Appendix 12A – Nouthetic Counseling
The 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous with Biblical Scriptures

For the nouthetic counselor, Adams here again urges the counselor to strive for presenting a well-rounded and biblical approach to the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.

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

<u>Admitting the problem</u> (Romans 7:18–24)
Scripture theme: Paul describes his inability to do good in his own strength and his struggle with sin.

Romans 7:18-24 reads,

For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. [19] For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. [20] Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. [21] So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. [22] For in my inner being I delight in God's law; [23] but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. [24] What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?

Overview: Rather than vague "powerlessness," Scripture identifies the real issue as indwelling sin. The problem is not merely alcohol but a sinful nature that cannot be overcome apart from God. This shifts the focus from helplessness to the need for redemption and deliverance through Christ.

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

<u>Hope in restoration</u> (Philippians 4:13)

Scripture theme: I can face the uphill battles.

Philippians 4:13 reads,

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

Overview: Instead of an undefined "higher power," the Bible points specifically to Christ as the source of strength. Change is not mystical but relational—grounded in dependence on Jesus, who empowers obedience.

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

<u>Surrender to God</u> (Ephesians 5:18; Hebrews 4:13–16)
Scripture themes: Be filled with the Spirit; God sees all and offers grace through Christ.

Ephesians 5:18 reads,

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit,

Hebrews 4:13-16 reads,

Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. [14] Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. [15] For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. [16] Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Over*view:* Biblical surrender is not to a God "as we understand Him," but to the revealed God of Scripture. It involves yielding to the Holy Spirit and approaching God through Christ with accountability and confidence in His mercy.

4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

<u>Self-Examination</u> (2 Corinthians 13:5; 1 John 1:8)
Scripture themes: "Examine yourselves…"; denying sin is self-deception.

2 Corinthians 13:5 reads,

Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?

1 John 1:8 reads,

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

Overview: A moral inventory becomes a biblically guided self-examination, measuring one's life against God's standards rather than personal or cultural ones.

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

<u>Confession of Sin</u> (James 5:16; 1 John 1:9)
Scripture themes: Confess sins to one another; God forgives and cleanses.

James 5:16 reads,

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

1 John 1:9 reads,

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Overview: Confession is not catharsis—or otherwise stated as purification or purgation of the emotions (such as pity and fear). It is acknowledgment of sin before God and others with the assurance of forgiveness. This restores both vertical (with God) and horizontal (with others) relationships.

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

<u>Turning from Sin</u> (Acts 3:19; Colossians 1:10)
Scripture themes: "Repent… and turn back"; live a life worthy of the Lord.

Acts 3:19 reads,

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,

Colossians 1:10 reads,

…so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,

Overview: Instead of passively waiting for defects to be removed, Scripture calls for active repentance—a decisive turning from sin toward a life that pleases God.

7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

<u>Humble transformation</u> (Philippians 2:2–5; James 3:13–18)
Scripture themes: Adopt Christ's humility; true wisdom produces righteous conduct.

Philippians 2:2-5 reads,

…then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you

to the interests of the others. 5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus …

James 3:13-18 reads,

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. 14 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. 15 Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. 16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. 17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. 18 Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

Over*view:* Change is not the removal of flaws but the cultivation of Christlike character, especially humility and wisdom that leads to righteous living.

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

<u>Recognizing Harm</u> (Matthew 5:23–24)
Scripture theme: Be reconciled to your brother before offering worship.

Matthew 5:23-24 reads,

Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

Overview: The Bible emphasizes relational responsibility. Recognizing harm is tied to reconciliation as a priority in one’s relationship with God.

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

<u>Making Restitution</u> (Matthew 3:8; Matthew 5:16)
Scripture themes: Bear fruit in keeping with repentance; let your light shine.

Matthew 3:8 reads,

Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.

Matthew 5:16 reads,

In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Over*view*: True repentance produces visible change, including making things right when possible. Restitution becomes evidence of a transformed life.

10. We continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, we promptly admitted it.

<u>Ongoing Accountability</u> (Ephesians 4:14–32)
Scripture theme: Put off the old self, put on the new; speak truth and pursue holiness.

Ephesians 4:14-32 reads,

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. 19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

20 That, however, is not the way of life you learned 21 when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. 26 “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold. 28 Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of

malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Overview: Continuous self-examination is reframed as daily sanctification—actively replacing sinful patterns with godly ones through intentional obedience.

11. We 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. (Matthew 6).

Scripture theme: Jesus teaches how to pray according to God's will following the pattern of the Lord's Prayer which isn't just a script—it's a structure for how to pray. So, how are we supposed to pray according to Matthew 6:5-15?

Establishing our relationship: When Jesus was showing His disciples how they should pray He begins by establishing a relationship with God as our Father. By calling Him "Our Father" - We invite God into our prayers by doing this.

Acknowledging His sovereignty: "hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." We acknowledge that His name is holy, that He is sovereign because He is all-powerful, and that He can do more than we can ever do.

Desire to pray as Paul did: Here we can approach the throne of grace with confidence (believing in His promises and Truth as we aim to draw nearer to God with sincere hearts in full assurance of faith (The blood of Jesus, HE as our high priest & mediator). As we pray and fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith (trust in Him), we can be thankful and offer our sincere worship to God with reverence and awe (with humble and grateful hearts).

Bring your practical needs to God:
Depend on Him daily—not just in crisis as He gives us today our daily bread.

Confess and receive forgiveness:

"Forgive us our debts…" means that we can admit our sins honestly and ask for God's mercy.

Forgive others: Likewise "…as we also have forgiven our debtors." Here, forgiveness is essential—not optional as our relationship with others affects our prayer life.

Ask for spiritual protection: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." This petition helps us recognize spiritual struggle and also ask for strength and guidance.

Overview: Prayer is not vague meditation but direct communication with God, aligning one's desires with His purposes and depending on Him for daily needs and obedience.

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

<u>Living out and sharing the faith</u> (Matthew 28:18–20)
Scripture theme: The Great Commission—make disciples of all nations.

Matthew 28:18-20 reads,

Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'

Overview: A "spiritual awakening" becomes true conversion and ongoing discipleship. The goal is not only personal recovery but helping others through the gospel and living a life that reflects Christ in every area.

In conclusion, Adams' overarching point is that adding Scripture should not merely decorate the Twelve Steps but transform them. Biblical change is not spirituality—it is a clear process of repentance, faith in Christ, obedience, and ongoing sanctification under the authority of God's Word.