

12 steps

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read in the Scriptures in terms of powerlessness. Anyone who takes a close look at the first step will discover that they are powerless and that their lives are unmanageable, and it's a matter of discovering what we're powerless over."

"The first step is acceptance," acknowledged Dan, a member of Gambler's Anonymous. "You have a problem, and

that problem has you licked."

Even when the initial step has been taken and the compulsive behavior appears to be under control, the person cannot relax, Dan noted.

"What I've learned is the steps are hard, and you can't skip one," he said.

"Sobriety is not always the answer to the problem," Karen remarked. She noted that the individual has to look honestly at what parts of his or her life led to the addiction or to the attraction to an addicted individual. In addition, years of living within

a dysfunctional family or situation can cause a person to change.

"We lose touch with our value system," Karen said. "We lose touch with our needs. All of a sudden, we're not the person we were. A lot of times we're not aware of it."

Betty, for one, was not aware of drastic changes that were taking place in her personality.

She married Ed in 1953 after a short courtship. Ed's drinking problem soon became apparent, and Betty gradually found herself taking care of not only the couple's three children, but her husband as well. She covered for him, cleaned up after him, lied to protect him, even went to the store to buy his alcohol.

Noted in high school as a cheerful, popular and outgoing girl, she gradually developed into a bitter, sarcastic, angry woman.

Although Ed never lost his job because of his drinking, he was denied a number of promotions and the subsequent raises. Betty had to get a job to supplement the family income, while keeping the house and the family running.

"I was a control freak," Betty declared. "I had to know what everyone was doing. I had to have a part in it. I was so afraid that if I didn't have control, the whole thing would blow up."

Along the way, Betty, who when she was

young had seriously considered becoming a woman religious, lost her sense of God.

"I thought that if God would allow this to happen to me, he wasn't a god for me," she recalled. She stopped attending church.

By the 1970s, however, Betty's control was beginning to unravel. Her older son was arrested repeatedly for drug possession and driving while intoxicated. Her daughter married two alcoholics within a five-year span. And the last straw was the younger son's suicide.

"I was certain that God hated me because of the person I was," Betty said. "I had ruined my life, and I had ruined my children, and now I had made one so unhappy he killed himself."

When Betty began attending Al-Anon meetings, she listened as men and women shared similar struggles with anger, bitterness and control, and their lives with alcoholics. Betty heard echoes of her own life.

"I remember this one time, it must have been my fourth or fifth meeting, when I suddenly knew that I didn't have to do it all," Betty said. "God was there."

Ed died in 1987. By then, Betty had learned to let go of the anger and bitterness that she had felt for years, and actually wept at his funeral.

"What I learned is, that God never left me, even at the worst times," Betty said. "I was just too sick to see Him. The steps led me back to Him."

AA's 12 Steps to Recovery

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable.

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

3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

7. Humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings.

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

9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

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

12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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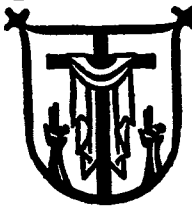
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Institute for youth set for Camp Stella Maris

The diocesan Department of Youth Ministry has scheduled its annual Catholic Youth Ministry Leadership Institute for June 24-29 at Camp Stella Maris.

The program aims to help high school teens develop skills in communications, planning group dynamics and consensus. A complimentary track is offered for individual growth in such areas as prayer, moral decision making and affirmation.

The fee for the program is \$125, which includes all costs, materials, food and lodging. A \$25 deposit is required for each registration, and the balance is due at the beginning of the program.

The registration deadline is Friday, June 15. Contact the youth ministry office, 716-328-3210, for information.

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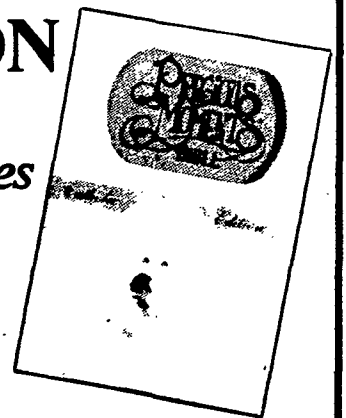
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