

The Big Book

In 1935 the lives of two men would intersect, leading to a worldwide movement having impact to this very day. One man blew up a promising career on wall street after failing to graduate from law school. The second barely squeaked through medical school. After marrying, he set up a medical practice where for the next seventeen years he would work the early part of the day, then get drunk, sleep, and take sedatives to relive the stress of the morning work. Both men had one thing in common: their addiction to alcohol and its destructive power over their lives.

Today we know these men as the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA); Bill Wilson and Robert Smith (Dr. Bob). The program they developed is known around the world as the 12 steps of recovery and has been incorporated into many other recovery groups helping individuals that struggle with a range of addictions from narcotics to gambling.



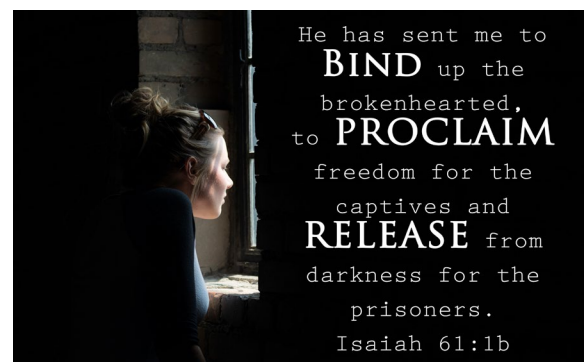
Since those beginning days of AA and recovery through small group, sponsors, confession, vulnerability, honesty, and surrender to a higher power, science has taught us much about the impact of alcohol, drugs, and other substances to the inner working of the mind. Considering this new understanding one might wonder, are the 12 steps that have led so many to sobriety over the past eighty-six years still relevant today?

Step 1 in the "Big Book" as AA members like to call it says, "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable". Relevant? I think so.

Though we more clearly understand the mind and its pathways and the interactions of different chemicals within the body, there is an unconscious part of our brain that cannot so readily be labelled and squeezed into a bottle.

Known as the limbic system, it is responsible for many of the automatic responses we have in life. Driven by experience and emotion it has the power to over-ride a person's will in response to things like fear, grief, anger, shame, and trauma. At the core is one's heart. A combination of thoughts and beliefs that is unique to each one of us shaping our emotions and behaviors and who we are.

It is into the very "heart" of the matter that we as Christians receive Jesus and ask Him to rule and reign. Into our thoughts, our beliefs, bringing change to our emotions and actions. Setting us free from fear, anger, shame, and guilt. Healing our grief and trauma. Romans 10:8-11 declares "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is the message concerning faith that we proclaim: If you declare with your mouth "Jesus is Lord,"



and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved."

Actionable words that we are all called to live out. Romans 10:2 takes it further "Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - His good, pleasing and perfect will."

Step one "Admit I am powerless" is not just for the alcoholic or the drug addict, it applies to every person that will ever walk this earth. Powerless over lust, greed, selfishness, or self-preservation. There is something in all our lives, no one is immune. Romans 3:23 puts it this way, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God". Still relevant? Yes!

Yet God in His grace and mercy provided a solution. He stands at the door and knocks and to all who would respond "He gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God". John 1:12. As children we walk in His freedom, as He renews our mind, setting us free from chains of addiction and healing our wounds.

If today you recognize your powerlessness over something in your life, I encourage you to ask Jesus to help. There is no need to journey alone, reach out to us here at New Life and we would gladly come alongside you.

