

“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)

We use the **questions** in the “Big Book” as our “lens” to view and improve our understanding of “How It Works” in the application of the Twelve Steps to our Spiritual Awakening.

- October 2. Step One: “What sort of thinking dominates an alcoholic ...?”
- October 9. Step Two: “*Why don’t you choose your own conception of God?*”
- October 16. Step Three: “But where and how were we to find this Power?”
- October 23. Step Four: “Wasn’t it because self-reliance failed us?”
- October 30. Step Five: “Having made our personal inventory, what shall we do about it?”
- November 6. Step Six: “Can [God] take them all—every one?”
- November 13. Step Seven: “Are we now ready to let God remove from us ...?”
- November 20. Step Eight: “... [have we] the will to do this ...?”
- November 27. Step Nine: Do I have “a sincere desire to set right the wrong?”
- December 4. Step Ten: “Are these extravagant promises?”
- December 11. Step Eleven: “... inquire what corrective measures should be taken?”
- December 18. Step Twelve: “... I must get along without liquor, but how can I?”
- December 25. Surprise??

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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.*

The next questions appear on pp. xviii-xix in the “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?”

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

Step One. “We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.”

Admitting I am powerless over anything or anyone begins with admitting three simple truths:

- 1. I am powerless over the physical effect of drinking alcohol, the physical “craving”.*
- 2. I am powerless over my mental delusion that I’m not powerless over the “craving”.*
- 3. Until I admit 1. and 2., my life becomes more and more unmanageable.*

*First we deal with the **physical problem** of the alcoholism illness—the physical craving for “more” over which the alcoholic is powerless—a craving triggered by one drink, the first one!*

“THE DOCTOR’S OPINION”.

“What is the solution?” (p. xxxi)

Dr. Silkworth uses this question as a response to his own description of the alcoholic illness and the physical allergy on pp. xxvii - xxx:

“... chronic alcoholics back from the gates of death.” (p. xxvii)

“... chronic alcoholics is a manifestation of an allergy ...” (p. xxviii)

“... drink ... because they like the effect produced by alcohol.” “

“... cannot ... differentiate the true from the false.” “

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

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

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Step One. “We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.” (Con’t)

*Now we deal with the **mental problem** of our alcoholism illness—the unmanageability of our lives. I learn to admit I am powerless, on my own, over my obsessions, illusions and delusions.*

“BILL’S STORY”.

“I fancied myself a leader, for had not the men ...?” (p. 1)

“Many people lost money—but some became very rich. Why not I?” (p. 2)

“My friends had dropped several million since ten o’clock—so what?” (p. 4)

“Where had been my high resolve ... was I crazy ... should I kill myself?” (pp. 5-6)

“THERE IS A SOLUTION”.

“How then shall we present that which has been so freely given us?” (p. 19)

(The answer to this begins with the great insight to first present the problem!)

“... how and why ... we have recovered from a hopeless condition of mind and body ... what do I have to do?” (p. 20)

“Why can’t he? Why don’t you drink like a gentleman or quit? Why don’t you try beer and wine?” “

“But what about the real alcoholic?” (p. 21)

“Why does he behave like this ... he takes that one drink ... can’t stay on the water wagon ... what has become of the common sense and willpower ...?” (p. 22)

“For God’s sake, how did I ever get started again ... what’s the use anyhow?” (p. 24)

“Yet he had no control whatever over alcohol. Why was this?” (p. 26)

“Is there no exception?” (p. 27)

“MORE ABOUT ALCOHOLISM”.

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

“Why does he ... of what is he thinking?” “

“How can such a lack of proportion ... think straight ... be called anything else?” (p. 37)

“Such a man would be crazy, wouldn’t he ... but is it ... but isn’t it true?” (p. 38)

“WE AGNOSTICS”.

“... we agnostics and atheists chose to believe that our human intelligence was the last word, the alpha and the omega, the beginning and end of all. Rather vain of us, wasn’t it?” (p. 49)

“Are not some of us just as biased and unreasonable about the realm of the spirit as were the ancients about the realm of the material?” (p. 51)

“... was not a basic solution to these bedevilements more important ...?” (p. 52)

“Who are you to say there is no God?” (p. 56)

“HOW IT WORKS”:

“What is his basic trouble ... a self-seeker ... victim of the delusion ... evident to all the rest ... each of them wish to retaliate ... a producer of confusion ...?” (p. 61)

Next Time: Step Two, “Why don’t you choose your own conception of God?”