

The Four Absolutes and the Four Spiritual Practices of the Oxford Group

The Oxford Group, which heavily influenced early Alcoholics Anonymous, followed a practice rooted in spiritual and moral disciplines rather than a strict numbered set of steps like A.A.'s 12 Steps. Although the Oxford Group didn't have formal "steps" per se, they did have six guiding principles and practices that functioned as steps or a moral framework. These principles included:

1. **Absolute Honesty** - Living truthfully and without deception in every aspect of life.
2. **Absolute Purity** - Striving for moral integrity and a clean life.
3. **Absolute Unselfishness** - Acting selflessly and putting others' needs ahead of one's own.
4. **Absolute Love** - Living in a way that embraces love for God and all people.

Alongside these absolutes, the Oxford Group advocated several spiritual practices which evolved into what we now see in the 12 Steps:

- **Surrender to God:** Surrendering one's will to the guidance and care of God.
- **Confession:** Sharing personal shortcomings and seeking forgiveness as a way to cleanse the soul.
- **Restitution:** Making amends for wrongdoings to reconcile with others.
- **Guidance:** Seeking direction from God through prayer, meditation, and listening.

These practices were essential for moral and spiritual alignment, and they served as the basis for helping individuals free themselves from guilt, fear, and selfishness.