

The Twelve Steps Baha'is in Recovery Fellowship

By Susan Gammage ¹

The “Twelve Steps” are a set of guiding principles first developed for use in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) as a course of action for recovery from addiction, compulsion, or other behavioural problems, and are now the basis of all “12 step” groups dealing with issues as diverse as recovery from drugs, gambling, sex, cluttering, workaholism, mental and emotional illness, co-dependency, debt, smoking, overeating and others.

A number of years ago, there was an attempt made to establish a 12-step group for Bahá'ís dealing with a variety of addictions. It was called the Baha'is in Recovery Fellowship (BIRF). As part of their meeting format, they put together a compilation of Bahá'í quotes which supported each of the 12 steps.

Although BIRF is no longer active, I thought it would be helpful for my readers to have access to it. Readers familiar with the original BIRF document will note that I have updated it with a few additional quotes and where possible updated the translations. I hope you find it helpful!

Step One: We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction (or for Al- Anon or ACAP) We admitted that we were powerless over the effects of addiction, and that our lives had become unmanageable.

I testify, at this moment, to my powerlessness and to Thy might (Prayers and Meditations of Bahá'u'lláh, CLXXXI, p. 313)

I love, in this state, O my Lord, to beg of Thee all that is with Thee, that I may demonstrate my poverty, and magnify Thy bounty and Thy riches, and may declare my powerlessness, and manifest Thy power and Thy might. (Prayers and Meditations of Bahá'u'lláh, CLXXXIII, p. 319)

O SON OF SPIRIT! I created thee rich, why dost thou bring thyself down to poverty? Noble I made thee, wherewith dost thou abase thyself? Out of the essence of knowledge I gave thee being, why seekest thou enlightenment from anyone beside Me? Out of the clay of love I molded thee, how dost thou busy thyself with another? Turn thy sight unto thyself, that thou mayest find Me

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standing within thee, mighty, powerful and self-subsisting. (Bahá'u'lláh, The Arabic Hidden Words, 13)

Every time I venture to make mention of Thee, I am held back by my mighty sins and grievous trespasses against Thee, and find myself wholly deprived of Thy grace, and utterly powerless to celebrate Thy praise. My great confidence in Thy bounty, however, reviveth my hope in Thee... (Prayers and Meditations of Bahá'u'lláh, CXXIV p. 210)

Powerless though I be to rise to the heavens of Thy glory and soar in the realms of Thy knowledge, I can but recount Thy tokens that tell of Thy glorious handiwork. (Bahá'u'lláh: Bahá'í Prayers (US), pp. 120-121)

And shouldst thou recognize thy powerlessness, do thou rein in thy passions, and return unto thy Lord, that perchance He may forgive thee thy sins . . . (Bahá'u'lláh: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 83)

O God! ... We are impotent; give us Thy heavenly power. O Lord! Make us useful in this world; free us from the condition of self and desire. ('Abdu'l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 302)

Step Two: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

O FLEETING SHADOW! Pass beyond the baser stages of doubt and rise to the exalted heights of certainty. Open the eye of truth, that thou mayest behold the veiless Beauty and exclaim: Hallowed be the Lord, the most excellent of all creators! (Bahá'u'lláh, The Persian Hidden Words, 9)

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God. (St Paul, cited by Bahá'u'lláh in Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 91)

Thou art He Who changeth through His bidding abasement into glory, and weakness into strength, and powerlessness into might, and fear into calm, and doubt into certainty ... Thou art, verily, the Almighty, the Most Powerful. (Bahá'u'lláh: Prayers and Meditations, pp. 249-250)

He, verily, is the Lord of strength and power ... Repudiation hath not veiled it, and ten thousand hosts arrayed against it were powerless to withhold it from shining. Thou canst excuse thyself no longer. Either thou must recognize it, or - God forbid - arise and deny all the Prophets! (Bahá'u'lláh: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 119)

And this is clear: a power above and beyond the powers of nature must needs be brought to bear, to change this black darkness into light, and these hatreds and resentments, grudges and spites, these endless wrangles and wars, into fellowship and love amongst all the peoples of the earth. This power is none other than the breathings of the Holy Spirit and the mighty inflow of the Word of God. (Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 53)

Step Three: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand Him.

O BEFRIENDED STRANGER! The candle of thine heart is lighted by the hand of My power, quench it not with the contrary winds of self and passion. The healer of all thine ills is remembrance of Me, forget it not. Make My love thy treasure and cherish it even as thy very sight and life. (Bahá'u'lláh: Persian Hidden Words, 32)

O MY SERVANT! Free thyself from the fetters of this world, and loose thy soul from the prison of self. Seize thy chance, for it will come to thee no more. (Bahá'u'lláh, The Persian Hidden Words, 40)

The essence of wealth is love for Me; whoso loveth Me is the possessor of all things, and he that loveth Me not is indeed of the poor and needy. This is that which the Finger of Glory and Splendour hath revealed. (Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 156)

The Tongue of Wisdom proclaimeth: He that hath Me not is bereft of all things. Turn ye away from all that is on earth and seek none else but Me. I am the Sun of Wisdom and the Ocean of Knowledge. I cheer the faint and revive the dead. I am the guiding Light that illumineth the way. I am the royal Falcon on the arm of the Almighty. I unfold the drooping wings of every broken bird and start it on its flight. (Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 169)

O God! Refresh and gladden my spirit. Purify my heart. Illumine my powers. I lay all my affairs in Thy hand. Thou art my Guide and my Refuge. I will no

longer be sorrowful and grieved; I will be a happy and joyful being. O God! I will no longer be full of anxiety, nor will I let trouble harass me. I will not dwell on the unpleasant things of life. O God! Thou art more friend to me than I am to myself. I dedicate myself to Thee, O Lord. ('Abdu'l-Baha: Bahá'í Prayers (US edition), p. 152)

Step Four: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

The first Taraz and the first effulgence which hath dawned from the horizon of the Mother Book is that man should know his own self and recognize that which leadeth unto loftiness or lowliness, glory or abasement, wealth or poverty. (Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 34-35)

O EMIGRANTS! The tongue I have designed for the mention of Me, defile it not with detraction. If the fire of self overcome you, remember your own faults and not the faults of My creatures, inasmuch as every one of you knoweth his own self better than he knoweth others. (Bahá'u'lláh, The Persian Hidden Words, 66)

The essence of all that We have revealed for thee is Justice, is for man to free himself from idle fancy and imitation, discern with the eye of oneness His glorious handiwork, and look into all things with a searching eye. (Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 157)

If the fire of self overcome you, remember your own faults and not the faults of My creatures, inasmuch as every one of you knoweth his own self better than he knoweth others. (Bahá'u'lláh: Persian Hidden Words, p. 66)

Be not afraid of anyone, place thy whole trust in God, the Almighty, the All-Knowing. (Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 190)

God hath in that Book, and by His behest, decreed as lawful whatsoever He hath pleased to decree, and hath, through the power of His sovereign might, forbidden whatsoever He elected to forbid. To this testifieth the text of that Book. Will ye not bear witness? Men, however, have wittingly broken His law. Is such a behaviour to be attributed to God, or to their proper selves? Be fair in your judgment. (Gleanings from the Writing of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 149)

Step Five: We admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

O HEEDLESS ONES! Think not the secrets of hearts are hidden, nay, know ye of a certainty that in clear characters they are engraved and are openly manifest in the holy Presence. (Bahá'u'lláh, The Persian Hidden Words, 66)

On the subject of Confession the Guardian's secretary wrote on his behalf to an individual believer: "We are forbidden to confess to any person, as do the Catholics to their priests, our sins and shortcomings, or to do so in public, as some religious sects do. However, if we spontaneously desire to acknowledge we have been wrong in something, or that we have some fault of character, and ask another person's forgiveness or pardon, we are quite free to do so. The Guardian wants to point out, however, that we are not obliged to do so. It rests entirely with the individual". (The Universal House of Justice, Lights of Guidance, p. 179)

The Universal House of Justice ... has instructed us to say that there is no objection to Baha'is being members of Alcoholics Anonymous, which is an association that does a great deal of good in assisting alcoholics to overcome their lamentable condition. The sharing of experiences which the members undertake does not conflict with the Bahá'í prohibition on the confession of sins; it is more in the nature of the therapeutic relationship between a patient and a psychiatrist. (Compilation of Compilations vol.3, p. 52, https://bahai-library.com/pdf/compilations/community_functioning.pdf)

The ninth Glad-Tidings When the sinner findeth himself wholly detached and freed from all save God, he should beg forgiveness and pardon from Him. Confession of sins and transgressions before human beings is not permissible, as it hath never been nor will ever be conducive to divine forgiveness. Moreover such confession before people results in one's humiliation and abasement, and God -- exalted be His glory -- wisheth not the humiliation of His servants. Verily He is the Compassionate, the Merciful. The sinner should, between himself and God, implore mercy from the Ocean of mercy, beg forgiveness from the Heaven of generosity and say:

I implore Thee by the blood of Thy true lovers who were so enraptured by Thy sweet utterance that they hastened unto the Pinnacle of Glory, the site of the most glorious martyrdom, and I beseech Thee by the mysteries which lie enshrined in Thy knowledge and by the pearls that are treasured in the ocean of Thy bounty to grant forgiveness unto me and unto my father and my mother.

Of those who show forth mercy, Thou art in truth the Most Merciful. No God is there but Thee, the Ever-Forgiving, the All-Bountiful.

O Lord! Thou seest this essence of sinfulness turning unto the ocean of Thy favour and this feeble one seeking the kingdom of Thy divine power and this poor creature inclining himself towards the day-star of Thy wealth. By Thy mercy and Thy grace, disappoint him not, O Lord, nor debar him from the revelations of Thy bounty in Thy days, nor cast him away from Thy door which Thou hast opened wide to all that dwell in Thy heaven and on Thine earth.

Alas! Alas! My sins have prevented me from approaching the Court of Thy holiness and my trespasses have caused me to stray far from the Tabernacle of Thy majesty. I have committed that which Thou didst forbid me to do and have put away what Thou didst order me to observe.

I pray Thee by Him Who is the sovereign Lord of Names to write down for me with the Pen of Thy bounty that which will enable me to draw nigh unto Thee and will purge me from my trespasses which have intervened between me and Thy forgiveness and Thy pardon.

Verily, Thou art the Potent, the Bountiful. No God is there but Thee, the Mighty, the Gracious. (Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 24-25)

Settle all things, both great and small, by consultation. Without prior consultation, take no important step in your own personal affairs. Concern yourselves with one another. Help along one another's projects and plans. Grieve over one another. Let none in the whole country go in need. Befriend one another until ye become as a single body, one and all. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Lights of Guidance, pp. 178-179, #588)

Step Six: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

O SON OF BEING! Thy heart is My home; sanctify it for My descent. Thy spirit is My place of revelation; cleanse it for My manifestation. (Bahá'u'lláh, The Arabic Hidden Words, 59)

Verily, the breezes of forgiveness have been wafted from the direction of your Lord, the God of Mercy; whoso turneth thereunto, shall be cleansed of his sins, and of all pain and sickness. Happy the man that hath turned towards them, and woe betide him that hath turned aside. (Bahá'u'lláh, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p . 46-47)

He would advise her to turn her thoughts determinedly and intelligently—by that I mean unemotionally—to God, realising that He is forgiving, that in one moment He can, through His Blessed Mercy, take away our sense of failure and help us to do better in the future—if we sincerely wish to; to turn to Him in prayer and seek to draw closer to Him; and to accept His Will and submit her own desires and opinions to His Wish and plan for her. (Shoghi Effendi, *Lights of Guidance*, p. 115, #395)

I am but a poor creature, O my Lord; I have clung to the hem of Thy riches. I am sore sick; I have held fast the cord of Thy healing. Deliver me from the ills that have encircled me, and wash me thoroughly with the waters of Thy graciousness and mercy, and attire me with the raiment of wholesomeness, through Thy forgiveness and bounty. Fix, then, mine eyes upon Thee, and rid me of all attachment to aught else except Thyself. Aid me to do what Thou desirest, and to fulfill what Thou pleasest. (*Prayers and Meditations of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 22, #XIX)

Step Seven: Humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings.

O SON OF SPIRIT! Burst thy cage asunder, and even as the phoenix of love soar into the firmament of holiness. Renounce thyself and, filled with the spirit of mercy, abide in the realm of celestial sanctity. (*Bahá'u'lláh, The Persian Hidden Words*, 38)

Forgive me, O my Lord, my sins which have hindered me from walking in the ways of Thy good-pleasure, and from attaining the shores of the ocean of Thy oneness. (*Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 29, #XXV)

O Lord! Thou art the Remover of every anguish and the Dispeller of every affliction. Thou art He Who banisheth every sorrow and setteth free every slave, the Redeemer of every soul. O Lord! Grant deliverance through Thy mercy and reckon me among such servants of Thine as have gained salvation. (*The Bab: Selections from the Bab*, p. 193)

ˆBid them recite: "Is there any Remover of difficulties save God? Say: Praised be God! He is God! All are His servants, and all abide by His bidding!" Tell them to repeat it five hundred times, nay, a thousand times, by day and by night, sleeping and waking, that haply the Countenance of Glory may be unveiled to

their eyes, and tiers of light descend upon them.' (Shoghi Effendi: God Passes By, p. 119)

Step Eight: Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

O SON OF SPIRIT! The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbor. Ponder this in thy heart; how it behooveth thee to be. Verily justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving-kindness. Set it then before thine eyes. (Bahá'u'lláh, The Arabic Hidden Words, 2)

Arise, then, and make steadfast your feet, and make ye amends for that which hath escaped you, and set then yourselves towards His holy Court, on the shore of His mighty Ocean, so that the pearls of knowledge and wisdom, which God hath stored up within the shell of His radiant heart, may be revealed unto you. (Bahá'u'lláh, The Summons of the Lord of Hosts, p. 187)

Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. Deal ye one with another with the utmost love and harmony, with friendliness and fellowship. He Who is the Day-Star of Truth beareth Me witness! So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth. The One true God, He Who knoweth all things, Himself testifieth to the truth of these words.

Exert yourselves that ye may attain this transcendent and most sublime station, the station that can insure the protection and security of all mankind. This goal excelleth every other goal, and this aspiration is the monarch of all aspirations. (Bahá'u'lláh: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 14)

Step Nine: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible except when to do so would injure them or others.

O CHILDREN OF ADAM! Holy words and pure and goodly deeds ascend unto the heaven of celestial glory. Strive that your deeds may be cleansed from the dust of self and hypocrisy and find favor at the court of glory; for ere long the assayers of mankind shall, in the holy presence of the Adored One, accept naught but absolute virtue and deeds of stainless purity. This is the daystar of wisdom and of divine mystery that hath shone above the horizon of the divine

will. Blessed are they that turn thereunto. (Bahá'u'lláh, The Persian Hidden Words, 69)

Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity. Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbor, and look upon him with a bright and friendly face. Be a treasure to the poor, an admonisher to the rich, an answerer of the cry of the needy, a preserver of the sanctity of thy pledge. Be fair in thy judgment, and guarded in thy speech. Be unjust to no man, and show all meekness to all men. Be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness, a joy to the sorrowful, a sea for the thirsty, a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression. Let integrity and uprightness distinguish all thine acts. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, CXXX, p. 285)

So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Make friends quickly with your accuser, while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. (Matthew 5:24-25 (New American Standard))

Step Ten: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

O SON OF BEING! Bring thyself to account each day ere thou art summoned to a reckoning; for death, unheralded, shall come upon thee and thou shalt be called to give account for thy deeds. (Bahá'u'lláh: Arabic Hidden Words, p. 31)

Every day, in the morning when arising you should compare today with yesterday and see in what condition you are. If you see your belief is stronger and your heart more occupied with God and your love increased and your freedom from the world greater then thank God and ask for the increase of these qualities. You must begin to pray and repent for all that you have done which is wrong and you must implore and ask for help and assistance that you may become better than yesterday so that you may continue to make progress. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Lights of Guidance, p. 456, #1485)

Step Eleven: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and for the power to carry that out.

O SON OF SPIRIT! Ask not of Me that which We desire not for thee, then be content with what We have ordained for thy sake, for this is that which profiteth thee, if therewith thou dost content thyself. (Bahá'u'lláh, The Arabic Hidden Words, 18)

Intone, O My servant, the verses of God that have been received by thee, as intoned by them who have drawn nigh unto Him, that the sweetness of thy melody may kindle thine own soul, and attract the hearts of all men. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, CXXXVI, p. 295)

O God! Refresh and gladden my spirit. Purify my heart. Illumine my powers. I lay all my affairs in Thy hand. Thou art my Guide and my Refuge. ('Abdu'l-Bahá: Bahá'í Prayers (US edition), p. 152)

Step Twelve: 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.

O SON OF MAN! Deny not My servant should he ask anything from thee, for his face is My face; be then abashed before Me. (Bahá'u'lláh, The Arabic Hidden Words, 30)

Verily, God hath made it incumbent upon every soul to deliver His Cause according to his ability. Thus hath the command been recorded by the finger of might and power upon the Tablet of majesty and greatness. (Bahá'u'lláh: Bahá'í World Faith, p. 206)

Unloose your tongues, and proclaim unceasingly His Cause. This shall be better for you than all the treasures of the past and of the future, if ye be of them that comprehend this truth. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh CLIV, p. 330)

12-Step Slogans

The 12 steps and 12 slogans of AA and Al-Anon are good psychologically and intellectually, but without divine scripture to supplement them, something is lacking. Many 12 steppers repeat the addiction. Without a spiritual cure, it cannot be lasting. Not to say some 12 steppers don't awaken spiritually. Indeed, a spiritual awakening is part of the 12 step program. But the spirituality in the 12 step program is intellectualized and personalized to the point that it can even become pantheistic and can lose the power of

the covenant, which comes only through divine Manifestations and Their Scripture. This is what led me to put the Writings to the slogans.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

God is sufficient unto me; He verily is the All-sufficing! In Him let the trusting trust. (The Báb, The Dawnbreakers, p. 632)

BUT FOR THE GRACE OF GOD

Breathe not the sins of others so long as thou art thyself a sinner. Shouldst thou transgress this command, accursed wouldst thou be, and to this I bear witness. (Bahá'u'lláh, Hidden Words Arabic 27)

EASY DOES IT

Be patient under all conditions, and place your whole trust and confidence in God. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, CXXXVI, p. 296)

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Forget all save Me and commune with My spirit. This is of the essence of My command, therefore turn unto it. (Bahá'u'lláh, Hidden Words, Arabic 16)

JUST FOR TODAY

Free thyself from the fetters of this world, and loose thy soul from the prison of self. Seize thy chance, for it will come to thee no more. (Bahá'u'lláh, Hidden Words, Persian 40)

LET IT BEGIN WITH ME

How couldst thou forget thine own faults and busy thyself with the faults of others? Whoso doeth this is accursed of Me. (Bahá'u'lláh, Hidden Words, Arabic 26)

HOW IMPORTANT IS IT?

Sorrow not save that thou art far from Us. Rejoice not save that thou art drawing near and returning unto Us. (Bahá'u'lláh, Hidden Words, Arabic 35)

THINK!

At the outset of every endeavour, it is incumbent to look to the end of it. (Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 168)

ONE DAY AT A TIME

Wert thou to speed through the immensity of space and traverse the expanse of heaven, yet thou wouldst find no rest save in submission to Our command and humbleness before Our Face. (Bahá'u'lláh, Hidden Words, Arabic 40)

KEEP AN OPEN MIND

Close one eye and open the other. Close one to the world and all that is therein, and open the other to the hallowed beauty of the Beloved. (Bahá'u'lláh, Hidden Words, Persian 12)

LIVE AND LET LIVE

Noble have I created thee, yet thou hast abased thyself. Rise then unto that for which thou wast created. (Bahá'u'lláh, Hidden Words, Arabic 22)

LET GO AND LET GOD

Is there any Remover of difficulties save God? Say: Praised be God! He is God! All are His servants and all abide by His bidding! (Selections from the Writings of the Báb, p. 217)

Bahá'í Serenity Prayer:

O God! Refresh and gladden my spirit. Purify my heart. Illumine my powers. I lay all my affairs in Thy hand. Thou art my Guide and my Refuge. I will no longer be sorrowful and grieved; I will be a happy and joyful being. O God! I will no longer be full of anxiety, nor will I let trouble harass me. I will not dwell on the unpleasant things of life. O God! Thou art more friend to me than I am to myself. I dedicate myself to Thee, O Lord. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'í Prayers, p. 151)