

“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 Seven. “**Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.**” (p. 59)

“When ready, we say something like this ...” (p. 76)

Ready for what? Ready to do what? We look again for a moment at Step Six:

“If we still cling to something we will not **let go**, we ask God to help us be willing.” (p. 76)

Am I now ready to “**let go**”, to **let God** help me learn how to live without my objectionable things?

Am I now ready to **let God** care for me and teach me how to live without my dishonesty, my resentments, my lack of forgiveness, my desire for too much attention, my cheating and stealing, my unrealistic fears, my inconsiderate use and abuse of other people?

Am I now ready to **let God** be my “new Employer” (p. 63), to care for me with God’s **Power**, God’s **Love** and God’s **Way** of life? (Bold print mine.)

I thought I was alive to do my will. In Step Three, I ask God to relieve me of the bondage of self. 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, I ask God for the strength to learn to live “God’s way”, not “my way”. Step Seven is the “hinge” on which my recovery turns. Step Seven offers me a life lived one day at a time centered in God’s will, not my will. Step Seven offers me a life of service to God and the people around me. Step Seven foreshadows for me a life of continuous spiritual awakening.

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Step Seven. “Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.”

(p. 59)

I pray in Step Three for God to “relieve me of the bondage of self”. (p. 63) God helps me set aside my delusions and defiance to begin healthy self-examination as I work Steps Four, Five and Six. I admit the wrongs I have done and the harms I have caused myself and others.

*I see and accept in my Step Six questions, answers and prayers that I am powerless to **let go** of my “objectionable things” with my own will power alone, even when I want to! I am now willing to let God help me change—to learn to live without my “objectionable things”.*

“When ready, we say something like this: ‘My Creator, I am now willing ...’ “ (p. 76)

God, am I “ready”, i.e., *willing*, that “you should have all of me, good and bad”?

Now I move from the certainty of Step Six to the uncertainty of Step Seven. I become more willing. I become willing to let God remove my *certain, known* objectionable things as well as the other *uncertain*, undesirable parts of my nature that are unknown to me!

I pray for the willingness to let God “have all of me, good and bad”.

“I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows.”

Am I willing to ask God, to **let God**, remove from me my “defects of character,” my unhealthy motives, thoughts and actions, that only God knows about?

Now my *desire* changes. In Step Six, my *motive* is to ask God to help me **let go** of the objectionable things in me blocking me from God’s help. In Step Seven, my *motive* becomes to **let God** help me become useful to God and others.

I pray that God “remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to [God] and my fellows.”

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

Am I ready and willing to **let go** of my will enough more to live a God-centered life instead of my old self-centered life of “self-will run riot”?

I stop trying to do everything my way. I start trying to do things God’s way.

God helps me so that can help others learn how to let God help them.

I pray that God “grant me strength, ask I go out from here, to do [God’s] bidding”.

“**Amen.**” “We have then completed *Step Seven.*” (p. 76)

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Observations: 1. My spiritual awakening began driven by my fear of drinking again.

My spiritual awakening continues in my my desire to serve God and others.

2. I over-estimate my willingness to change.

I underestimate the resistance of my self-will to change.

3. To believe is to commit. In Step Two I *come* to believe. In Step Three I *decide* to believe. In Steps Four through Nine I *act* to believe.

Next Time: Step Eight, “... [have we] the will to do this”?