

THE RISKS AND REWARDS OF PRAYER IN 12-STEP RECOVERY

A “Threads of Recovery” Workshop: July 1 through July 29, 2022

(All quotes from Alcoholics Anonymous, Edition Four, unless otherwise noted.)

Introduction.

What is **prayer**? What are the **risks** in prayer? What are the **rewards** in praying?
We answer these questions with five prayers that are widely used in the AA fellowship:

The Set-Aside Prayer.

The Prayers in Steps 3, 4, 6, and 7 in Alcoholics Anonymous.

The Prayers in Steps 10 and 11 in Alcoholics Anonymous.

The Prayer of St. Francis.

The Serenity Prayer.

We are encouraged in this series by these three guidelines from Alcoholics Anonymous:

“... though perhaps he came to scoff, he may remain to pray.” (p. xxxii)

“... we ask(ed) God ...” (countless times in the “Big Book”)

“[Prayer] works, if we have the proper attitude and work at it.” (p.86)

Session One, July 1: The Set-Aside Prayer.

“Surrender”

“Lord, help me set aside (1) everything I think I know about You;
(2) everything I think I know about myself; (3) everything I think I know about my
fellows; (4) everything I think I know about my own recovery ...
for a much-needed new experience in (1) You, (2) myself, (3) my fellows
and (4) a new experience in my own recovery.” (Attributed to Don P.)

1. *What is prayer, as experienced in the Set-Aside Prayer?*

Prayer is communicating with God, a vital part of my healthy relationship with God.

With the Set-Aside Prayer, I **surrender** my illusion that I can ever know “enough”:

“Lord, help me set aside everything I think I know about You ...”

“... even willing to believe that there is a Power greater than myself?” (p. 47)

“We had a new Employer.” (p. 63)

I am no longer *scoffing*. I am *asking God* to “help me”. My *attitude* is one of
humility—accepting that I need help. I am “*working at*” asking God for help.

2. *What are the risks we feel when we pray, as experienced in the Set-Aside Prayer?*

Surrendering my Illusion of all-knowing self-reliance feels like a great risk.

To “set aside” everything I think I know about myself, my fellows and my recovery
requires me to continually admit “we realize we know only a little” (p. 164):

“Simple, but not easy; a price had to be paid ...self-centeredness.” (p. 14)

“... alcoholic is an extreme example of self-will run riot, though he usually
doesn’t think so.” (p. 62)

“First of all, we had to quit playing God. It didn’t work.” (p. 62)

3. *What are the rewards we can hope for in praying, as expressed in the Set-Aside Prayer?*

A “*much-needed new experience*”—each day, every time I **surrender** with “**Lord, help me**”.

“God will constantly disclose more to you and to us”: (p. 164)

“I offer myself to [God] ...” (**Surrender**) (p. 63)

“We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator.” (p. 75)

“We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.” (p. 83)