

“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 Nine. “**Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.**” (p. 59)

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

“Now we need more action, without which we find that ‘Faith without works is dead.’ Let’s look at *Steps Eight and Nine.*” (p. 76)

Do I have “a sincere desire to set right the wrong”? (p. 77)

*I do my part to work with God to enlarge my spiritual life when I ask God for help.
I also do my part to enlarge my spiritual life when I act on whatever guidance God gives me.*

In Steps One through Six, I learn to ask God to help me become honest about myself. I ask God to help me stop blaming God and people for my problems. I ask God to help me be willing to “*let go*” and learn to live without the “objectionable” parts of me.

In Step Seven, I “*let God*”. I offer “all of me” to God, so God can “remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to [God] and my fellows”. I ask God to “grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do [God’s] bidding”.

In Step Eight, I ask God for the willingness “until it comes”—to be responsible to list each person I harmed and to be willing to make direct amends to each of them.

In Step Nine, I ask God for the willingness to go to each person on my Step Eight list “wherever possible” and make direct amends to them. I am accountable to those I harmed.
I continue to gain relief from my “debris” of guilt, regret, remorse and shame.

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Step Nine. “Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.” (p. 59)

Am I confused about why I am being asked to make direct amends to people?

“... we may feel diffident about going to some of them on a spiritual basis.” (p. 76)

“At the moment we are trying to put our lives in order. But this is not an end in itself. Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us.” (p. 77)

My work in Steps Eight and Nine enables my “real “purpose”, my responsibility and opportunity to serve God and others, even with the uncertainty of their response.

I work Steps One through Eight to do my part to enlarge my spiritual life. (p. 35)

I become more “God-centered” within myself. In Step Nine I act “God-centered” outside myself. I am accountable with those I have harmed. I amend my wrong actions.

Am I willing to set aside my pride and my fear—to see each person I ever harmed?

“... 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)

*I list all the people I wronged and the harms I did to them. I am willing to make direct amends, **wherever** possible, to become more open to God’s care; God’s help.*

I continue to “sweep away the debris” of my guilt, regret, remorse and shame.

I ask God to forgive me. (p. 70) *When appropriate, I ask them to forgive me.* (p. 79)

Am I willing to ask God to help me follow the Step Nine guidelines and limitations?

“... sincere desire to set right the wrong ... helpful and forgiving spirit ...” (p. 77)

“Under no condition do we criticize ... or argue ... his faults are not discussed.” “

“We do not dodge our creditors.” (p. 78)

“... we ask that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing ...” (p. 79)

“... admitting his faults and asking forgiveness.” (p. 79)

“... asked God to help ...” “... place the outcome in God’s hands.” (p. 80)

“... sorry [regret] for what we have done ... God willing ... not be repeated.” (p. 81)

“We feel a man is unthinking when he says that sobriety is enough.” (p. 82)

“... there is a long period of reconstruction ahead. We must take the lead.” (p. 83)

“... asking each morning in meditation that our Creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love.” “

“The spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it.” (p. 83)

Next Time: Step Ten, “Are these extravagant promises?”

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A STEP NINE PRAYER

GOD, I THANK YOU FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY TO DIRECTLY AMEND MY WRONGS.

**GOD, PLEASE GRANT ME STRENGTH
TO REMAIN WILLING TO MAKE DIRECT AMENDS TO EACH PERSON
I HAVE HARMED BY MY WRONG-DOING.**

**GOD, PLEASE GRANT ME THE *WILLINGNESS* TO BE
ACCOUNTABLE WITH EACH PERSON I HAVE HARMED.**

**GOD, PLEASE GRANT ME THE *HONESTY* TO MAKE
RESTITUTION FOR THE WRONGS I HAVE DONE, WHERE APPROPRIATE.**

**GOD, PLEASE GRANT ME THE *OPEN-MINDEDNESS* TO SET ASIDE
WHATEVER HARM THEY HAVE DONE TO ME
AND TO HAVE NO EXPECTATIONS ABOUT THEIR RESPONSE TO MY AMENDS.**

**GOD, I THANK YOU ONCE AGAIN FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE
ACCOUNTABLE AS I MAKE MY DIRECT AMENDS,
THAT I MAY BECOME FREE FROM MY GUILT, REGRET, REMORSE AND SHAME.**

AMEN.