

“UNITY INSURES RECOVERY THROUGH SERVICE”  
MEETING OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

**STEP THREE:**

**“Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God  
as we understood him”**

Homework: Writing Inventory on the Third Step  
By Dennis F.

Decisions are wonderful. They resolve conflicts. In my case, the conflict over drinking and not wanting to drink made a third step decision relatively simple. I was happy to turn over my drinking problem to God as I understood him.

However, I was not so willing to turn over other areas of my life so readily. I knew I needed God for sobriety but I wanted to hold on to my self will in the areas of sex and money.

I can tell the quality of my sobriety by seeing how surrendered I am with the false gods of sex and money.

God speaks to me through the only ways he can get my attention. He speaks to me through loneliness when he wants me to surrender sexually. He speaks to me through financial fear when he wants me to place him first rather than money.

In early sobriety, I rebelled at the way I was living. I was sober and living alone and didn't like it. I wanted to know where my soul-mate was now that I was good. I was rebelling against the condition of life in which God had placed me.

I prayed about my situation and the answer that came to me was “Am I willing to do the exact opposite of what I wanted to do if that is what God wanted me to do in order to stay sober?”

I struggled with this surrender because it meant that I would have to be celibate a day at a time. I told myself that I came to A.A. to get sober, not celibate.

I reflected that the majority of times that I went back to drinking, sex was involved.

I wanted to be delivered from a condition of lust to an ability to love. I knew that the two could not exist side by side. I wanted to be restored to sexual sanity in a meaningful relationship. Yet I always picked lower companions. Sick picks sick.

I told God that my choices were poor and that I wanted him to do the choosing.

I turned my genitals over to his care.

### Step 3

I told him that if he wanted me to be celibate a day at a time in order for me to stay sober that I would try to do it.

I was celibate for most of my first three years of sobriety. I told God that if he never wanted me to marry that I wouldn't. I became willing to be a celibate monk if that was what he wanted.

But at three years of sobriety God led me to my soul-mate and we were married. God is so generous with his gifts that he gave me a woman who was beyond what I had dreamed.

I now see that the relationship of celibacy a day at a time to a mature sexual relationship is the same as withdrawal to sobriety. A necessary pruning period I had to pass through.

There was also another purpose to my sexual surrender and that was to train me for a correct sexual attitude in marriage. Rather than insisting on sexual conjugal rights, which amounted to sexual self will run riot, which was also part of my drinking pattern, I learned that celibacy in bachelorhood was the proper attitude in marriage. We make love when mutually agreeable; otherwise I am to surrender my sexual desires and have an attitude of celibacy. This has led me to a peaceful relationship rather than the stormy scenes of my drinking years when I insisted on my "rights."

I do not regret the sexual surrender I made at all. It was the gateway to the happiness I find now in our relationship. It also taught me to develop a surrendered sexual attitude during the relationship. Sexual demands had caused the sex instinct to run riot in me when I was drinking.

The financial surrender for me was similar. The same answer came in my prayer. "Was I willing to do the opposite of what I wanted to do if that was God's will for me in order that I stay sober?"

In other words, was I willing to go bankrupt if that was what I needed to do to stay sober?

When I surrendered to this idea, my financial fear of insecurity left and has not reappeared with the same intensity. I have found this to be true of all fears. Once I walk through a fear, it does not have the power to return with the same intensity in my life.

I did little more than show up for work in my first year of sobriety, yet God rescued me from sizable debts. I spent much of my time at meetings and discussing the program in my first year of sobriety.

The "12 & 12" very eloquently makes the point that God will handle whatever I become willing to turn over to him. My willingness to surrender is essential. I have to believe that my intelligence and will power are as powerless over my life as they were over alcohol.

### Step 3

My two favorite quotations from the Third Step in the “12 & 12” are these: “We are certain that our intelligence, backed by will power, can rightly control our inner lives and guarantee us success in the world we live in.”

The other quotation appears at the end of the chapter, “Our whole trouble has been the misuse of will power. We had tried to bombard our problems with it instead of attempting to bring it into agreement with God’s intention for us.”

The more I surrender, the more I am free to do the footwork. Unless I surrender the results or outcome of my life, I am not free to make the efforts I need to make.

I believe this is why the “12 & 12” states on page 36 that, “The more we become willing to depend upon a Higher Power, the more independent we actually are. Therefore, dependence, as A.A. practices it, is really a means of gaining true independence of the spirit.”

It is easy to decide to handle problems myself after I have been sober a while. When sobriety is no longer the pressing issue it was when I had the obsession to drink, it is easy for me to resort to my old way of thinking.

The Third Step is a decision step only, which I take daily, since I try to live a day at a time and take the steps a day at a time. Each day there is a new area I need to surrender. I also take decisions back during the day that I need to re-surrender the next day. The awareness that I need to surrender takes place in the writing of Fourth or Tenth Step inventory. God surrenders me with Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Steps. He does for me what I cannot do for myself.

Let us now stop to examine in inventory any areas of our lives where we have taken back the reins. What is the most pressing area of my life that I need to turn over today after I have turned over my sobriety?

#### THIRD STEP CHECKLIST

1. Am I hanging on to loneliness? (I regard loneliness as a character defect.)
2. Am I secretly angry at God because my soul-mate has not appeared in my life?
3. Am I depressed because I don’t have the job or money I want? (I define depression as being secretly angry at God because I don’t want to accept life as He gives it to me.)
4. Am I fearful about the outcome of my life?
5. Do I feel that there won’t be enough time to get it all done?

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

- a.) The Story: I feel anxious that I won't get all my projects done soon enough in my life.
- b.) What Did I Do Wrong?: Hurry rather than being serene while I work.
- c.) What Would God Expect Me To Do Instead?: Surrender the results of my life to God, realizing that He is in charge of the divine calendar of my life and try to enjoy living life a day at a time, project at a time.

Besides examining our "lives," the Third Step refers to turning our "wills" over to the care of God as we understand Him, so let us examine this are.

"Will" means "willingness." What is the state of our willingness? Has the defeat of self will beaten us down enough in life that we are willing to surrender it to God? Or do we need to punish ourselves more in our futile effort to be God in our lives?

Can we decide to surrender this are of our lives to God with enthusiasm? Note that the word "care," which means "love," is used in the Third Step. Can we make a decision to turn our willingness over to the loving care of God as we understand Him? Let us write inventory.

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

- a.) The Story: My Third Step willingness is not what it was when I first got sober.
- b.) What Did I Do Wrong? Now that I am sober with less pain, I have taken back the management of my life.
- c.) What Would God Expect Me To Do Instead? I decide to surrender it all to you again on a daily basis and I pray that you use my "willingness" somehow today to carry the message.

FOR THE NEWCOMER

Also, after reading about the Third Step in the "Big Book" (pages 60 - 64) and in the "12 & 12" (pages 34 - 41), conclude your letters to the imaginary newcomer with a description of your decision to turn over the following areas of your life to a power greater than yourself: drinking, money and sex.