

STEP 3 AA WORKSHEET

Step Three: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.

Spiritual Principle of Step Three: Surrender

“Practicing Step Three is like the opening door which to all appearances is still closed and locked. All we need is a key, and the decision to swing the door open. There is only one key, and it is called willingness. Once unlocked by willingness, the door opens almost of itself, and looking through it, we shall see a pathway beside which is an inscription. It reads: “This is the way to a faith that works.” In the first two steps we were engaged in reflection. We saw that we were powerless over alcohol, but we also perceived that faith of some kind, if only in A.A. itself, is possible to anyone. These conclusions did not require action; they required only acceptance.

Like all the remaining Steps, Step Three calls for affirmative action, for it is only by action that we can cut away the self-will which has always blocked the entry of God – or, if you like, a Higher Power – into our lives. Faith, to be sure, is necessary, but faith alone can avail nothing. We can have faith yet keep God out of our lives. Therefore, our problem now becomes just how and by what specific means shall we be able to let Him in? Step Three represents our first attempt to do this. In fact, the effectiveness of the whole A.A. program will rest upon how well and earnestly we have tried to come to “a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.” (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, pp, 34-35.)

“The first three steps are a composite AA package. Conceived of meditation and experience, they are a basic recovery prescription. Taken with proper timing and in correct proportion they immediately arrest our alcoholic lives. These steps complement each other, but they fail to work if any of them are omitted.” (The Little Red Book, p. 33.)

“Selfishness – self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity, we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate. Sometimes they hurt us, seemingly without provocation, but we invariably find that at some time in the past we have made decisions based on self which later placed us in a position to be hurt.

So our troubles, we think, are basically of our own making. They arise out of ourselves, and the alcoholic is an extreme example of self-will run riot, though he usually doesn’t think so. Above everything, we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us! God makes that possible. And there often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self without His aid. Many of us had moral and philosophical convictions galore, but we could not live up to them even though we would have liked to. Neither could we reduce our self-centeredness much by wishing or trying on our own power. We had to have God’s help.” (Alcoholics Anonymous, p.62)

What does the above passage (from page 62 in the Big Book) mean to you?

STEP 3 AA WORKSHEET

On page 60 in the Big Book it states that: "The first requirement is that we be convinced that any life run on self-will can hardly be a success." What does this mean to you?

To "make a decision" implies action. What does this mean to you in practical terms?

Describe God as you understand it/him/her.

In order to take this step, is it necessary to first have a firm and complete understanding of what God is?

Are you willing to turn your will and your life over to the care of God as you understand it/him/her? If not, what is preventing you from doing so?

Even if you believe that God could if it/he/she were sought, do you believe that it/he/she would [help to relieve you of your obsession to drink]?

STEP 3 AA WORKSHEET

How would your life be different if you made a decision to turn your will and your life over to God as you understand it/him/her?

How might you benefit from making a decision to turn your will and your life over to the care of God as you understand it/him/her?

How do you (or can you) apply this step in your daily life?

“We stop playing God. We surrender our self-centeredness to Him. We relax. We avoid confusing AA with religion. We try not to define God. We recognize and try to develop our spiritual possibilities. We seek a personal contact with God, practicing thought and action with moral values that help us develop a better conscience. We plan and try to live daily lives that embrace sobriety, faith, honesty, prayer, tolerance, forgiveness, service to others, and amends where they should be made.” (The Little Red Book, p.45)

The Third Step Prayer:

“We were now at Step Three. Many of us said to our Maker, as we understood Him: God, I offer myself to Thee—to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of Life. May I do Thy will always.” (Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 63)

“The wording [of the Third Step and prayer] was, of course, quite optional so long as we expressed the idea, voicing it without reservation. This was only a beginning, though if honestly and humbly made, an effect, sometimes a very great one, was felt at once.

Next we launched out a course of vigorous action, the first step of which is a personal housecleaning, which many of us had never attempted. Though our decision was a vital and crucial step, it could have little permanent effect unless at once followed by a strenuous effort to face, and to be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us. Our liquor was but a symptom. So we had to get down to causes and conditions. Therefore, we started upon a personal inventory. This was Step Four.” (Alcoholics Anonymous, pp. 63-64)

STEP 3 AA WORKSHEET

Additional Reading:

Alcoholics Anonymous. "Big Book," 4th edition. (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 2001) pp. 17-29, 44-64, 567-568.

Alcoholics Anonymous. Came to Believe. (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 2002)

Alcoholics Anonymous, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 1981)

The Hazelden Foundation. The Little Red Book. (Center City, MN: Hazelden Foundation, 1986) 33-45.