

PREPARING FOR THE TENTH CONCEPT OF SERVICE

(Read pp. 46-50 of the “Twelve Concepts for World Service”)

THE TENTH CONCEPT OF SERVICE:

We are of service by accepting responsibility for the authority God has given us and by respecting the authority God has given to others.

Let us prepare for the study of the tenth concept of service by examining our attitudes toward authority in the following questions.

Has my old alcoholic thinking changed concerning how I view those in authority over me? Do I resent it and want to change “them”, or do I accept their authority as God given and want to help them with their responsibilities?

Has God given me authority in any areas in A.A., home life, or work that I am avoiding because of the responsibilities involved?

Is the theme of my inventories how I am doing as I see myself or does it include a vision of how God might see me exercising the responsibilities for the authority he has given me? What authority has God given me in A.A., home and work? Am I responsible for my authority as a sponsor, secretary, or speaker and as a parent, son, and mate? Am I responsible for the authority of the work, artistic, and sports talents God has given me? Which ones am I shirking that I feel I should develop?

“UNITY INSURES RECOVERY THROUGH SERVICE”
MEETING OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

THE TENTH CONCEPT OF SERVICE:
We are of service by accepting responsibility for the authority God has given us and by respecting the authority God has given to others.¹

Homework: Writing Inventory on the Tenth Concept of Service
By Dennis F.

This concept of service challenges me to change my alcoholic attitudes about authority.

I loved giving orders but didn't like to accept responsibility when I gave the wrong orders. I need to examine in written inventory the various talents God has given me in A.A., at home and at work to see if I am shirking responsibility in sobriety.

Am I a responsible sponsor? Am I avoiding any of my duties as a husband, father, or son? Do I use my best job talents in earning a living? Do I have artistic and sports talents that are lying fallow in sobriety?

The subject of my responsibilities for the authority God has given me is the correct subject for my nightly inventories: How well am I doing Father's business today?

Bill writes in the tenth concept about the importance of responsibility being equal to authority in the service we give.

CONCEPT 10

Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority – the scope of such authority to be always well defined whether by tradition, by resolution, by specific job description, or by appropriate charters and bylaws.

Nearly all societies and governments of today exhibit serious deviations from the very sound principle that *each operational responsibility* must be accompanied by *a corresponding authority* to discharge it.

This is why we have been at such pains in pretending discussions to define the several authorities and responsibilities of the A.A. groups, the Conference, the trustees, and our active service corporations. We have tried to make sure that authority in each of these levels is equal to responsibility. Then we have tried to relate these levels one to another in such a way that this principle is maintained throughout.

An outstanding characteristic of every good operational structure is that it guarantees harmonious and effective function by relating its several parts and people in such a way that none can doubt

¹ The wording of the “concepts” as given here is an interpretation by Dennis Fitzpatrick

what their respective responsibilities and corresponding authorities actually are. Unless these attributes are well defined; unless those holding the final authority are able and willing properly to delegate and maintain a suitable operational authority; unless those holding such delegated authority feel able and willing to use their delegated authority freely as trusted servants; and unless there exists some definite means of interpreting and deciding doubtful situations – then personal clashes, confusion, and ineffectiveness will be inevitable.

The next aspect of this concept to consider is how do I handle authority when God entrusts me with it. Am I a dictator with those I sponsor, with my spouse and children, or at work? Can I now trust others to carry out their responsibilities when I delegate jobs to them? Do I use my authority sparingly? Can I imitate my Higher Power in the loving way he trusts me?

In the following paragraphs, Bill considers these proper and improper uses authority in our service structure.

The principle of ultimate authority runs clear through our structure. This is necessary, because all of our service affairs and activities have to head up *somewhere* for final responsibility. Ultimate authority is also needed so that each worker or each classification of servants knows where and who the final boss is.

If, however, ultimate authority is not carefully qualified by delegated authority, we then have the reverse result. Were there no delegated authority, the groups would be directing their delegates on every important vote; the delegates would similarly turn the trustees into a timid committee which would receive point-blank direction on just about everything; the trustees would then install themselves as the sole directors of the service entities and would commence to run them by directives. The corporate executives would become small czars, pushing the working staffs about. In short, such a misuse of ultimate authority would add up to a dictatorship where in nearly every classification of A.A. servants would have large responsibilities, but no real or certain authority, and hence no capability of effective decision and leadership with which to operate. Big or little tyrannies and buck-passing would be the inevitable penalties.

Therefore, it becomes clear that ultimate authority is something which cannot be used indiscriminately. Indeed, ultimate authority should practically never be used in full, *except in an emergency*. That *emergency* usually arises when delegated authority has gone wrong, when it must be reorganized because it is ineffective, or because it constantly exceeds its defined scope and purpose. For example, if the groups are dissatisfied with the Conference, they can elect better delegates or withhold funds. If the delegates must, they can censure or reorganize the trustees. The trustees can do the same with the service corporations. If a corporation does not approve of the operations of its executives or staff, any or all of them can be fired. These are the *proper* uses of *ultimate authority*, because they rightly discharge a truly ultimate responsibility. The *influence* of ultimate authority must always be felt, but it is perfectly clear that *when delegated authority is operating well, it should not be constantly interfered with*. Otherwise, those charged with operating responsibility will be demoralized because their authority to do their work will be subject to arbitrary invasion, and because their actual responsibility will be made greater than their real authority.

The other half of this concept teaches me to have respect for the authority God has given you. I give up my alcoholic attitude of defiance.

Just as I respect the authority of alcohol over my being, and just as I came to respect the authority of the group over alcohol, I now respect those in authority over me because that authority comes from God.

I now try to approach the authority God has given you a spirit of helpfulness rather than defiance or fear. The tenth concept inspires me to want to help you accomplish the tasks God has created you for.

When there is conflict, can I surrender to the group conscience as the ultimate authority? Can I now see that my own authority as a trusted servant is delegated and not ultimate authority? Bill now expands on these points at the conclusion of his remarks on the tenth concept of service.

In all matters of joint or conflicting authority, therefore, a senior jurisdiction must be established. The junior jurisdiction must be heard, and regardless of the question involved, there must be an understood point or body where a final settlement can be had. It is understood that lesser conflicts are not to be loaded upon the trustees for final decision. But it should always be clear *where the point of final decision is located*.

A condition to be avoided at all costs is *double-headed* business or policy management. Authority can never be divided into equal halves. Nowhere does such split authority or double-headed management so bedevil a structure as in its executive departments. The vital need of avoiding double-headed executive management will be fully discussed under Concept XI.

In addition to the methods we use to make delegated authority equal to delegated responsibility, we have two more guaranties – the “Right of Appeal” and the “Right of Petition”. As we know, a bare majority is apt to constitute itself as a pseudo-ultimate authority on many occasions when it should not do so. Likewise, executives are apt to over-boss their assistants. Therefore, we use the concepts of appeal and petition to insure the every minority, and every worker doing a job, has an authority and a status commensurate with the responsibility involved.

To sum up: Let us always be sure that there is an abundance of final or ultimate authority to correct or to reorganize; but let us be equally sure that all of our trusted servants have a clearly defined and adequate authority to do their daily work and to discharge their clear responsibilities.

All of this is fully implied in A.A.’s Tradition Two. Here we see the “group conscience” as the *ultimate* authority and the “trusted servant” as the *delegated* authority. One cannot function without the other. We well know that only by means of careful definitions and mutual respect can we constantly maintain a right and harmonious working balance.

End of Reading

COMMENTARY

“Authority” is a word I drank at. I resented anybody’s authority over me. I would rebel and drink about it. I thought that I was the only authority that mattered.

Gradually, though, I began to respect the authority of alcohol over me because I saw it dictating my life. As I felt the devastating results of my drinking, I began to look for some authority that could master alcohol in my life. I found that authority in the group conscience of Alcoholics Anonymous. Only by going to meetings and imitating the principles practiced by the group, could I stay sober. The authority I saw in the group conscience of A.A., and then in my sponsor, I finally saw in a Higher Power I know now as a loving God.

This is how my idea of authority changed from me to God. In applying the tenth concept of service to my life, I see that there are three new ideas about authority I need to practice:

- 1) Wherever I have been given the authority to serve, I have also been given an equal responsibility for that service.
- 2) I need to respect the authority of those placed over me in life as God given.
- 3) The proper subject of my nightly written inventories is presented in the tenth concept of service: Am I of service with the authority or talents God has given me, or am I irresponsible in exercising them?

The tenth concept of service defines what is meant by “active responsibility” in the sixth concept of service: It is my willingness to accept authority and the responsibility for my service talents.

By examining the first new idea of authority in my life, I am confronted with the following question: Do I reject authority God gives me to be of service because of the responsibilities involved?

God grants equal authority for the responsibilities he gives me. They are co-equal. My drinking attitude used to be to avoid all responsibilities by refusing any authority. I wasn’t responsible for the mess my life was in when I drank because I had no authority to stop drinking. When I found out that I could stay sober if I went to A.A. and practiced a program, that excuse was removed. I was now responsible for myself. The authority of sobriety had been given to me.

As I stayed sober and practiced the program, God gave me authority for other relationships and their co-equal responsibility. He gave me the authority to be a sponsor, a speaker, a secretary, a husband, a father, a conductor, a president, and a leader.

The tenth concept is saying to me that I can give service to you if I say “yes” to the authority God gives me by accepting the responsibility that goes with the authority.

When I drank, I wanted to have authority without responsibility. I liked running a business but didn't like being responsible for the company's inability to pay its bills. I liked conducting music, but I didn't like the drudgery of preparing for rehearsals. I wanted the fruits of love without the responsibilities of caring. I wanted to be a parent, but I didn't want the responsibilities of changing diapers. Now I have authority for the poop department!

To successfully apply the first lesson of the tenth concept to my life, I need to ask myself, "Are there any areas where I have been asked to do things, but I have said 'non' because I did not want more responsibility in my life?" Or, are there any areas of added responsibility in my life I did not say "no" to, but I simply have delayed answering when I know I should confront them? Are there some areas where I know I should be doing something, however little, with one of my talents? If I am a writer, do I know I should be writing a book, getting it on the market, and I am not doing it? Or if I am a composer, should I be working on a score?

When I say "no" to my creative urgings, I prevent my own growth. I learned in the eighth concept of service that I cannot grow without accepting new responsibilities. The tenth concept tells me that I also need to accept and exercise the authority for my talents that God gives me in order to keep growing in my capacity to serve.

When I say "no", I listen to the voice of alcoholism which seeks to paralyze me from taking action out of fear. I become fearful that I won't succeed. My disease knows that the only way I can go back to drinking now is to be paralyzed out of fear so that I will stop working a program and go back to drinking. This is one reason we don't say "no" to an A.A. request. I need the same attitude to the rest of my life in using my talents to serve.

When I say "no" to a challenge God sends me, I am telling God that I don't think I am ready for it. God respects my "Right of Decision" (see Concept Three) and is patient with me. God gave me many opportunities at sobriety in the ten years that I drank, but I was not ready. I said "no". What did He do? He saw that I learned the lessons that I had to learn in those ten years of drinking without killing myself or anyone else. He was patient, and He waited for me until I was ready because He loves me. I am to respect the "Right of Decision" in other people the same way. I am to respect your pace and your "no". As Bill points out in the reading, I need to respect your "Right of Decision" to choose which matters you can handle and to refer back other matters for future guidance. The "Right of Decision" helps to keep authority and responsibility in proper balance.

If I say "no" long enough, my responsibilities will be given to someone else, and my authority will be removed. Talent improves when it is used, and it dies when it is not used. This is also true in regard to the gift of sobriety. If I make twelve step calls when I am asked, my sobriety prospers. If I say "no" to twelve step work, it will not be very long before I am back to drinking.

When I am tempted to say "no", I want to remember that God would not permit a responsibility to be asked of me unless He was also going to give me the authority to carry it out. I need to risk faith, say "yes" and take the plunge. God would not ask me to do

something unless He was also going to give me the answers I need, at the time that I need them, to accomplish the job.

I have to surrender my alcoholic insecurity of thinking that I won't commit myself to a project until I have all the answers ahead of time.

I can plunge in and handle any project God gives me because I believe He will give me the authority to handle it. I pray for an attitude of fearlessness in accepting the challenges God presents to me.

I believe that we were made to be fearless. I have the confidence of seeing the daily miracle of sobriety in my life to know that I can rely on God to accomplish anything else through me that He cares to accomplish. This is the basis of my attitude of fearlessness toward life's challenges.

Each of us is given different talents and responsibilities. If God did not want me to use the authority He gave to me, He would have given it to someone else. The one talent we all have in A.A. is the authority to be sober. I can be fearless about staying sober, since I know that God will continue to give me the authority to be sober as long as I exercise the responsibilities of sobriety by working a daily program of the steps, traditions, and concepts.

If I misuse any of my talents, I have problems. These problems usually occur in the area of relationships and finance. If I do not practice my talent of love in a relationship, it deteriorates. If I do not produce service with my work talents, I do not earn a living. God withholds funds when I misuse the authority of my service talents.

When God gives me a responsibility, He also gives me a talent with which to accomplish that responsibility. When things go wrong, I need to step back, take written inventory, and see where I need to change spiritually. Then I am able to be one with my responsibilities in life.

In sobriety, I have the authority to accomplish many responsibilities that make my life a very rich one. I have the authority of a sponsor, speaker, and secretary in A.A. I have the authority of a husband, father and son at home. I have the authority of a company owner, president, author, music conductor and composer at work. I have the authority of a jogger and tennis player. I have authority over all my physical appetites. In short, I have unlimited authority for all the responsibilities God has given me. Therefore, I can be fearless with any challenge.

My alcoholic reaction to new responsibilities used to be, "I cannot handle it." Now my sober reaction is, "I cannot fail." I believe that God does not permit something to happen in my life unless He is going to show me how to handle it through increased faith.

As I become more productive the longer I am sober, I receive more challenges. I look at new responsibilities this way: The more I produce, the happier I get. The road of sobriety becomes narrower, in order that joys may become greater. I now welcome the

responsibilities that I am given because the more I get, the better I feel. Those to whom much is given, much is expected.

One of my fears that I have had to overcome in dealing with my talents is the fear that “there is not enough time to handle everything I have to do with this added burden.” When I discovered that I could turn my time schedule over to the love of God and operate on a divine timetable instead, this fear was removed.

I discovered that God does not add new challenges to my life without also balancing my timetable. I find that I am relieved of some old responsibilities or that I am not to do certain tasks anymore, but to delegate them to others. I then learn that I must delegate authority equal to the responsibility I delegate to others, just as God does to me in this tenth concept

When I rush or hurry because I don't think there is enough time to accomplish everything, I am really saying that I don't think God has a divine timetable for my life. I am saying that I am in charge because only I know the timetable, and time is running out.

I don't believe that anymore. There is a divine timetable for everything that I am to do, for every responsibility I have been given, and for everything that has to be accomplished in my life. It is to be accomplished in a spirit of having fun being loving, and not being rushed. He did not put me here to knock myself out running around. He put me here to do His will and have some fun while I do it.

Whenever I rush, I am not a loving person. I lose my spirit of love as soon as I hurry. When I start rushing to drive somewhere, I begin to curse the slowness of other drivers. Only when I am not in a hurry, do I have the courtesy to let other cars into my lane.

I can practice our saying, “Easy Does It”, if I also believe in God's divine timetable, especially when I am late. I might be late by human time, but right on time by divine time! God has ultimate authority and delegates His authority to me through the group conscience.

In my relationships with others, I become very sparing in my use of ultimate authority. It is only to be exercised in an emergency – “when delegated authority has gone wrong:” when it is ineffective or “constantly exceeds its defined scope and purpose.” (“Twelve Concepts for World Service”, p.47) I do not use ultimate authority when delegated authority is working well. Otherwise, demoralization occurs, since I have asked someone to be responsible without giving them authority. I likewise call upon you to help me with the tasks God has delegated to me to accomplish. If I do not delegate authority, I become a dictator again like I was when I drank and did not trust anybody. Rather, I try to imitate God. I trust you in the same way God trusts me with authority to do his will. Learning to use my authority well increases my usefulness in giving service.

It is interesting to see the lengths Bill Wilson goes to in the reading on the tenth concept to explain the proper use of authority in A.A. He was trying to let go of the reins of Alcoholics Anonymous, and he was trying to see that the principles of A.A. would survive without him being around. He had to solve the knotty problem of how do you handle authority in the

service structures of A.A. with sober alcoholics, who all think they are an expert on authority?

The principles of this concept are marvelous in that they not only teach me how to sanely view authority in A.A. but also in a marriage and at work. The second principle I get from this concept is that I need to respect the authority of those placed over me because this authority comes from God.

I am of service in this concept by helping you carry out your talents and authority in any way I can. I give up completely my old ideas about resenting anyone else's authority and instead respect it as God given. I try to be of service by assisting you with your tasks. I give up my old idea that everyone simply looks out for themselves in this "dog eat dog" life.

I begin to see that God delegates authority to each of us. I can grow if I take a service attitude toward your authority. When I drank, I would put those who had authority on pedestals because I didn't see that they only had delegated authority from God. I treated such people as false gods. All other authority is delegated. I no longer need to fawn over those in authority or be fearful or jealous of them. I take the attitude of a servant and assist those in authority over me because God has placed them there and given them his authority to administer.

Your authority is no longer a threat to me, but an opportunity for me to be of service to you in any way you call upon me. Helping you do God's will is a whole new view of authority I never had before. How do I handle conflicting authority? Bill describes several solutions to this problem.

I try to handle conflicting authority by having good communications and sharing my decisions with those to whom I delegate. I can establish or accept senior and junior jurisdiction on various matters. I accept that there is a point where a final settlement can be had. I can respect your "Right of Appeal" and your "Right of Petition" when you disagree with me (see the Fifth Concept). There are also times when I need to avoid passing the buck and need to risk being unpopular. I avoid my tendency to "people please" and instead try to "God-please" with my use of authority.

Unresolved conflicting authority is dangerous because it can lead to justified resentments. Bill points out the need to have good communication to avoid problems. This is an important principle, not only in A.A., but also in marriage and at work. When my wife and I talk and know who is supposed to be doing what, we don't clash. Sharing decisions keeps conflict at a minimum.

We establish senior and junior jurisdictions in our marriage also. She is in charge of certain things in our marriage, and I am in charge of other things. We are not equally in charge of the same thing. For instance, I have a junior jurisdiction in things in regard to the house; she has junior jurisdiction in regard to my business. This avoids a lot of conflicts right there. Bill Wilson commented on the wisdom of not appointing equal bosses. I think it is an important observation. When one of us pokes his or her nose in the other person's

jurisdiction, we have a saying we use on each other called, M.Y.O.B. (“Mind Your Own Business”) it works for us without offending either of us.

When there is a conflict over authority, I need to respect your right to your opinion, which is guaranteed in the fifth concept of service (the right of the minority to their opinion). I have had to learn not to turn away in love from someone who disagrees with my use of my authority. I pray for a listening ear and an understanding heart during such disagreements.

I also must be careful to maintain a spirit of love when it is necessary for me to use ultimate authority to resolve a dispute. I try not to act in a hostile manner as I did when I drank, and to use ultimate authority sparingly.

The third and final lesson of this concept in my life is that it tells me what the subject of my nightly written inventory is supposed to be. Instead of nitpicking at my faults, this concept has me examine how I am being of service with my sobriety and my other talents. Am I giving responsible service or not? Do I have a vision of myself that God does about my capabilities in handling the responsibilities he has given me?

These inventory questions make me take a larger inventory perspective on myself. There comes a point in taking inventory when the wrong I do lessens so that I become more interested in asking inventory questions such as, “What could I have done better”, and especially, “Where could I have been more loving”. (See the Big Book, p. 86.) Am I being responsible by improving when my inventories show me where to improve?

The tenth step, tradition and concept of service are all related. The tenth step teaches me to continue to examine myself in writing on a nightly basis and to promptly practice steps five through nine when I’m wrong. The tenth tradition teaches me that by taking my own inventory, I stay out of controversy by not taking your inventory. The tenth concept teaches me not to take inventory on how I shape up according to my vision of myself but to take inventory on God’s vision of me: Am I of service by accepting the responsibilities to carry the message that God gives me?

My tenth concept of service prayer is this: Father, teach me to be responsible for all the talents you have given me, and may I not rebel, but accept the authority you give to others over me since it comes from you.

As we stop now for our three minute meditation period, I would suggest that we examine these ideas: Am I accepting new authority and added responsibility in my A.A., home, and work lives? Am I being helpful to someone in authority over me? Am I willing to examine in inventory how I am doing in meeting the major challenges in my life today? Do I exercise authority with love, or am I too structured?

In my meditation, I want to thank God for his being responsible for me. I want to thank Him for seeing that I survived ten years of alcoholic drinking. I want to thank Him that I am still surviving sober without having to take the first drink. I want to acknowledge Him as the authority in my life, and I want to thank Him for relying on me by delegating authority in my

Concept 10

life. I will accept the responsibilities He give me, the more demanding, the better, for I can then give Him greater service in gratitude for the privilege of my sobriety. Let us stop now and meditate.

(Pause for three minutes of meditation.)

Written inventory is the key that leads to surrender because of the awareness it give me. Let us examine any authority/responsibility that God has given us that we have refused or delayed in our relationships with God, A.A., home life, work or other of our talents.

HOMEWORK: WRITING INVENTORY – PART ONE
(My Authority)

- 1) GOD and A.A.: Have I been serving as a sponsor, speaker, or secretary, whenever asked? Is there any area of service I am weak in? How can I improve the use of my talents in A.A.?

INVENTORY EXAMPLE - (Try to condense to three sentences.)

- a) The Story: I used to be concerned about lack of time in sponsoring more people.
- b) What did I do wrong? I looked at the time problem through my eyes instead of relying upon God for a creative answer.
- c) What would God have me do instead next time? Look to Him for solutions and simply accept the responsibility for sponsoring whomever he sends to me.

- 2) HOME: Do I accept my authority as a husband, father and son? Do I avoid any responsibilities at home or in my relationships by saying I am not responsible for these jobs?

INVENTORY EXAMPLE - (Try to condense to three sentences.)

- a) The Story: I sometimes forget my responsibility to be a loving son, as my mother grows older.
- b) What did I do wrong? I get distracted by today's assignments and don't go out of my way to be as loving as I can to all around me.
- c) What would God have me do instead next time? Pray for an unselfish spirit of love for my wife, son, and mother, and then take care of today's assignments.

- 3) WORK AND OTHER TALENTS (arts, sports, etc.): Am I sparing in the use of the authority God gives me at work? Do I leave some of my talents dormant because I am afraid of the responsibility to succeed if I use them?

INVENTORY EXAMPLE - (Try to condense to three sentences.)

- a) The Story: Sometimes I am reluctant to face challenges because I don't feel equal to them.
- b) What did I do wrong? I try to avoid responsibility.
- c) What would God have me do instead next time? Pray to surrender with a zealous attitude, since God does not give me any responsibilities unless he also gives me the authority to accomplish his vision.

**HOMEWORK: WRITING INVENTORY – PART TWO
(Your Authority)**

- 4) GOD AND A.A.: Do I respect the authority of the group conscience over my life? Do I accept the authority God gives to my sponsor to guide me in a program of working the steps, traditions, and concepts? Have I changed in sobriety from my old view of authority?

INVENTORY EXAMPLE - (Try to condense to three sentences.)

- a) The Story: When I was newly sober, I avoided getting a sponsor.
 - b) What did I do wrong? I was defiant of any authority.
 - c) What would God have me do instead next time? Pray to accept the authority God gives to others over me for he gives authority to his trusted servants for my good in A.A.
- 5) HOME: Do I stay out of my wife’s responsibilities, or am I a meddler? Do I offer to help, or do I take my family’s inventory? Do I respect others’ rights to decide contrary to my views, or do I try to “change” them?

INVENTORY EXAMPLE - (Try to condense to three sentences.)

- a) The Story: I wanted to get results at work without delegating any of my authority.
 - b) What did I do wrong? I blamed others for the lack of results rather than giving them the authority to do the job.
 - c) What would God have me do instead next time? Pray for the wisdom to realize that I must trust responsibility in others by giving them co-equal authority.
- 6) WORK and OTHER TALENTS (Arts, sports, etc.): Do I delegate authority equal to responsibility at work? Or do I expect employees to be responsible without giving them equal authority for those responsibilities?

INVENTORY EXAMPLE - (Try to condense to three sentences.)

- a) The Story: I wanted to get results at work without delegating any of my authority.
- b) What did I do wrong? I blamed others for lack of results rather than giving them the authority to do the job.
- c) What would God have me do instead next time?: Pray for the wisdom to realize that I must trust responsibility in others by giving them co-equal authority.