

The Heart of Step One

Recovery begins not with strength, but with honesty about weakness.

Step 1 is not defeat — it is the doorway to freedom.

“My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.”

2 Corinthians 12:9

When we acknowledge our inability to manage life on our own, we make room for God’s strength to enter.

¹¹ Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

¹³ “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. ¹⁷ “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹ “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

²² “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

—Luke 15:11-24 (NIV)

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STEP ONE POWERLESSNESS & HONESTY

“We admitted we were powerless over our addiction — that our lives had become unmanageable.”

Key Scripture:

⁹ But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.

2 Corinthians 12:9

Also see back panel—Luke 15:11–24

A simple guide to understanding Step 1 through the lens of Scripture and grace.

1. The Truth About Powerlessness

Addiction promises relief but delivers bondage. Step One is the moment we stop pretending we can fix ourselves. It is the moment we say:

“Lord, I cannot do this alone.

Key Idea:

Surrender isn't the end — it is the beginning of healing.

Self Inventory:

Check any that apply:

- I've tried to control my addiction on my own.
- I've minimized or justified my behavior.
- I've hidden the truth from others.
- I've felt ashamed but unable to change
- I've promised myself “this time will be different”.

Reflection:

- What illusions of control have you been holding onto?
- What has your addiction cost you?
- What would surrender look like for you?

2. The Lost Son: A Picture of Step One

(Read Luke 15:11–24 (NIV), see back panel.

Jesus tells of a son who ran far from home, squandered everything, and ended up broken and alone.

His turning point came when he:

- Came to his senses
- Admitted his failure
- Chose to return to his father

And while he was still a long way off, the father ran to him with compassion.

Key Idea:

Step 1 is our return — the moment we stop running and start trusting God.

Scripture Engagement:

Read Luke 15:11–24 again. Underline any words that stand out.

Reflection:

- Where do you see yourself in this story.
- What “distant country” have you been living in.
- What would it mean for you to “come to your senses”.
- How do you imagine God responding to your return.

3. Brutal Honesty

Denial keeps us trapped.

Truth sets us free.

Powerlessness is not weakness — it is courage.

Key Idea:

Honesty breaks the chains that denial strengthens.

Honesty Inventory:

Rate 1–5 (1 = not true, 5 = very true):

- ___ I avoid facing the full truth about my addiction.
- ___ I minimize the impact of my behavior.
- ___ I hide parts of my story.
- ___ I fear what will happen if I'm fully honest.
- ___ I want freedom more than control.

Reflection:

- What truth have you been avoiding?
- What fears keep you from honesty?
- Who is one safe person you could share with this week?