a safe place for people recovering from addiction, abuse or trauma: [www.christianrecovery.com](http://www.christianrecovery.com)

National Association for Christian Recovery is a non-denominational parachurch organization connecting 12 Step groups and other recovery ministries in local churches across the U.S.: [www.nacronline.com](http://www.nacronline.com)

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## Discussion Questions

1. In your heart of hearts, what is your reaction to admitting powerlessness? Why?
2. How does this concept of powerlessness relate to the concept of free will?
3. How can a person be powerless and also accept responsibility at the same time?
4. Have you found yourself thinking of people with addictions different than your own as “inferior” or “bad”? Have you thought of yourself that way? What can you do to change things?
5. As a group, try giving a ranking to the following list of sins, from worst to least bad:

addictions

violent temper

overeating

backbiting

neglect of spiritual disciplines

laziness

workaholism

any others you'd like to add ...

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Discussion  
Questions

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## Group Activity

**Purpose:** To take a different look at powerlessness and the different ways in which we can help each other.

**Preparation:** You will need a pair of high quality earplugs and three strips of cloth about two feet long. At least one of these strips should be black or a dark color. A timer would be helpful, though a clock or watch will work. On four 3 x 5 cards, put the following four sentences, including the numbers:

1. Write 'We admit we are powerless' on the other side of this card and give it to the blind person.
2. Read what is written on the card you will be given, to the person whose mouth is covered.
3. Whisper what you were told to the deaf person.
4. Share what you are told with the whole group.

**Assignment:** Ask for four volunteers. Tie the dark cloth around the eyes of one volunteer. Use the other strips of cloth to tie one volunteer's hands behind their back, tie around the mouth of one so they can't speak, and give the earplugs to the fourth person. Tell the volunteers that you have instructions for each of them, and that as soon as they are given the instructions they will have only five minutes to complete them so they must begin at once. Say: "You may help each other in any way you can, but don't remove your bindings, and no one must do another's work." When everyone is ready put card #1 into the hands of the person whose hands are tied. Don't let them see it first. Give card #2 to the blindfolded person. Give card #3 to the person whose mouth is covered. Give card #4 to the person with earplugs. Start keeping time and say, "Begin!"

The idea of the timer is to add excitement and even a little anxiety, so act antsy, say things like, "Hurry up!", call out "Three minutes!" and so on. Since many people are now accustomed to various team-building games, the group will likely begin coming up with creative ways to get the jobs done. They may even succeed in part, but in fact, the job is impossible. Your goal is to get them to figure out that the best and fastest way they can help each other is to take off the various bindings. If they get this in their five minutes' time, that's great; go directly to debriefing. Most likely, you will say, "Time!" and everyone will moan, groan, and complain that it's impossible. Talk a few minutes about feelings, but don't remove any bindings yet, so the ones who can't hear, see, or even speak will be even more frustrated. Then tell them they get a second chance, and you'll give them a hint. Read to them John 11:43, 44. Then give them another five minutes.

**Time:** Allow ten minutes to get everyone ready, then 15 for the two timed exercises plus the Bible reading. Save 15 minutes for debriefing. Total time: less than an hour.

**Debrief:** Spend 15 minutes discussing what feelings were aroused in each part of the exercise, and then what the implications are for recovery ministry. We can't remove our own bindings, and we can't do another's work. But we can help to unbind each other. Jesus called Lazarus. It was God's direct, miracle-working power that raised him. But it was the hands of his friends who unbound him and set him free.

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Group  
Activities

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# Handout 1

## The Powerless and Unmanageable 5 and 5 Exercise

*Follow the steps below to complete this exercise each day of the week.*

1. Buy a small notebook for this exercise. It should be small enough to be carried with you at all times.
2. Each day, write out the day of the week (“Monday”) and the date (“June 12”).
3. At the top of the page, under the date, write “5 evidences I am powerless over my addiction today.” **As events occur**, write examples of triggers, temptations, etc. that reveal your powerlessness over your addiction that day.
4. On the back of that page, write at the top “5 evidences that my life is unmanageable today.” **As events occur**, write down the interactions with people or other circumstances that remind you that you are not in control and are powerless to change them.

Pay attention to the feelings you have related to each situation. The primary feelings for the second list are anger, resentment, or frustration. Unmanageability is defined as any Person, Circumstance or Institution you have no control over that affected you that day.

You must write down events as they occur. This exercise will not work and will take longer to complete if you try to recall items at the end of the day. It is very important to carry the notebook with you at all times and write down at least five items for each list, each day.

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## Handout 2

### The Step One Questionnaire

*Use your journal notebook to answer these questions thoroughly and completely. If you hold something back, it will continue to poison you from the inside. Be as honest as you can. Be specific without being graphic.*

1. What specific activities have ever been a part of your addictive behavior?
2. When did your addictive behavior start? What form did it take? How did it increase in frequency or in risk?
3. When did you become a Christian? How did your Christian values (or if you were not yet a Christian), your conscience conflict with your acting out? Describe a typical cycle of acting out, the feelings that followed, especially if it involved asking God to deliver you, or other religious responses.
4. What did the next stage in your life look like -e.g. college, your vocation, etc.? How did your addiction manifest itself during this period?
5. How has your addiction developed since then? What forms and frequency has it taken? How have you attempted to “treat it” spiritually?
6. In what ways have you been preoccupied with sex or relationships?
7. If you are married, what impact did your marriage have on your addiction? Did it drive it more underground; increase your sense of shame, etc?
8. Describe the lies and deception that accompanied your addictive behavior -to spouse, parents, coworkers, other family, etc.
9. In what ways have you tried to deny, rationalize, explain away, or justify your behaviors?
10. In what ways were you unable to control your behaviors in spite of promises and attempts to stop? Describe the feelings you had—despair, self-hatred or whatever.
11. What lies have you told to conceal your addictive behaviors?
12. How have you been disrespectful and/or abusive of others while engaging in addictive behaviors?
13. Have you risked arrest or been arrested for illegal behavior, lost or jeopardized your job, position or reputation because of your compulsive behavior? How?
14. In what ways have you put yourself in danger of disease, physical abuse, assault or death while pursuing your addiction?

15. How has your compulsive behavior affected the following areas of your life?

- Education
- Career/employment
- Ability to know or be in touch with your feelings
- Relationships with family, spouse, kids, friends
- Financially
- Spiritual health
- Physical health
- Mental health
- Ethically, your morals and values
- Personal goals and objectives

16. What was your most recent episode of acting out behavior? What precipitated it? Identify your feelings and thought patterns before, during and after the incident. What attempts did you make to stop or control your behavior?

17. What are the 10 things you are most embarrassed about concerning your addiction?

18. What finally brought you into the program? What was the “bottom” for you? How did you know you had “hit bottom”?



## Handout 3

### 12 Step Assignments Schedule—Step 1

Completed	Week 1
	Set “official” sobriety date
	The “Powerless and Unmanageable 5 and 5” exercise
	Begin work on the Step 1 Questionnaire
	Read Chapter 3 in <i>Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous</i>
	Write five insights from the reading above
	Write “10 Bible Verses on God’s Love for Me”

Completed	Week 2
	Review insights from previous week’s assignments
	Review progress on the 5 and 5 exercise
	Review progress on the Step 1 Questionnaire
	Read the section on Step 1 in <i>12 Steps and 12 Traditions</i>
	Write five insights from the reading above

Completed	Week 3
	Review insights from previous week’s assignments
	Review progress on the 5 and 5 exercise
	Review progress on the Step 1 Questionnaire. Begin finalizing that work for sharing.
	Read the material through the section on Step 1 in <i>The Steps We Took</i>
	Write five insights based on the reading above
	Read the material through the section on Step 1 in <i>Hunger for Healing</i>
	Write five insights based on the reading above

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Completed	Week 4
	Review insights from previous week's assignments
	Review progress on the 5 and 5 exercise
	Review progress on the Step 1 Questionnaire. Begin finalizing that work for sharing. Plan for sharing with the group.
	Write an essay on "What I Learned from the 5 and 5"

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