

## PREPARING FOR THE TWELFTH CONCEPT OF SERVICE

(Read pp. 64-76 of the “Twelve Concepts for World Service”)

### **THE TWELFTH CONCEPT OF SERVICE**

**We are guaranteed the freedom of selfless service by observing the six warranties:**

- 1. We do not pursue authority, wealth, and power.**
- 2. We live by a prudent financial principle: sufficient operating funds plus an ample reserve (one year of operating expenses).**
- 3. We are not dictators and are not placed in a position of unqualified authority over anyone.**
- 4. We seek substantial unanimity whenever possible.**
- 5. We are not personally punitive, nor do we incite public controversy.**
- 6. We are democratic in thought and action.**

Let us examine any of our attitudes that interfere with our ability to give service:

1. Do I seek authority, wealth or power as a goal in my life?
2. Have I been living a financially reckless or miserly life?
3. Am I a dictator to my spouse, child, at work, to those I sponsor, or anyone at all? Do others describe me as a dictator? Let us ask someone who knows us if they think we are dictatorial.
4. Do I seek consensus at home and work, or do I issue orders? Do share my authority?
5. Is there someone I feel personally punitive about? Do I enjoy gossiping or criticizing others and thus promote public controversy?
6. Do I think and act democratically, or do I even ask what others think? Can I love someone who disagrees with me? Did the last disagreement I had lead to estrangement or closeness? Did we part friends?

“UNITY INSURES RECOVERY THROUGH SERVICE”  
MEETING OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

**THE TWELFTH CONCEPT OF SERVICE**

**We are guaranteed the freedom of selfless service by observing the six warranties<sup>1</sup>:**

- 7. We do not pursue authority, wealth, and power.**
- 8. We live by a prudent financial principle: sufficient operating funds plus an ample reserve (one year of operating expenses).**
- 9. We are not dictators and are not placed in a position of unqualified authority over anyone.**
- 10. We seek substantial unanimity whenever possible.**
- 11. We are not personally punitive, nor do we incite public controversy.**
- 12. We are democratic in thought and action.**

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

This final concept has been called “The A.A. Service Bill of Rights”. It protects us from ourselves by giving us a standard by which we respect each other’s spiritual liberties.

The warranties protect us from past errors with money, property, prestige, and power through a spirit of prudence. The traditions express the principles and attitudes of prudence that create unity. The warranties teach prudence, which keep us from the extremes of fear and recklessness. Bill writes about the importance of prudence in achieving harmony, effectiveness, and consistent spiritual progress:

Concept 12

**General Warranties of the Conference: In all its proceedings, the General Service Conference shall observe the spirit of the A.A. Tradition, taking great care that the Conference never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principle; that none of the Conference members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others; that all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy; that, though the Conference may act for the service of Alcoholics Anonymous, it shall never perform any acts of government; and that, like the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves, the Conference itself will always remain democratic in thought and action.**

The Concept here considered consists of Article 12 of the Conference Charter. There are good reasons for placing it in this context.

Taken as a whole, our Conference Charter is the substance of an informal agreement, which was made between the A.A. groups and their trustees in 1955. It is the agreed

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

## Concept 12

basis upon which the General Service Conference operates. In part, the Charter is an elastic document; its first eleven Articles can be readily amended by the Conference itself at any time.

But Article 12 of the Charter stands in a class by itself. An amendment or a cancellation of any of its vital Warranties would require the written consent of three quarters of all the directory-listed A.A. groups who would actually vote on any such proposals, and the considerable time of six months is allowed for careful deliberation. (This would include all A.A. groups known to the general service offices around the world.) Although changes in the Warranties of Article 12 thus have been made difficult, they have not been made impossible.

It is clear that all of these Warranties have a high and permanent importance to A.A.'s general welfare. This is why we believe we should permit change in them only upon positive evidence of their defectiveness and then only by common consent of the A.A. groups themselves. We have ranked them, therefore, with A.A.'s Twelve Traditions, feeling that they are quite as important to A.A.'s world services as the Traditions are to A.A. as a whole.

The warranties of Article 12 are a series of solemn undertakings which guarantee that the Conference itself will conform to A.A.'s Twelve Traditions; that the Conference can never become the seat of great wealth or government; that its fiscal policy shall ever be prudent; that it will never create any absolute authority; that the principle of substantial unanimity will be observed; that it will never take any punitive action; that it never will incite public controversy; that it can serve A.A. only; and that it shall always remain democratic in spirit. These Warranties indicate the qualities of prudence and spirituality, which our General Service Conference should always possess. Barring any unforeseen defects, these are the permanent bonds that hold the Conference fast to the movement it serves.

There are significant aspects of these Warranties, which should be considered. Notice, for example, that all of them are counsels of *prudence* – prudence in personal relatedness, prudence in money matters, and prudence in our relations with the world about us. For us, prudence is a workable middle ground, a channel of clear sailing between the obstacles of fear on the one side and of recklessness on the other. Prudence in practice creates a definite climate, the only climate in which harmony, effectiveness, and consistent spiritual progress can be achieved. The Warranties of Article 12 express the wisdom of taking forethought for the future based on the lessons of the past. They are the sum of our protection against needless errors and against our very natural human temptations to wealth, prestige, power, and the like.

Article 12 opens with this general statement: “In all its proceedings, the General Service Conference shall observe the spirit of the A.A. Tradition. . .” Of all bodies and groups in Alcoholics Anonymous, the Conference should, above all, feel bound by the A.A. Tradition. Indeed, the Conference is named “the guardian of the Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous”. The Traditions themselves outline the general basis on which we may best conduct our services. The Traditions express the principles and attitudes of prudence that make for harmony. Therefore, A.A.'s Twelve Traditions set the pattern of unity and of function which our General Service Conference is expected to exemplify at the highest possible degree.

If I take written inventory on the six warranties and try to conform to them in all my affairs by working the first nine steps on areas where I need to improve, I will be led to the most exhilarating place I have discovered in sobriety: the freedom to give selfless service.

I observe the first warranty in A.A. at home and at work by letting service motivate me and not authority, wealth and power.

I finally learn how to strike a balance between recklessness and stinginess with money in warranty two. I seek sufficient operating funds and try to save one year of operating expenses (see p. 67 from “Twelve Concepts for World Service”).

Warranty three reminds me that as a sponsor, husband, or employer, I am not placed in unqualified authority over anyone.

Warranty four urges me to take the trouble to explain situations fully in order to seek unanimity for decisions I must make.

The fifth warranty keeps me from playing God in anybody’s life: I am not personally punitive, and I am not judgmental about others so that I do not incite controversy or gossip.

Most importantly, I combat my dictatorial tendencies by trying to be democratic not only in my actions but in my thinking in the sixth warranty. I take no action in anger, hast, or recklessness. Mutual trust prevails.

These six warranties of the Twelfth Concept guarantee me the freedom of selfless service. They are as important to giving service as the traditions are to having loving relationships, and the steps are to staying sober. The concepts are the service actions which complete the promises of love contained in the traditions.

The steps produce recovery, the traditions produce unity, the concepts produce service. Perhaps their relationship can best be expressed in this manner: Unity insures recovery through service!

The Warranties of Article 12 are as follows, ensuring:

**Warranty One:** “that the Conference never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power.” What is meant by “perilous wealth or power”? Does it mean that the Conference should have virtually no money and no authority? Obviously not. Such a condition would be dangerous and absurd. Nothing but an ineffective anarchy could result from it. We must use *some* money, and there must be *some* authority to serve. But how much? How and where should we draw these lines?

The principle protection against the accumulation of too much money and too much authority in Conference hands is to be found in the A.A. Tradition itself. So long as our General Service Board refuses to take outside contributions and holds each individual’s gift to A.A.’s world service at a modest figure, we may be sure that we shall not become wealthy in any perilous sense. No great excess of group contributions over legitimate operating expenses is ever likely to be seen. Fortunately, the A.A. groups have a healthy reluctance about the creation of unneeded services which might lead to an expensive bureaucracy in our midst. Indeed, it seems that the chief difficulty will continue to be that of effectively informing the A.A. groups as to what the financial needs of their world services actually are. Since it is certain, therefore, that we shall never become too wealthy

through group contributions, we need only avoid the temptation of taking money from the outside world.

In the matter of giving delegates, trustees, and staffs enough authority, there can be little risk, either. Long experience, now codified in these Twelve Concepts, suggests that we are unlikely to encounter problems of too much service authority. On the contrary, it appears that our difficulty will be how to maintain enough of it. We must recall that we are protected from the calamities of too much authority by rotation, by voting participation, and by careful chartering. Nevertheless, we do hear warnings about the future rise of a dictator in the Conference or at the Headquarters. To my mind, this is an unnecessary worry. Our setup being what it is, such an aspirant couldn't last a year. And in the brief time he did last, what would he use for money? Our delegates, directly representing the group, control the ultimate supply of our service funds. Therefore, they constitute a direct check upon the rise of too much personal authority. Taken all together, these factors seem to be reliable safeguards against too much money and too much authority.

We have seen why the Conference can never have any dangerous degree of human power, but we must not overlook the fact that there is another sort of authority and power which it cannot be *without*: the spiritual power which flows from the activities and attitudes of truly humble, unselfish, and dedicated A.A. servants. This is the real power that causes our Conference to function. It has been well said of our servants, "They do not drive us by mandate; they lead us by example." While we have made abundantly sure that they will never drive us, I am confident that they will afford us an ever-greater inspiration as they continue to lead by example.

**Warranty Two:** "that the sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principle."

In this connection, we should pause to review our attitudes concerning money and its relation to service effort.

Our attitude toward the giving of time when compared with our attitude toward giving money presents an interesting contrast. Of course, we give a lot of our time to A.A. activities for our own protection and growth. But we also engage ourselves in a truly sacrificial giving for the sake of our groups, our areas, and A.A. as a whole.

Above all, we devote ourselves to the newcomer, and this is our principal Twelfth Step work. In this activity, we often take large amounts of time from business hours. Considered in terms of money, these collective sacrifices add up to a huge sum. But we do not think that this is anything unusual. We remember that people once gave their time to us as we struggled for sobriety. We know, too, that nearly the whole combined income of A.A. members, now more than a billion dollars a year has been a direct result of A.A.'s activity. Had nobody recovered, there would have been no income for any of us.

But when it comes to the actual spending of cash, particularly for A.A. service overhead, many of us are apt to turn a bit reluctant. We think of the loss of all that earning power in our drinking years, of those sums we might have laid by for emergencies or for education of the kids. We find, too, that when we drop money in the meeting hat, there is no such bang as when we talk hours to a newcomer. There is not much romance in paying the landlord. Sometimes we hold off when we are asked to meet area or inter-group service expenses. As to world services, we may remark, "Well, those activities are a long way off, and our group does not really need them. Maybe nobody needs them." These are very natural and understandable reactions, easy to justify. We can say, "Let's not spoil A.A. with money and service

organization. Let's separate the material from the spiritual. That will really keep things simple."

But in recent years, these attitudes are everywhere on the decline; they quickly disappear when the real need for a given A.A. service becomes clear. To make such a need clear is simply a matter of right information and education. We see this in the continuous job now being done with good effect for our world service by delegates, committee members, and general service representatives.

The fact and the symbol of A.A.'s fiscal common sense can be seen in the Reserve Fund of our General Service Board. As of now, this amounts to little more than \$200,000 – about one year's operating expense of our World Office. (In 1978, the \$2,179,100 Reserve Fund would have covered about nine months' operating expense.) This is what we have saved over the last twenty years, largely from the income of our books. This is the fund which has repeatedly prevented the severe crippling, and sometimes the near collapse, of our world services.

In about half of the last twenty years (1950-1960) A.A. group contributions have failed to meet our world needs. (Between 1954 and 1979 group contributions met these needs only once.) But the Reserve Fund, constantly renewed by book sales, has been able to meet these deficits – and save money besides. What this has meant in the lives of uncounted alcoholics who might never have reached us had our services been weak or nonexistent, no one can guess. Financial prudence has paid off in lives saved.

**Warranty Three:** "that none of the Conference members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others."

We have learned that this principle is of incalculable value to the harmonious conduct of our Conference affairs. Its application in our structure has already been extensively discussed under the Concept entitled "The Right of Participation", which emphasizes that our world servants, both as individuals and as groups, shall be entitled to voting rights in reasonable proportion to their several responsibilities.

Many A.A.'s have already begun to call Article 12 of the Conference Charter "the A.A. Service Bill of Rights". This is because they see in these Warranties, and especially in this one, an expression of deep and loving respect for the spiritual liberties of their fellows. May God grant that we shall never be so unwise as to settle for anything less.

**Warranty Four:** "that all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity."

Here, on the one hand, we erect a safeguard against any hasty or overbearing authority of a simple majority; and on the other hand, we take notice of the rights and the frequent wisdom of minorities, however small. This principle further guarantees that all matters of importance, time permitting, will be extensively debated, and that such debates will continue until a really heavy majority can support every critical decision that we are called upon to make in the Conference.

When we take decisions in this fashion, the Conference voice speaks with an authority and a confidence that a simple majority could never give it. If any remain in opposition, they are far better satisfied, because their case has had a full and fair hearing.

And when a decision taken in substantial unanimity does happen to go wrong, there can be no heated recriminations. Everybody will be able to say, “Well, we had a careful debate, we took the decision, and it turned out to be a bad one. Better luck next time!”

In passing, it should be noted that the Conference will sometimes have to decide, with respect to a particular question, what the requirements of substantial unanimity are going to be – whether a two-thirds, a three-quarters, or an even greater majority will be required to settle a particular question. Such an advance agreement can, of course, be had on a simple majority vote.

**Warranty Five:** “that no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy.”

Practically all societies and governments feel it necessary to inflict personal punishments upon individual members for violations of their beliefs, principles, or laws. Because of its special situation, Alcoholics Anonymous finds this practice unnecessary. When we of A.A. fail to follow sound spiritual principles, alcohol cuts us down. Therefore, no humanly administered system of penalties is needed. This unique condition is an enormous advantage to us all, one on which we can fully rely and one which we should never abandon by a resort to the methods of personal attacks and punishment. Of all societies, ours can least afford to risk the resentments and conflicts which would result, were we to yield to the temptation to punish in anger.

Therefore, it is evident that the harmony, security, and future effectiveness of A.A. will depend largely upon our maintenance of a thoroughly non-aggressive and pacific attitude in all our public relations. This is an exacting assignment, because in our drinking days we were prone to anger, hostility, rebellion, and aggression. And even though we are now sober, the old patterns of behavior are to a degree still with us, always threatening to explode on any good excuse. But we *know* this, and therefore I feel confident that in the conduct of our public affairs, we shall always find the grace to exert an effective restraint.

**Warranty Six:** “that, though the Conference may act for the service of Alcoholics Anonymous, it shall never perform any acts of government; and that, like the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves, the Conference itself will always remain democratic in thought and action.”

It is probable that we A.A.’s possess more and greater freedoms than any fellowship in the world today. As we have already seen, we claim this as no virtue. We know that we personally have to choose conformity to A.A.’s Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions or else face dissolution and death, both as individuals and as groups.

Therefore, we expect that our Conferences will always try to act in the spirit of mutual respect and love – one member for another. In turn, this signifies that mutual trust should prevail; that no action ought to be taken in anger, haste, or recklessness; that care will be observed to respect and protect all minorities; that no action should ever be personally punitive; that whenever possible, important actions will be taken in substantial unanimity; and that our Conference will ever be prudently on guard against tyrannies, great or small, whether these be found in the majority or in the minority.

The sum of these several attitudes and practices is, in our view, the very essence of democracy – in thought and action.

Freedom under God to grow in His likeness and image will ever be the quest of Alcoholics Anonymous. May our General Service Conference be always seen as a chief symbol of this cherished liberty.

To a man, we of A.A. believe that our freedom to serve is truly the freedom by which we live—the freedom in which we have our being.

*End of Reading*

## COMMENTARY

What is the purpose of the six warranties? I suspect that they are the six essential defects that prevent me from giving selfless service. They represent my life-long pitfalls in being of service.

In order to protect the fellowship from their defects, the six warranties may not be changed without the written consent of three-quarters of all the directory-listed A.A. groups and six months must be allowed for careful deliberation. This is not true of the first eleven concepts of Service which can be amended by the General Service Conference.

The Warranties are ranked with A.A.'s Twelve Traditions and are "as important to A.A.'s world services as the Traditions are to A.A. as a whole" ("Twelve Concepts for World Service" p. 65)

The purpose of the warranties is to teach prudence. Prudence is a virtue I never sought. I thought prudent people were boring people who lived dull lives. The last thing I wanted to do was to be like one of those squares that lived for their family. I have come full circle. I no longer want the enticements of alcohol. I seek to be prudent so that I too can bask in the love a happy family.

The traditions express the principles and attitudes of prudence that create unity. The warranties teach prudence, which keep me from the extremes of fear and recklessness.

I now believe that harmony, effectiveness, and consistent spiritual progress cannot be achieved without prudence. The warranties protect me from my past errors with money, property, prestige and power through a spirit of prudence.

Just as the principles of the six warranties are essential in being of service in A.A., they are being of service at home, at work and in the rest of my relationships. Let us examine each warranty to see where we can improve our service.

**WARRANTY ONE: We do not pursue authority, wealth, and power.**

When I drank, I always pursued authority, I always pursued wealth, and I always pursued power. I thought that was the purpose of living. Why work if you don't pursue authority, wealth and power? What else is there? This is the very first defect that keeps me from giving selfless service. If I am out in the rat race for myself, how can I possibly have the kind of attitude necessary to give selfless service? I can't.

When I did think about giving service, I was thinking about self-seeking service. I never thought of selfless service. I would give service as long as I could think of the reward I was going to get. But to be guided by the principle of simply giving service in order to please God, not for any other reason, was a principle that was new to me. This is what I now call the principle of selfless service. I cannot possess it if I am also pursuing authority, wealth, and power.

How do I apply this first warranty to my life? One of the first things I do is to accept living at a modest salary figure. I quit pursuing grandiose dreams of unlimited wealth. I accept what is happening in my life financially. If more money comes to me, that is fine because it can help me give more service, but I don't pursue it with an obsession any more as one of life's essential goals. I surrender my drinking goal of unlimited authority, wealth, and power. Instead I seek to be a servant to the needs of others in A.A., at home and at work. I humbly pray that my old fantasies be replaced with a spirit of poverty regardless of the amount of money God entrusts to me.

If God does entrust me with authority, wealth and power, I try to administer this trust with a spirit of prudence so that I am of service with assets I am given.

The real power that I pursue though, is the spiritual power that comes from my example of giving service. This is the only spiritual power I need to pursue. I cannot get self-esteem from authority, wealth and power anymore because I know the truth. I do not have problems that money can fix. My self-esteem can only come from giving selfless service.

**WARANTY TWO: We live by a prudent financial principle: sufficient operating funds plus an ample reserve (one year of operating expenses.)**

I am grateful that A.A. does not separate the material from the spiritual (see "Twelve Concepts for World Service", p.67.) I think it is interesting that Alcoholics Anonymous through the steps, traditions, and concepts is able to answer the questions in life that I have always had problems dealing with. Rarely has it gotten more specific than it gets right here when it talks about how to handle money. A most vexing problem. How much money is enough money? It even defines that for me.

If I have \$20,000 worth of expenses a year, then I can have a reserve fund of the same amount. In the eleventh concept (p. 53), Bill points out that two-thirds of our reserve funds should be so invested that they are immediately available to us "without loss, thereby enabling us to meet hard times or even a calamity."

My financial goal is to save one year of operating expenses as an ample reserve. This means that I must become more prudent in the handling of my salary. I need to spend less and save more. This was never my style as a drinker, nor in sobriety.

To bring myself into alignment with the second warranty, I need to practice prudent financial principles. I need to live well within my means so I can save some money. I need to agree with my wife on a budget, and I need to see that I stick to it as the year progresses by periodically checking myself.

I need to treat money as a trust from God just as I view the gift of my sobriety. I have to surrender a lot of old irresponsible ideas about money if it is not to be my master. I resist hoarding money. Just as I share my sobriety in order to keep it, so must I use money to serve others in order to succeed financially. It is not “my” money. It is “the” money. It is a trust from God.

I need to avoid the financial extremes I pursued when I drank: reckless with money when drinking and miserly when hangover and remorseful. I need to be as generous with money as I am with my time to A.A., intimate relationships, and work. My new attitude is that I am a trusted servant with the money God gives me.

**WARRANTY THREE: We are not dictators and are not placed in a position of unqualified authority over anyone else.**

I respect the right of participation that others have in life in reasonable proportion to their responsibilities.

In A.A. this means that I do not have absolute authority over those I sponsor. I respect the spiritual liberties of others especially when they act contrary to my suggestions. I only make suggestions, I do not give orders.

With my spouse, authority is decided according to responsibility. At work, I respect the authority of others according to their responsibilities.

A priest friend of Mother Theresa described her early service as that of a “benevolent dictator”. Now he describes her as a “benevolent coach”. This is my goal in my sponsor relationships in A.A., as a parent and to my employees at work.

This warranty is a service “Bill of Rights” for those I might claim authority over. Being authoritarian is a defect of character of mine. I need to see if others describe me as a dictator. Am I a dictator to those I sponsor, at home or t work? If so, I need to make spiritual progress with this third warranty in order to be free of my defects that I may be come a “benevolent coach”.

**WARRANTY FOUR: We seek substantial unanimity whenever possible.**

This warranty requires effort from me. Instead of giving orders, I need to spend the time and effort required with those I sponsor, at home, and at work to achieve unanimity. It doesn't necessarily mean that I change orders views to correspond with my own. My views might need to be changed to be in accord with theirs.

I try to do better than achieve a simple majority or consensus. I seek to accommodate the minority view so that heated recriminations later can be avoided if something goes wrong. If the minority view were obstinate and not reasonable, even if this is my view, I would have to surrender to the majority view and be overridden.

I need to pray that my willfulness in wanting my way in all decisions be removed along with my laziness in not seeking the views of others. Than my life can come into accord with this warranty and my achieving unanimity with those I serve can increase the effectiveness of my service.

**WARRANTY FIVE: We are not personally punitive nor do we incite public controversy.**

Obviously, I cannot give loving service if I feel punitive to anyone in my life. I have no right to try to play God in others' lives by being punitive to anyone in A.A. to those I sponsor, at home or at work. Instead I seek a spirit of forgiveness.

I need to maintain that triangle of peace that resulted when I made my last ninth step amend: the divine juices flowed in my life when I was at peace with you, God, and myself. I cannot maintain this peace in my life if I feel punitive to anyone. It blocks my ability to want to give service. Until the spiritual tear is healed, I cannot get back into divine order. I need to practice steps four through nine on the situation to become peaceful again.

Knowing that I used to always be on the edge of exploding when drinking, I seek to be free of resentments or conflicts that tempt me to want to punish others in anger.

The second half of this warranty says that I do not incite public controversy. I stay out of public controversy by not disagreeing for the sake of being punitive. I avoid criticism and gossip since I cannot give selfless service when I am trying to hurt someone in the eyes of others by my remarks. I need to practice restraint when tempted to criticize or gossip in order to bolster myself at someone's expense. I incite public controversy when I try to turn one person's opinion against someone I am trying to punish. I practice prudence in this warranty by practicing restraint.

When I am called on to make difficult stands in the world, do so on principle only and pray for those I must oppose. I need to exert restraint on myself and my statements, especially in public affairs. I avoid being judgmental about others. I don't need to reform others – only myself.

**WARRANTY SIX: We are democratic in thought and action.**

I believe that God is democratic in thought and in action. He gives sobriety to those who choose to conform to A.A.'s Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts of Service. Even though the alternative is dissolution and death, God gives me a democratic choice.

I am to imitate loving you in the way that God loves me. God does not want the love of a slave, but the love of a person free to choose. I am free to choose his will or my will.

I need to love you in the same manner. You are free to accept or reject the love I offer you in the form of the service I give you. I try to force myself or my service on you. I respect your freedom to choose. You are free to reject my service, but I may still offer it to you with selfless love. I can love you though you reject me or disagree with me just as God loves me. Jesus is the ultimate model of such love.

When I tyrannize others, I become bound by the strictures of the exact nature of my wrongs – trying to be God! I become a dictator, not a servant.

Instead, I want to deal with you out of mutual trust and love. May mutual trust prevail between us.

If I practice this warranty successfully, we can disagree and still come closer together as loving human beings because of the mutual trust that continues to exist between us.

This warranty enables me to cope with differences in the world without having to drink at it, stuff food down my throat at it, curse it, get angry at it, judge myself as inferior because you don't like me or you don't want what I have to offer, and judge you as being a miserable person because you don't like what I have. Instead of those old alcoholic reactions, I simply respect your right to choose whatever it is you want to choose, the same way God respected my right to choose sobriety when I got ready. To me this is what democracy means, the ability to choose.

When I practice prudence by respecting your right to choose, I stay free to offer service. When I rebel at your right to choose, I am no longer free to serve. I am resentful.

I regard the ability to maintain my freedom to want to give selfless service as one of the greatest privileges of sobriety. Maintaining this attitude is the crowning achievement and inevitable result of living a daily program based on the twelve steps, twelve traditions, and twelve concepts of service.

Bill Wilson expresses this idea most beautifully in his closing words on the sixth warranty of service: "Freedom under God to grow in His likeness and image will ever be (our) quest . . . our freedom to serve is truly the freedom by which we live – the freedom in which we have our being." ("Twelve Concepts for World Service" p. 76)

I understand the twelfth step, tradition and concept to be related in this way: I carry the message by giving selfless service without taking credit!

By carrying the message, I practice the twelfth step. By not taking credit, I practice the twelfth tradition. By turning from selfishly motivated service to selfless service, I practice the twelfth concept of service.

In early sobriety, I worked a selfish program. This idea worked until I encountered a better idea. I came to understand that my service was given, not to benefit me, but my service was given in order to praise God. It is another level of giving. There is nothing wrong with selfish giving until a deeper level of giving is needed. By changing my motivation of giving service, not for what I get out of it, but to give service in order to please God, I became free to offer service without self-seeking motives in it. I become free to praise God through selfless service!

My twelfth concept prayer is: Father, may I not pursue authority, wealth and power; may I be financially prudent, may I not be a dictator, but seek unanimity; may I not be punitive toward others nor incite controversy; rather, may I be democratic in thought and in action so that I may have the freedom of praising you through selfless service!

As we prepare for our three-minute meditation period, I want to ask God to remove the defects I have discovered in myself in these six warranties that I may be free to give selfless service.

When I am free to love, I am free to serve. I become free to love God to the extent that my defects are removed. In meditation, I ask Him to remove my pursuits of authority, wealth, and power. May I become a financially prudent person. May I be a benevolent coach and not a dictator. May I take the time and effort to get unanimity on decisions, not just consensus. May I be at one with all and give up criticizing and gossiping about others. May I have a heart full of love and legs ready to give selfless service to anyone who is sent to me.

Above all, I want to thank my Maker for giving me the freedom to give selfless service through continued sobriety by placing our common welfare first. May our unity insure our recovery through selfless service. Let us meditate.

(Pause for three minutes of meditation.)

Let us improve our capabilities of giving selfless service by examining the six warranties to see where we need to grow. Writing inventory is the A.A. way of becoming surrendered to new awarenesses that lead to new growth. Let us write inventory where we need improvement today.

## HOMEWORK: WRITING INVENTORY – Part 1

1. Do I still seek authority, wealth or power in my life? Do I seek God's will or His money? How sincere is my desire to give selfless service?

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

- a) The Story: My first reaction to my job many times is what will I get out of it.
  - b) What did I do wrong? I don't think about what I can contribute to working with others.
  - c) What would God have me do instead next time? Pray to have a sense of giving with my fellow workers so that our spirit of service can become contagious in our jobs.
2. Have I been living a financially reckless or miserly life? Do I spend money I don't have, or do I go to the other extreme and hoard money? Do I have a budget that I live by? When was the last time I checked my performance against my budget? How long have I been able to conform to my budget?

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

- a) The Story: I resisted setting up a budget.
  - b) What did I do wrong? I egotistically thought that I could spend whatever I wanted without controls.
  - c) What would God have me do instead next time? Pray for a spirit of obedience in handling the resources that God gives me for my family's welfare.
3. Am I a dictator as a sponsor? Do I think that my role as a husband, parent, or employer means that I am placed in unqualified authority over others? Am I willing to ask those I sponsor, my wife and children, and my employees if I come across as a dictator or a servant?

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

- a) The Story: When I have important responsibilities to meet, I give orders rather than requesting cooperation.
- b) What did I do wrong? I forgot that there is a big difference between a request and a demand.
- c) What would God have me do instead next time? Pray to respect each person's "Right of Decision" by requesting their participation rather than ordering it.

## HOMEWORK: WRITING INVENTORY – Part 2

4. Do I take the time and trouble to explain the circumstances of a decision in order to get unanimity? Do I patiently listen to the opinions of others especially when they disagree with mine? Am I content with a majority vote and too lazy to pursue a unanimous consensus?

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

- a) The Story: Rather than be patient, I cite the number of my duties as my reason for not explaining all details of important decisions to my wife.
- b) What did I do wrong? I avoid explanations for fear that she will not agree with me.
- c) What would God have me do instead next time? Pray to risk disagreement by being totally open and listen to her with the same attention and importance I want her to listen to me and let our group conscience decide the issue.

5. Have I forgiven everyone in my life? Is there anyone I feel personally punitive about? Do I judge others or gossip in A.A., at home, or at work? Am I backbiting if my offer to serve is rejected? Am I faithful to God when He says “not now” to my requests, or do I blame him for my challenges in life?

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

- a) The Story: I feel rejected when my offer to serve is rejected.
- b) What did I do wrong? I reject myself because I deal with my personality and not the principle that God loves me for offering to be of service, whether it is accepted or not.
- c) What would God have me do instead next time? Realize that rejection of my service is not rejection of me and pray for a continued willingness to offer loving service to anyone God sends to me.

6. Do I respect the freedom of others to make choices in life? Do I even ask what others think, or do I care because of my inflated idea of my own opinion? Am I willing to ask those I sponsor, my wife, and my employees if they have a feeling of mutual trust in their relationship with me? Do I try to inspire a spirit of freedom in others or do I insist that they follow my spiritual path, my thoughts? Did the last time I disagreed with someone lead to closeness or estrangement? Can I release with love all disagreements? Am I an example of selfless service in A.A., at home and at work?

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

- a) The Story: I used to think of giving service as a necessary imposition on my time.
- b) What did I do wrong? I gave selfish rather than selfless service because I was not free to give myself.
- c) What would God have me do instead next time? Pray to conform to the six warranties so that I will have a spirit of selflessness in my service and can give of myself out of the privilege and joy of doing God's will rather than giving for what I can get out of my service.