

“WHAT WAS THE QUESTION?”

A Twelve-Step Study Guided by the Questions in Alcoholics Anonymous.

October 2 through December 25, 2023

Facilitator: Bill H., St. Louis, Mo.

(All page numbers from Alcoholics Anonymous, Fourth Edition, unless otherwise noted)

The first question that appears in Alcoholics Anonymous is on the second page of the Table of Contents. The question is “*Who am I to say there is no God?*” p. vi

The second and third questions in the book are also in the Table of Contents:

“*This drinker finally found the answer to her nagging question, Why?*” p. vii

“*Me an Alcoholic?*” p. viii

Were these first three questions in the book part of some “Grand Plan” to get our attention? Is it an accident that the first questions in the book should be about “*God*”, “*Why*” and then “*Alcoholic*”? Are these questions attractive or offensive to new readers of the book?

Is God using questions in our book to “constantly disclose more to you and to us”?

In this Big Book study of the Twelve Steps, we discover every question raised in the book is eventually answered in the book. As we ask and answer the questions, we find that *they guide us from what our life is like living in our problem, our illness, of alcoholism to what our life is like living in the solution of our spiritual awakening.*

Questions appear on pp. xviii-xix, “FOREWARD TO SECOND EDITION”:

“Could these large numbers of erstwhile erratic alcoholics successfully meet and work together? Would there be quarrels over membership, leadership, and money? Would there be strivings for power and prestige? Would there be schisms that would split A.A. apart?”

Our Twelve Traditions, adopted at the first AA International Convention in Cleveland in 1950, answer these questions. We will return to these questions later in this study.

Step Three. “Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.”

Step One information in the Big Book (first 62 pages) discloses that *I need help*:

“... cannot ... differentiate the true from the false.” (p. xxviii)

“They are restless, irritable and discontented ...” “

“... phenomenon of craving ...” (p. xxix, p. xxx)

“... unwilling to admit we were real alcoholics.” (p. 30)

“... the great obsession ... persistence of this illusion ... the delusions ...” “

“What sort of thinking dominates an alcoholic who repeats time after time the desperate experiment of the first drink?” (p. 35)

Step Two information in our Book (first 62 pages) discloses the *hope of spiritual help*:

“... who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body.” (p. xiii)

“... clear cut directions are given showing how we recovered.” (p. 29)

“... no effective mental defense ... defense must come from a Higher Power.” (p. 43)

“To be doomed to an alcoholic death or to live on a spiritual basis are not always easy alternatives to face.” (p. 44)

“... consciousness of the Presence of God ... most important fact ... lives ...” (p. 51)

How do I respond to God’s disclosures to me in Steps One and Two?

Step Three lead question: “**But where and how were we to find this Power?**” (p. 45)

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Step Three. “Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.”

Step Three lead question: **“But where and how were we to find this Power?”** (p. 45)

“What do I have to do?” (p. 20). “... just what do we do?” (p. 60).

“Made a decision ...” (My *decision* to do something precedes my doing it!)

I **do not** turn my will (my *choices*) and my life (the *consequences* of my choices) over to God in Step Three.

I make a decision to learn how to do this in Step Three—a decision to work Steps 4-9.

“To be doomed to an alcoholic death or to live on a spiritual basis are not always easy alternatives to face.” (p. 44)

“We had to ask ourselves why we shouldn’t apply to our human problems this same readiness to change our point of view?” (the “bedevilmments”) (p. 52)

“What was our choice to be?” (p. 53)

“... to turn our will and our lives over to ...” (I am willing to be changed.)

“What is the solution?” (p. xxxi)

- “... entire psychic change ...” (p. xxix)

- “... once a psychic change has occurred ...” “

- “... more than human power is needed to produce the essential psychic change ...” (change of “ideas, emotions and attitudes ...”) “

“Is there no exception?” (p. 27)

- “Yes ... once in a while, alcoholics have had what are called vital spiritual experiences ... phenomena ... huge emotional displacements and rearrangements ... ideas, emotions and attitudes which were once the guiding forces of the lives ... suddenly cast to one side ...” “

“... decided to turn our will and our life over ... what do we mean by that?” (p. 60)

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

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

“... the care of God as we understood Him.” (A *caring* God.)

“*Why don’t you choose your own conception of God?*” (a “*caring*” God) (p. 12)

“His defense must come from a Higher Power.” (p. 43)

“Lack of power ... was our dilemma ... find a *Power greater than ourselves.*” (p. 45)

“... find a Power greater than yourself, which will solve your problem.” (p. 45)

“God either is, or He isn’t. What was our choice to be?” (p. 53)

“... we decided ... God was going to be our Director ... Principal ... new Employer.” (pp. 62-63)

Read Step Three Promises, p. 63.

Decide to “take” the Step Three Prayer. p. 63.

Next Time: Step Four, “Wasn’t it because self-reliance failed us?”