

“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 Eight. “**Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.**” (p. 59)

“Now we need more action, without which we find that ‘Faith without works is dead’. Let’s look at *Steps Eight and Nine*. We have a list of all persons we have harmed and to whom we are willing to make amends ... we ask [for the will to do this] until it comes.” (p. 76)

In Step Three, I ask God to relieve me of the bondage of self, to stop living on my will alone. The first six Steps disclose to me the harm I do to myself and others when I live only to try to get “my way” all the time. The first six Steps free me from my delusion that I am not powerless—over alcohol (and many other things)—and that *I need God’s help in all things*.

In Step Seven, the “hinge” on which my recovery turns, I ask God for the strength to learn to live “God’s way”, not “my way”. *Step Seven offers me a life lived one day at a time centered in God’s will, not my will; a life of service to God and the people around me; a life of continuous spiritual awakening.*

“Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding.” (Step Seven prayer, p. 76)

*I can “see” God in exceptional things. I grow my spiritual life when I try to experience God in every detail of my daily life. I **enlarge my spiritual life when I seek God’s help.***

Step Eight is my opportunity to seek God’s strength, God’s help, to help me take responsibility for the wrong things I did (make a list) and be willing to make amends (pray to God to help me)—gaining relief from my personal “debris” of guilt, regret, remorse and shame.

“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 Eight. “Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.” (p. 59)

“We have a list of all persons we have harmed ...” (p. 76)

Am I willing to make a list of all persons I have harmed by my wrong actions?

“We made a list of people I had hurt ... expressed my entire willingness to approach these individuals, admitting my wrong.” (p. 13)

“... we couldn’t seem to be of real help to other people ...” (p. 52)

“... we step on the toes of our fellows ...” (p. 62)

“We admitted our wrongs ... willing to set these matters straight.” (p. 67)

“We must be willing to make amends where we have done harm ...” (p. 69)

I grow in willingness when I carefully follow the directions in our textbook.

Step Eight gives me the opportunity to become more willing as I seek God’s help to make my list and take responsibility for my wrong actions and harms to others.

“We attempt to sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will and run the show ourselves.” (p. 76)

Am I willing to list each name from each category of persons in our text, to let God help me become free of my “debris” of guilt, regret, remorse and shame?

“... the list of business acquaintances and friends ...” (p. 76)

“... the man we hated ...” (p. 77)

“... our creditors ...” (p. 78)

“... committed a criminal offense ...” (p. 78)

“... other people are involved ...” (p. 79)

“... domestic troubles (spouses) ...” (p. 80)

“... at home (the family) ...” (p. 82)

These categories help “jog my memory” so that I can be thorough in my responsibility to list the people and the harms I did to them. Thus I begin to “sweep away the debris” of my guilt, regret, remorse and shame that results from my past behavior in my relationships, as I ask God to forgive me. (See p. 70)

“If we haven’t the will to do this, we ask [God] until it comes.” (p. 76)

Am I willing to ask God for the willingness to take responsibility for the harms I have done to others by my wrong actions and make direct amends to them?

I seek God’s help. I pray to God for the willingness to accept this responsibility, individually—name by name—for each person on my Step Eight amends list. I rely on God’s forgiving strength to free me from my guilt, regret, remorse and shame.

“Remember it was agreed at the beginning we would go to any lengths for victory over alcohol.” (p. 76)

Next Time: Step Nine, Do I have “a sincere desire to set right the wrong?”