

## PREPARING FOR THE SECOND CONCEPT OF SERVICE

(Read pp. 13-15 of the “Twelve Concepts for World Service”)

### **THE SECOND CONCEPT OF SERVICE:**

**“We develop discipline in order to serve the group conscience by obeying it as a trusted servant. We do what god delegates to us through the group.”**

Let us examine the state of our “discipline” in giving service by examining three areas of our lives:

1. God and A.A.: Am I disciplined in working the steps in my relationship to God? Am I as reliable in attending meetings and participating in them with answers as well as problems? Do I obey the group conscience?
2. Home: Am I disciplined in carrying out my responsibilities in a relationship? Where can I improve?
3. Work and other talents (artistic, sports, etc.): Do people rely on me at work because they know I will do what I say? Do people treat me as a trusted servant or do they avoid me because I like to run things?

“UNITY INSURES RECOVERY THROUGH SERVICE”  
MEETING OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

**THE SECOND CONCEPT OF SERVICE:**

**“We develop discipline in order to serve the group conscience by obeying it as a trusted servant. We do what god delegates to us through the group.”**

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

(It is suggested that Bill Wilson’s booklet, “Twelve Concepts for World Service”. (Published by Alcoholics Anonymous, World Service, Inc., New York, available for 85 cents) be purchased and each concept be read in full that is assigned for each week since only excerpts are read at each meeting.)

Concept II: We develop discipline in order to serve the group conscience by obeying it as a trusted servant. We do what God delegates to us through the group.<sup>1</sup>

The principle behind the second concept of service is that we become disciplined in order that we may do those jobs that God delegates to us through the group.

We also unselfishly help others do the jobs the group conscience has delegated to them.

In the first concept we committed ourselves to serve the group conscience. In the second concept we become willing to accept immediate service authority for those tasks the group delegates to us. We serve with discipline in order to effectively serve the group conscience.

The principle of “amply delegated authority and responsibility to trusted servants” is the implication of the second tradition that flows to the second concept.

The first three paragraphs of the reading on concept II speak of this<sup>2</sup>:

## **Concept 2**

When, in 1955, the A.A. groups confirmed the permanent charter for their General Service conference, they thereby delegated to the Conference complete authority for the active maintenance of our world services and thereby made the Conference - excepting for any change

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

<sup>2</sup> Excerpts from the “Twelve Concepts for World Services” are copyrighted © 1962 by Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

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in the Twelve Traditions or in Article 12 of the Conference Charter – the actual voice and the effective conscience for our whole Society.

It is self-evident that the thousands of A.A. groups and the many thousands of A.A. members, scattered as they are all over the globe, cannot *of themselves* actually manage and conduct our manifold world services. The group conscience is out there among them, and so are the needed funds.

The power of the groups and members to alter their world service structure and to criticize it's operation is virtually supreme. They have all of the final responsibility and authority that there is. The operation is really theirs; they really own it. This has been true ever since the groups took over from the founders and old-timers at St. Louis in 1955.

But an ultimate authority and responsibility in the A.A. groups for world services – if that was all there was to it – could not amount to anything. Nothing could be accomplished on that basis alone. In order to get effective action, the groups must delegate the actual operational authority to chosen service representatives who are fully empowered to speak and to act for them. The group conscience of A.A. could not be heard unless a properly chosen Conference was fully trusted to speak for it respecting most matters of world service. Hence the principle of amply delegated authority and responsibility to “trusted servants” must be implicit from the top to the bottom of our active structure of service. This is the clear implication of A.A.'s Tradition Two.

Just as Dr. Bob transferred nearly all of his immediate responsibility for the creation of the world service to Bill, and Bill delegated his immediate service authority to the Trustees and his ultimate service authority to the groups, so I must accept carrying the message, speaking, being secretary, cleaning up, and being a listening ear and an understanding heart.

In order for me to be of service I must become disciplined in order to do these jobs the group delegates to me. I cannot serve as an effective secretary if I let my responsibilities slide.

Further, I see that I have immediate service authority and the group has the ultimate service authority.

Bill describes how Dr. Bob and he transferred their immediate service responsibility and authority to the board of trustees; and how they transferred their ultimate service responsibility and authority to the A.A. groups themselves.

At first, the trustees of our new foundation took jurisdiction over money matters only. Little by little, however, they were obliged to assume many other responsibilities, because I alone could not discharge these on any permanent basis. Hence I gave the trustees added responsibility and corresponding authority as fast as possible.

After some time, it became apparent that A.A.'s public relations, a vital matter indeed, could not continue to be entrusted to me alone. Therefore, the A.A. groups were asked to give the trustees of the foundation complete control in this critical area. Later on, the trustees took jurisdiction over our national magazine, the A.A. Grapevine, which had been separately organized by another group volunteers.

In the course of these developments, the great difference between *ultimate* and *immediate* service authority became apparent.

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As early as 1945, it began to be evident that the co-founders' ultimate responsibility and authority for services should never be wholly vested in a board of trustees. Certainly, our trustees must be given a large share of the active and immediate responsibility. But the ultimate and final responsibility which Dr Bob and I still possessed simply could not be transferred to a self-appointing board which was relatively unknown to A.A.'s as a whole. But where, then, would our ultimate responsibility for world services finally be lodged? And what would become of my own leadership in world service matters? A.A.'s history now shows where the ultimate authority finally went. At St. Louis, it went from Dr. Bob and me to the A.A. groups themselves.

But the groups' acceptance of ultimate service authority and responsibility was not enough. No matter what authority the groups had, they could not meet their new responsibilities until they had actually delegated most of the active ones. It was precisely in order to meet this need that the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous was given the general responsibility for the maintenance of A.A.'s world services and so became the service conscience for A.A. as a whole.

Exactly as Dr. Bob and I earlier had found it necessary to delegate a large part of our active authority to the trustees, so have the A.A. groups since found it necessary to delegate these same powers to their General Service Conference. The final say – the ultimate sanction in matters of large importance – has not been given to the trustees alone. By the Conference Charter, Confirmed at St. Louis, this authority is now delegated to the A.A. groups and thence to their Conference, a body which is a representative cross section of our entire Fellowship.

*Therefore, the General Service Conference of A.A. – plus any later-formed sections – has become for nearly every practical purpose the active voice and the effective conscience of our whole Society in its world affairs.*

In making this momentous transfer, we old-timers deeply hope that we have avoided those pitfalls into which societies has so often fallen because their originators have failed, during their lifetimes, to properly delegate and distribute their own authority, responsibility, and leadership.

*End of Reading*

## COMMENTARY

Just as the groups delegate complete authority to the General Service Conference for the active maintenance of A.A.'s world services, God delegates spiritual work for me to do through A.A. in carrying the message. This is the meaning of me being a trusted servant with my sobriety. My sobriety is delegated to me.

In the first concept we dedicated ourselves to serving the group conscience. In the second concept we develop an attitude of discipline in order to implement our first concept attitude of dedication.

The second concept is also the direct outcome of putting the second tradition in practice. I relate to the group by being a trusted servant and as a trusted servant I give service by doing the jobs delegated to me. God delegates to me because he needs me. This is the continuing source of my self-esteem. God would delegate to someone else if I wasn't important to him.

I also learn that I need to delegate some jobs to others. I give up my imperious attitude that a job cannot be done well unless I do it.

When I begin to see myself in my true light, as a trusted servant, I also see that I cannot serve the group without becoming disciplined in my life. Good intentions without disciplined actions are meaningless.

Therefore, I need to also implement the second concept of service by developing discipline in my service.

When I begin to see you in your true light as a fellow trusted servant and not as a threat to me, I can begin to delegate work with a sense of trust and not suspicion. I can begin to imitate God's trusting attitude as he delegates important matters to my trusteeship.

So a spirit of obedience is necessary for me to be of service. Where I was once undisciplined and only did things for my own benefit, I now dedicate myself to becoming disciplined that I may serve the group in order to preserve my sobriety.

The first time that I had to develop an obedient spirit in A.A. was when I first got sober. I had to become obedient to going to nightly meetings. If I didn't do it, I wouldn't stay sober. That was a difficult thing to do, because my attitude was to be anything but obedient. I like being a rebel. I had been a rebel all my life. I like being independent. I didn't like having to rely on you to tell me how to stay sober. I didn't even like admitting that I knew nothing about it. I had to adopt an attitude of reluctant obedience in order to survive.

I give obedience to God by obeying the group, who in turn frequently speaks to me through my sponsor. I believe that a sponsor is one who is delegated by God to carry to me the suggestions I need to obey in order to stay sober. I in turn need to learn discipline to become a sponsor – a trusted servant. I must do the things I suggest to others to do.

When I declared that my life was unmanageable, I delegated to A.A. the authority and responsibility to show me the path of sobriety. I had to totally let go and trust the group because my efforts at sobriety failed.

The most important area of obedience is my discipline in working my own program so that I can become more useful to the group conscience. I try to conform to the A.A. program as described in the "Big Book" and the "12 & 12."

Am I working the step, tradition, or concept that I am on, on a daily basis? Am I taking nightly written inventory? (This only takes five minutes each evening.) Am I getting up early enough to have enough time (at least fifteen minutes) for prayer and meditation? Am I available for twelve step work on a daily basis and do I try to practice the spiritual theme of my inventory and mediation throughout the day? Do I take weekly inventory on the tradition or concept of service I am on in order to improve my relationship and service in A.A., at home and at work? Do I read these inventories to my sponsor every several weeks and then work the sixth and seventh steps of my new awarenesses for

growth by praying to practice the opposite of my defects? Do I make prompt amends to God and others for my newly discovered defects and admit it when I'm wrong?

It is the steps, traditions, and concepts that have disciplined me. I did not begin as a very disciplined person.

The principle of being disciplined is an important one and is a difficult one because it requires a lot of self-sacrifice to do it. It requires a belief that it is important. I'm not saying that its optional. I'm saying that discipline is necessary for my survival.

How do I develop discipline? I think discipline developed with me by simply saying yes to A.A. requests. Gradually the discipline requests got more demanding. Being secretary is more demanding than emptying out the ash trays and coffee cups and sponsoring a group of men is more demanding on a continuous basis than occasional twelve step work. God guided me in becoming increasingly disciplined.

Discipline in my own life began with my appetites. After stopping drinking I became aware of my other undisciplined appetites in my fourth and fifth steps.

When it was time for me to do the sixth and seventh steps it came to me in prayer to make a list of everything that was coming between me and my Maker. I discovered all the appetites run wild I was depending upon rather than reliance on a Higher Power. They included compulsive gambling, lust, coffee, sugar, and overeating.

God removed all these defects from me in a sixth and seventh step when I was several years sober. I take absolutely no credit for the discipline he gave me.

Now that I couldn't escape to Las Vegas, run to sex, or rely on a lift from caffeine and nicotine, or get high on sugar and overeating, I was forced to get, closer to my God because the only place left that I could go to was prayer.

God was shaping me up to become a disciplined servant so I could carry a better message. A trusted servant is a servant who is disciplined to serve when the going gets tough.

I welcome the increased challenges to discipline God gives me now because I see the rewards in my life for being disciplined. I am able to be of more service to others. I continue to grow, which keeps me sober.

Unless I keep trying to plunge myself into being of more service, I don't grow. And when I don't feel that I'm growing or contributing a day at a time, I go backwards. I don't stand still. And then when I stop my connection with God at all, I get into a dry drunk. I lose conscious contact with God and I'm right back into frustrations, anger, resentment, self-pity. Then comes the first drink. So I'm personally convinced that the only way I can go back to drinking is to stop being of service.

Discipline in my program has moved from the outer to the inner, from my appetites to my thoughts. Today the program is disciplining me to be restrained in what I say, to practice patience, tolerance, understanding, and love (see the "Big Book," p. 118.)

Discipline does not test me; discipline refines me like gold in fire. My God does not give me trials in order to grade me. My God is a loving God who knows my heart is good and knows that I want to be refined (sometimes against my will, though) so that I can be of greater service.

The second concept of service is really saying to me, am I willing to be disciplined? As I willing to let the program discipline me in order that I may serve the group conscience as an obedient trusted servant? That's the real question behind the second concept of service.

Do I know what my special gifts in A.A. are? In the first concept of service we took written inventory on this subject.

Am I willing to serve in A.A. by carrying the message, mopping floors, becoming a GSR or CSR, answering phones, visiting the sick or suffering alcoholics, emptying coffee cups and ashtrays, being a sponsor, helping others with my inventory experience, being a secretary, treasurer, literature person or coffee maker at a meeting, doing institutional work, visiting hospitals, visiting prisons, giving comfort, being a listening ear and an understanding heart to others, or cooking for meetings?

My special gifts in A.A. are sponsorship, inventory and sharing my path with those who want to follow a similar path.

Whatever my talents are in A.A., am I willing to be more disciplined in the service I offer? Have I shirked any jobs in A.A. that God has delegated to me? Am I willing to go to any length to develop an aggressive program that will make me a disciplined trusted servant? If God can't rely on me, how can I expect him to use me?

To become disciplined, to work the second concept of service in my life, I need to be available to all who God sends to me because he has delegated sobriety to me. It is vital for me to do this in order to grow that I remain sober. It is not a matter of preference. I am an obedient trusted servant as a matter of survival. Therefore, I become disciplined in order to stay sober.

I can get as little or as much out of the program as I am willing to put into it. I get certain opportunities for growth. If I take full advantage of them and serve to the utmost, I can grow accordingly. Or I can do as little as possible and then I will grow as little as possible too. So there is this choice about discipline.

I had to trust the group for sobriety because I didn't know any other ways to get sober. Now I need to trust the group in order to serve it. I need to trust God to tell me how he wants me to be of service. My job is simply to show up, as Bobby E. says. If I am disciplined enough to show up, God will show me what to do.

Bill Wilson has said about the second tradition that each of us is given special gifts for the group to utilize. God has intended me to be a trusted servant with my special gifts.

He delegates to me immediate service authority to accomplish the task he has given me while he delegates to the group the ultimate service authority over me. I feel that I'm going to have to make an account for the stewardship of my sobriety. My sobriety is a gift and when I die I feel I am going to have to answer my Maker about what I did to serve with my sobriety. What did I do as a trusted servant? Did I become disciplined to serve others or not?

This question of accountability for my gifts motivates me strongly to want to be as of much service as possible, I want to be able to make a good accounting of myself in sobriety because I want to balance my drinking past. I feel this is part of me tipping the scales back my way.

There is a wider dimension to my service gifts. So far I've just been speaking of A.A.. But this concept of service, of being disciplined in service with all my talents, extends to the entire world. It extends to all of my other talents.

Am I offering disciplined service with the love relationships I have been entrusted with? Am I a trusted servant as a husband, father and son?

Have I developed my work talents, my sports talents, and my artistic talents through the discipline of practice and study?

The first area though is A.A. because I need to become disciplined enough to stay sober a day at a time. The disciplined spirit of service will then overflow into the rest of my life.

There are two aspects to each concept of service: how I need to change in order to be of service and how I can help you to be of service. We have discussed the first aspect of this concept: I need to be more disciplined to give service. The second aspect is how can I help you to give greater service? I might not be the secretary of a group but I can be of help in any meeting by volunteering my services to help the secretary. Sometimes I am asked to give more humbly in my services by being the servant of the servants.

The relationship of the second step, tradition and concept of service becomes clear to me: sanity is believing in the group conscience and becoming obedient to it through the disciplined service I give as a trusted servant.

In the widest context this includes serving my family and the world through all the gifts God has delegated to me: I serve first of all through my sobriety, then as a husband, father and son. I also serve others by assisting their worship as a musician and businessman. Even my leisure times are an opportunity for loving supportive service as I play God's games and have fun at tennis and other sports.

I can do none of this without getting into divine order through a loving spirit of obedience. To be obedient I need to pray for a spirit of self discipline.

## Concept 2

My second concept of service prayer is this, "Father, may I have the discipline necessary to do whatever you delegate to me."

What I want to suggest that we think about in our meditation is "what is my special gift in A.A.? Where do I really feel most comfortable giving service right now?" Our service gifts change as we grow. Maybe we are in a new place now with our service. So I would suggest that we think about what is my gift of service and then ask a second question about it. "Do I need to become more disciplined, in being a trusted servant with this gift? Am I doing everything I can with this gift that God has given me or not? How can I do better? How can I give more service?"

I also want to ask myself if I have been saying "no" to giving any service in my life lately. Have I been saying "no" to anything in the steps? Am I avoiding any challenges in my life? How can I become more disciplined in my relationships at home and in my talents at work?

Above all, I want to thank God for the gift of discipline he has given me over my alcoholism. I pray for greater gifts of discipline with all of my talents that I may give better service as a way of saying thank you for the eternal gift of sobriety a day at a time.

(Pause for 3 minutes of meditation.)

Working a step, tradition, or concept to me means that I am willing to take written inventory and allow it to surrender something within me. The second concept suggests to me that I surrender my defiance and laziness for discipline and obedience in serving the group as a trusted servant.

**HOMEWORK:  
WRITING INVENTORY – PART ONE  
(Being Disciplined)**

- 1) **GOD and A.A.:** Am I willing to dedicate my life a day at a time to being obedient to any A.A. request no matter how inconvenient? Are there any areas in my life where I am being undisciplined in carrying out the requests of the group or of my sponsor? Am I now willing to accept those delegated duties?

Working the steps restores my relationship with God and sobriety results. Am I willing to spend a few minutes each day working the steps that I am on? Working the traditions restores my relationship with others and sobriety results. Am I willing to see a loving God in every person I encounter today? Working the concepts expresses my love for all by giving service and sobriety results. Am I willing to adopt a spirit of obedience and discipline so that I can be of service to other and thus serve God a day at a time?

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

- a) The Story: One of my gifts is sponsorship.
- b) What Did I Do Wrong? There are times when I am unwilling to listen to complaining and ungrateful phone calls.
- c) What Would God Have Me Do Instead Next Time? Practice greater willingness to be used however God wishes to use me so that I stay sober by being a listening ear and an understanding heart and an example of an obedient spirit to all who are sent to me.
- 2) **HOME:** Do I see myself as a trusted servant of my marriage? Do I have the attitude of a servant in my home life or am I demanding of others? Am I disciplined in carrying out my responsibilities to my mate, my parents and my children?

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

- a) The Story: When a request is made to me, my first thought is whether it's convenient or not for me to do it.
- b) What Did I Do Wrong? I am involved with self.
- c) What Would God Have Me Do Instead Next Time? As what is God's will for me in this situation and answer yes or no with love.

- 3) **WORK AND OTHER TALENTS** (arts, sports, etc.): Do I see myself as a trusted servant of my work talents? Do I have the attitude of a servant at work or am I demanding of others? Am I disciplined in carrying out my work responsibilities?

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

- a) The Story: I go to work with a demanding attitude some days.
- b) What Did I Do Wrong? I question the discipline of others rather than look at myself.
- c) What Would God Have Me Do Instead Next Time? Pray to give an example of discipline by doing better with my work responsibilities.

**HOMEWORK**  
**WRITING INVENTORY - PART TWO**  
**(Helping you give disciplined service)**

- 4) **GOD AND A.A.:** Do I volunteer to help others give service at meetings? When there is a tough job to do am I quick to help ease someone else's burden?

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

- a) The Story: I could be more helpful to others when they feel overwhelmed by writing inventory.
- b) What Did I Do Wrong? I don't ask how a person that I sponsor feels when they are writing inventory since I get more interested in the results.
- c) What Would God Have Me Do Instead Next Time? Pray to be more sympathetic and helpful to those struggling with the steps, traditions, and concepts.

- 5) **HOME:** Do I do nothing to help my mate's burden unless I am asked to be of service? Do I take my mate's inventory when she is not disciplined?

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

- a) The Story: I am demanding of my wife but slow to offer help.
- b) What Did I Do Wrong? I expect her to be disciplined.
- c) What Would God Have Me Do Instead Next Time? Pray to be more disciplined myself in volunteering to lighten her burden.

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- 6) **WORK AND OTHER TALENTS** (art, sports, etc.): Do I help fellow workers be more disciplined by helping them with difficult jobs? Am I an example of efficiency and helpfulness?

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

- a) The Story: I think of my own job satisfaction rather than how can I help others achieve job happiness.
- b) What Did I Do Wrong? I am self-centered.
- c) What Would God Have Me Do Instead Next Time? Pray that I be useful to others in finding fulfillment in their work.