

“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 Twelve Step study, we discover every question raised in the book is answered in the book. We find the questions and answers *guide us from what our life is like living in our illness 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 Five. “**Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.**” (p. 59)

“Having made our personal inventory, what shall we do about it?” (p. 72)

“We have been trying to get:

- a new attitude,
- a new relationship with our Creator,
- and to discover the obstacles in our path.”

- **new attitude:** Steps One and Two change my attitude from obsession with self-centeredness to a desire and hope to be God-centered. (pp. i- 62)

- **new relationship with our Creator:** Step Three, “We had a new Employer”. (p. 63)

- **discover the obstacles in our path:** Step Four, “flaws in our make-up.” (pp. 63-71)

“Now these [the obstacles in our path—the weak items] ... are about to be cast out. This requires action on our part ... admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our defects [wrongs].” (p. 72)

In Step Five I continue my self-examination. I share the information from my resentment, fear and sexual conduct (inconsideration) inventories. We discuss the “wrong” things I did to others *because of my resentments, fears and selfishness.*

And, I go deeper, to uncover the “exact nature” of my wrongs, my defective motives.

“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)

Step Five. “Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.” (p. 59)

Implied Question: Why is “a solitary self-appraisal insufficient”? (p. 72)

Explicit Answers: 1. “If we skip this vital step, we may not overcome drinking.” (p. 72)

2. “They only *thought* they had lost their egoism and fear ...” (p. 73)

3. “... they only *thought* they had humbled themselves.” “

4. “... they had not learned enough of humility, fearlessness and honesty, in the sense we find it necessary ...” “

Implied Question: Why is the alcoholic “under constant fear and tension ...”? (p. 73)

Explicit Answers: 1. “... the alcoholic leads a double life.” (p. 73)

2. “... the things he does on his sprees.” “

3. “... we were honest with no one ...” “

Implied Question: How can “we expect to live long or happily in this world”? (pp. 73-74)

Explicit Answer: 1. “We must be entirely honest with somebody ...” (p. 73)

Implied Question: How can “we choose the person ... with whom to take this intimate and confidential step”? (p. 74)

Explicit Answers: 1. “It is important that he be able to keep a confidence ...” (p. 74)

2. “... that he fully understand and approve ...” “

3. “... he will not try to change our plan.” (p. 75)

“We pocket our pride and go to it, illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past.” (p. 75)

What is a “twist of character”?

“Twists of character” are my God-given attributes that my “self-will run riot” have distorted, “twisted”, into harmful, unhealthy behaviors, i.e., dishonesty, resentments, cheating, stealing, unrealistic fears, use and abuse of other people—the facts of “our own mistakes”, “our fears” and our “faults” from Step Four.

What is a “dark cranny of the past”?

My “dark crannys” are my unhealthy, harmful hidden *motives* that lie beneath my “twists of character”, i.e., lust, greed, desire for too much attention and approval, desire to avoid responsibility yet take credit, fear of embarrassment/disappointment.

“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)

Implied Question: What happens “once we have taken this step”? (p. 75)

Explicit Answers: See the Step Five promises: (p. 75)

“... we are delighted.”

“We can look the world in the eye.”

“We can be alone at perfect peace and ease.”

“Our fears fall from us.”

“We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator.”

“... we begin to have a spiritual experience [awakening].”

“... feeling that the drink problem has disappeared...”

“We feel we are on the Broad Highway,
walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe.”

“... rid of that terrible sense of isolation ... we could be forgiven ... humility ...”

(AA 12x12, pp. 57-58)

Pray. “We thank God from the bottom of our heart that we know Him better.” (p. 75)

“... we ask if we have omitted anything?”

Have I lied?

“Is our work solid so far?”

Have I been honest?

“Are the stones properly in place?”

Have I disclosed my motives?

“Have we skimmed on the cement put into the foundation?”

Have I told partial truth?

“Have we tried to make mortar without sand?”

Have I omitted the prayers?

Other Aids in Discovering Our “Defective Motives” that drive our “Wrongs”.

“... a universally recognized list of major human failings—the Seven
Deadly Sins of pride, greed, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth.”

(AA 12x12, p. 48)

“All of these failings generate fear, a soul-sickness in its own right.
Then fear, in turn, generates more character defects:

- “... drives us to covet the possessions of others,
- to lust for sex and power,
- to become angry when our instinctive demands are threatened,
- to be envious ... of others.”
- “We eat, drink and grab for more of everything ...
- ... fearing we shall never have enough.”

(AA 12x12, p. 49)

“... terrible sense of isolation ...”

(AA 12x12, p. 57)

... lack of “humility ... forgiveness ... honesty about ourselves ...”

(AA 12x12, p. 58)

“... self-pity ... hurt feelings ... hurt pride ...”

(AA 12x12, p. 59)

Do I see my need to learn to live without these objectionable, selfish motives and wrongs?

Next Time: Step Six, “Can [God] take them all—every one?”