

S T U D Y G U I D E
T O T H E
A A B I G B O O K

With emphasis upon Principles before Personalities
this Study Guide presents

“A SPIRITUAL VIEW BEYOND THE LIMITS OF TRADITIONAL RELIGION”

by Ken W. as - “*a member of Alcoholics Anonymous*”
(see Forward to First Edition)

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THIS STUDY GUIDE:

This is a Study Guide to the book Alcoholics Anonymous. It is dedicated to those who want recovery from alcoholism, but have difficulty with the word "God". Especially, as that word gets used by individuals who embrace traditional religious concepts of what it means to them. Be advised that other ideas and interpretations, which are consistent with the basic AA text, also have value and usefulness in the recovery process.

Should you choose to follow this Study Guide, you will be presented ideas which this author has found to be consistent with the basic text of AA. However, some of those ideas go beyond the limitations many traditional religions have in their interpretation of the word "God" and what that word means for them. Readers who are open minded (see Appendix II) may discover *new thinking* about "a power greater than yourself".

The three-letter word "God" is generally used to communicate a concept of infinite knowledge and power. Concepts, other than those utilized by traditional religion, do exist. One fundamental idea of God, based upon the basic text of AA, (see pg 55), is being offered in this Study Guide. Some individual alcoholics may find the approach is useful in their personal recovery.

It is self-evident that no person is qualified to speak for God, nor for AA as a whole. The vital spiritual experience, necessary for recovery from alcoholism, is intensely personal to the individual alcoholic. **That is precisely the point. A readers concept of God need not follow traditional lines.**

The experience of the first successfully sober members of AA tells us:

"Why don't you choose your own conception of God?"

(AA pg 12)

**"We found the Great Reality deep down within us.
In the last analysis it is only there that He may be
found. It was so with us."**

(AA pg 55)

Regardless of whatever approach you choose for yourself, you can be assured that:

**THERE IS A POWER FOR GOOD,
AND YOU CAN UTILIZE IT IN YOUR LIFE.**

* * * * *

SECTION A02:

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE:

COMMENTS:

“FROM REPETITION COMES RECOGNITION”

Any reader of this Study Guide material will quickly recognize that the author repeats numerous points of view with great frequency. There are similarly repeated references to the same pages of the AA basic text for recovery from alcoholism. This is intentional.

For those who are alcoholic, the entire message of AA could be condensed into a simple one-line expression:

“DON’T DRINK - NO MATTER WHAT”.

Nothing further would be required as a message of sobriety.

Due to individual differences in a conscious awareness of *the Great Reality* of life, on life’s terms, there are differences in individual alcoholics. What is understood by one may not be clear to another. That is precisely the point.

Certain mental attitudes repeatedly appear within the basic text for recovery from alcoholism. Comments are made, by the author about those *ideas, emotions and attitudes* as they repeatedly appear in the basic text. (see pg. 27). Many are repetitious. They appear to have significance for any alcoholic having difficulty reconciling use of the “*three-letter word God*” in the AA Big Book with the interpretations of that word commonly offered by traditional religions.

“We have no monopoly on God; we merely have an approach that worked with us.” (pg. 95)

The Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous is “*a company of equals*”. There is no second requirement for membership. AA gains it’s strength from universal acceptance by those who are members, on their own say so.

“The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.” (Tradition 3)

As a result, the issue of “*human equality in the eyes of a Creator*” becomes a point of departure between the AA program, and the basic precepts of many traditional religions. Where religion defines that which is and is not “*God*” for their followers, AA does not. Where most religious *belief systems* have boundaries to define what they “*believe about God*”, the basic text for AA does not.

The only “*belief about God*” this author has found within the basic text of AA is a statement which finds universal acceptance for any alcoholic who seeks recovery as their *primary purpose in this lifetime*.

“We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous and free. We cannot subscribe to the belief that this life is a vale of tears, though it once was just that for many of us. But it is clear that we made our own misery. God didn’t do it.”

(pg. 133)

Where most traditional religions provide authoritative spokesmen on what is or is not acceptable human behavior “*in the eyes of God*”, AA does not. In fact, the very beginning of AA was based upon a very simple idea:

“*Why don’t you choose your own conception of God?*”
(pg. 12)

“*It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a Power greater than myself. Nothing more was required of me to make my beginning.*”
(pg. 12)

The demonstrated results of AA have clearly established that alcoholics can and do recover from a once seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. Those who have recovered obviously possess conscious awareness of something which is possible.

It is the contention of the author in this Study Guide of the AA basic text, that “recovered alcoholics” have “tapped a source of power greater than themselves”. It is in the form of “new knowledge” about “the Great Reality” of life, on life’s terms. (see pgs 53, 55, 60(c), 68, 129, 163-164 & Appendix II).

There is universal acceptance of the “*three letter word God*” as being “*the source of all knowledge and the power of that knowledge*”. Any such awareness of reality is obviously “*a power greater than any individual*” could acquire during a single lifetime. Furthermore, there is more *new knowledge* available, than has been discovered by the entire human race since the beginning of time.

For practical human purposes, the available supply of *new knowledge* about life, on life’s terms is infinite. (pgs 53 & 68). Where this has application to recovery from alcoholism, the basic text of AA is clear.

“Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter to the agnostic, and our personal adventures before and after make clear three pertinent ideas:

- (a) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives.
- (b) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.
- (c) That God could and would if He were sought.

(pg. 60)

At issue is “*a fundamental idea of God*” which this author suggests will be different within each and every alcoholic. (pg. 55). Every alcoholic will have differences in their personal awareness of that which is and is not “*the Great Reality*” of life, on life’s terms. Therefore, it is the “*belief in their own equality in the eyes of their Creator*” which becomes the focal point of concern.

This author does not subscribe to any *belief system* which claims superiority of some human beings over others.

The word “*ethnocentric*” describes that mental attitude. Many traditional religions hold to such a *belief system* for their followers. (see pg. 23). Alcoholics who desire to retain a *belief* that “*our group is superior to other groups*” should not be reading this material. Not unless they are open minded enough to consider other ideas which can be found within the AA basic text for recovery.

Having been issued “*fair warning*”, the reader of this Study Guide material should be prepared to encounter challenges to many well established “*old ideas*” about the disease of alcoholism. This will include observations about “*the power*” which has produced recovery for countless thousands of men and women from all segments of humanity. They should be evaluated with the “*inherent intelligence*” which can be found within every man, woman and child. (see pgs 55 & 86).

Before AA, no “*second hand belief system*” had been able to produce any results equivalent to what the AA program has demonstrated is possible for “*any alcoholic with a desire to stop drinking*”.

“We find that no one need have difficulty with the spirituality of the program. *Willingness, honesty and open mindedness are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable.*”
(Appendix II)

With that mental approach to the material contained in this Study Guide of the basic text for Alcoholics Anonymous, some specific suggestions follow:

1. Remember that no individual member of AA is qualified to speak for the Fellowship, except with the endorsement of the General Services Offices of Alcoholics Anonymous.
2. Rely upon “The Twelve Traditions - (The Long Form) for clarification of what AA is and what AA is not. (see Appendix I).
3. Consider the viewpoint of any individual member as just that. The view of “*a member of Alcoholics Anonymous*”. This specifically includes any comments by the author of this Study Guide of the basic text. (see Foreword to First Edition).

Each “Section” of the Study Guide suggests reading some particular portion of the basic text. Then comments follow. When reviewing this Study Guide material, it is

suggested that the reader consider it as if they were attending “*a group meeting which is studying the basic text of the AA Big Book*”.

In that setting, consider that, over in the corner, sits an “*old timer*” who has been around AA for over half a century. He is usually long-winded, repeats himself frequently, and has an opinion on just about anything or everything pertaining to the AA program. However, he does usually wait to be called upon before unleashing his viewpoints on others. It is obvious he is reasonably familiar with what is contained in the AA Big Book. His observations are eagerly accepted by some “*as a guru*”, and similarly rejected by others as being the blabbering of “*an old man who has forgotten what it is like*”.

Despite the *belief* by many that “*the old timer is full of crap*” he remains sober, and has been sober a very long time. Frequently he may voice “*a point of view*” with which it is very difficult to argue, dispute, or to find fault with it. After many years of sobriety, he still attends a lot of meetings, and claims to be “*reasonably happy, joyous and free*”. This will sometimes disturb those who find “*their own personal belief system*” is being challenged by what he says.

During any such meeting to Study the AA Big Book, you would expect to encounter a wide variety of viewpoints on the portions under consideration. The individual “Sections” of this Study Guide material reflect *ideas, emotions and attitudes* you might hear from the mouth of that “*old timer over in the corner*”. (see pg. 27).

The written material of this Study Guide is being provide in a self-centered attempt to assure the efforts of a lifetime remain available to anyone who might be interested. They are the *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which produced satisfactory results for a single alcoholic. Other alcoholics are encouraged to put forth similar effort and make “*their personal interpretation*” available to other alcoholics in a similar and equal manner.

Recovery from alcoholism is something which requires continued effort to “*perfect and enlarge a spiritual life*”. (see pgs 14-15, 35, 129 & 164). When evaluating this Study Guide material, it is suggested that the reader proceed at their own pace. Valid *new knowledge* will always displace and rearrange “*erroneous old ideas and false beliefs*”.

The only measure of validity for *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which are the guiding forces in the lives of alcoholics is to be found in how well they work. Do they produce satisfactory results? Are they principles with application to anyone, anyplace and at any time? (see pg. 27).

The improvement of an established *belief system* is not an overnight matter. (see Steps 10 & 11). With this thought in mind, (pg. 23), study the material of each individual Section carefully, in the light of your own intelligence.

Scan rapidly through the material first, without paying any particular attention to the parenthetical references to other portions of the AA basic text. If the points being

made are not clearly understood, then review the references for additional clarification. There is “*no other authority*” intended to be used than the basic text itself.

If the reader cannot reconcile with the basic text of AA anything they are told by anyone about the AA program, this author recommends it be considered suspect of error.

It is recommended that the reader progress through the extensive comments of the author over an extended period of time. Each individual Section was intended to serve as “*a single lesson in an educational variety of a spiritual experience*” for those with an open mind to new “*ideas, emotions and attitudes*”. (pg. 27). Hopefully it will be useful to some alcoholics in producing “*the personality change sufficient to bring about recovery*”. The comments are primarily intended for those experiencing difficulty accepting traditional religious versions of “*God, as we understand Him*”. It is anticipated that any such transformation will develop slowly over a period of time.

“Yet it is true that our first printing gave many readers the impression that these personality changes, or religious experiences must be in the nature of sudden and spectacular upheavals. Happily for everyone, this conclusion is erroneous.”

(see Appendix II - Spiritual Experience).

For the alcoholic who is “*a defiant individualist*” there is value in building a personal *belief system* on the foundation of the AA basic text for recovery. This approach to recovery has produced demonstrated results which remain unequalled by any other thus far. However, “*Be quick to see where religious people are right. Make use of what they offer.*” (pg. 87). Just remember that their discovery of “*a truth*” is not the same as having knowledge of “*all truth*”.

“Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us.”

(pg. 164)

With a mental attitude of *willingness, honesty and open mindedness*, give thoughtful intelligent consideration to the *ideas, emotions and attitudes* of any alcoholic who has achieved successful results in their life. Especially those which you would like to have included in your own. While no two individuals will ever be *happy, joyous and free* in an identical manner, anyone can acquire *new knowledge of the Great Reality* from almost anyone.

Any improvement in your own “*conscious contact with God*” will allow for *spiritual progress* in cooperating with life, on life’s terms. It will occur as you understand more about “*a power greater than yourself*”. This “*spiritual growth*” is to be found by constantly seeking *new knowledge* from the infinite source of all knowledge. That source is some intelligence referred to by use of the “*three letter word God*”.

The individual alcoholic, seeking recovery will quickly recognize a need for reliance upon “a conception of God” that produces practical results. A *fundamental idea of God* as “the source of all new knowledge” is a simple approach which has worked well for many. (see pg. 46).

This approach to recovery has been particularly valuable to those alcoholics who have difficulty *believing* the versions of “a power greater than ourselves” offered by and available from the spokesmen for many traditional religious “*ideas of God*”.

What this author has found by way of support for “a *fundamental idea of God*” from the basic text of AA is being freely offered in this Study Guide material to those who are interested.

TAKE WHAT YOU CAN USE, AND LEAVE THE REST FOR OTHERS

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SECTION A03

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SECTION A04:

FORWORD TO STUDY GUIDE :

"ALL GENERALIZATIONS ARE FALSE - INCLUDING THIS ONE"

That is a principle, emphasized in this "Study Guide".

COMMENTS:

Disagreement with traditional religious *beliefs* need not block recovery from alcoholism. There can be both value and limitations to some of those old ideas and their *belief systems*. However, the power of *new knowledge* is infinite. (see pg 68).

Knowledge is power, and it provides additional freedom with the power of increased choice. There is always more to know. Any knowledge you do NOT possess is "*a power greater than yourself*".

Seeking *new knowledge* is equivalent to seeking improved power to make choices that were not previously available due to personal ignorance. As you understand *new knowledge* you are free to use it. (see Steps 3 & 11).

The ability of alcoholics to recover, from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body, was *new knowledge* for many, when the book "Alcoholics Anonymous" was first written. That *new knowledge* provided alcoholics *new power* to make *new choices*. With those *new choices* they were able to enjoy *a new freedom and new happiness*. (see pgs 83-84).

There is no limit upon how much additional *new knowledge* (i.e.: "*the power of God*") anyone can acquire. More *new knowledge*, hence more power is available to anyone, any place, at any time if it is sought. (see pgs 47 & 60(c)).

By seeking more *new knowledge*, the seeker taps into an infinite source of power. (syn: "God" - see pg 59). That source is *a power greater than yourself*.

That message reflects a basic view of the AA Big Book which will be found in this Study Guide. It has been prepared for the sole purpose of sharing what has been found in the basic text with alcoholics who have problems with traditional religious interpretations of the word "God" and what that word means to their mind. The book "*Alcoholics Anonymous*" offers a path of recovery which extends beyond any requirement to conform to traditional religious ideas or practices.

Many alcoholics find personal fulfillment within a traditional religious *belief system*. Such readers may not be interested in seeking any additional improvements in their life. (see pg 133). For them to read on could expose their minds to other ideas and *new knowledge* which might disturb what they now *believe* about life.

Those who have found peace of mind and personal contentment with their faith, are advised to *stop reading here, and set this book aside now.*

Those who have continued to read this Study Guide material will recognize that many alcoholics have problems with traditional religious interpretations of the word "God". Some of those problems are aggravated by exposure to militantly religious and highly vocal AA members who insist "*their way is the only way*" to experience the "*vital spiritual experience*" necessary for recovery. The basic text on recovery from alcoholism does not support that claim. (see pgs 27 & 95).

Some religious groups of alcoholics insist it necessary to shave your head, or meditate in a certain position. Others *believe* it is important to don a yellow robe and chant in order to find spiritual enlightenment. Large numbers of other alcoholics emotionally insist that engaging in rituals, symbolic of being like a vampire and cannibal, is the only valid way of "*communion with their deity*". How much intelligence is involved in any of the different *belief systems* becomes a matter of personal choice. (see pg 23).

Though useful to many alcoholics, religious practices merely reflect personally chosen *beliefs* by individual alcoholics. Fortunately, none of those religious *belief systems* are necessary requirements for recovery. If they were necessary, then no one could or would recover without them. AA experience has indicated the only requirement for recovery is a desire to stop drinking. (see pg 58).

Principles of recovery, found in the AA Big Book, have universal application.

Those principles will work for anyone with a desire to stop drinking. **There is no second requirement for membership.** Similarly, there is no difference between an alcoholic with a Buddhist hang-over or a Baptist hang-over. The AA program works equally well in producing recovery for them both.

Furthermore, the only assumption about "*what God wants for the alcoholic*" is:

"We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous, and free".
(pg 133)

Some individuals prefer having another human being (i.e.: "*equal in the eyes of God*") tell them if and when they are happy, joyous or free. If so, a different approach to recovery may produce what they want most. This Study Guide emphasizes the spirit of human equality as a concept which has been found consistently throughout the basic AA text for recovery from alcoholism.

In this regard, the reader may wish to consider the author of this Study Guide to be like "a sponsor". Someone, like a "*safari guide*" which you have chosen. Someone who is willing to point out what they have found in the basic text "Alcoholics Anonymous". Someone willing to take the reader on a guided tour of the basic text, while emphasizing points of interest from a personal perspective with a personal bias built into

all comments which get made. Such an approach can be anticipated by anyone who continues reading this material.

Comments made by the author of this Study Guide are offered freely to alcoholics who are interested in them. Others may prefer taking a different approach to the basic text for recovery from alcoholism. The only important approach to sobriety for any alcoholic is the one that works best.

It is suggested the reader utilize whatever *new knowledge* is helpful to them, regardless of how or where it is acquired. If some of those ideas, emotions or attitudes have broader application in life than sobriety alone, then consider them a bonus benefit. They will be *the power of new knowledge* you will be free to use as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny.

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SECTION A05:

“COMMENTS ON SPONSORSHIP”

READ:

1. Basic text of “Alcoholics Anonymous” from frontispiece through end of Chapter 11 on page 164.
2. Appendices I - VI found in the back of the basic text.
3. AA Pamphlet (P-15) - “Questions & Answers on Sponsorship”.

COMMENTS:

It is a common recommendation to newcomers in the AA Fellowship that they get a sponsor who will help them understand what is in the basic text for recovery. This Study Guide was written with that consideration in mind. If the reader desires to use the author “*as a sponsor*” it is worthwhile to establish a clear understanding of what that relationship is. Specifically, in regard to interpreting the basic text for recovery that is found in the first 164 pages of the AA Big Book.

Where the reader chooses to use the author of this Study Guide “*as a sponsor*”, it is recommended that anything which cannot be confirmed with that basic text be considered suspect of error.

Be assured that the author has made every effort to reconcile personal comments with the AA Big Book. While these and other outside views may provide value and usefulness, it is not recommended that any alcoholic bet their life and their freedom on something which they cannot confirm with AA’s basic text for successful recovery.

Consider anyone you select as “*a sponsor*” to be like a “*safari guide*” you have chosen to lead you through territory which is new for you but familiar to them. In the process of your journey, you will inescapably be exposed to the personality of your guide, as part of the process. What they consider of significance or importance may not have the same value to you.

When reading material in this Study Guide, be aware that understanding the personality of the author is not essential to your own recovery from alcoholism. However, improving conscious understanding of the principles of recovery is required for a vital spiritual experience. (Step 11).

“We find that no one need have difficulty with the spirituality of the program. *Willingness, honesty and open mindedness are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable.*”
(Appendix II)

Because no one has all the answers in AA, individual members share their experience, strength and hope with each other. No individual member is qualified to speak for AA as a whole. Therefore, when selecting “*a sponsor*” as “*a safari guide*” to lead

you through the unfamiliar territory of the basic text, the use of your own intelligence will be helpful.

Any observations offered in this Study Guide by the author are personal. While they have worked well, it should be recognized that other views exist. The objective is to help the reader improve ways to become increasingly “*happy, joyous and free*”. (pg 133). This occurs by enlarging a conscious understanding of “*a power greater than yourself*” as presented in AA’s basic text for recovery.

Different individuals seek different approaches to obtaining the fulfillment of their desires. (i.e.: “*the answers to their prayers*”). No one else really knows what they want for themselves. Because this author failed “*mind reading*” the alcoholic reader must make a decision concerning what *new knowledge* they are seeking for themselves. Part of that desire (syn: “*prayer*”) may be answered from comments provided in this Study Guide. If so, utilize those ideas freely, and leave what is not suitable for someone who may find them helpful.

Be aware that some alcoholics are, or believe they are, unable to make decisions, in their own best interests. If so, they may require a conservator, caretaker or “*a keeper*” to protect them from themselves. AA places emphasis upon human equality, particularly in the eyes of a creator. For that reason, participation in AA may not be their best personal approach to recovery. Established AA members are not necessarily qualified to run the lives of other alcoholics. Beyond personal success with their own recovery, there is room for doubt concerning their expertise in other areas of living.

In AA, most established members have admitted their inability to successfully manage their own lives. Most also *believe* that, in the past, some “*power, greater than themselves*”, had been lacking. (see pg 45). How they have tapped a source of power that has restored them to sanity may vary. The value of their choice will vary according to whomever renders judgment on their mental condition. (pg 23). Therefore the reader would be wise to utilize their own intelligence and exercise caution when making a selection of someone to provide them with “*guidance*”.

Should an alcoholic desire “*a sponsor*” to run their life for them, they would require a “**non-revocable Power of Attorney**” in order to be effective. Remember that any alcoholic is always free to rebel, and they would likely try to outsmart “*the sponsor*” any time they disagreed.

Nonetheless, within AA, there still exists an ample supply of other alcoholics who are willing to run your life for you. The reason is that it is to their own personal best interests to share the secrets of their own success. The reader should be aware that any *happiness, joy or freedom* will be “*their version*” rather than your own. (see pg 133). Therefore, caution is recommended.

Because no two alcoholics are precisely the same, any “*second-hand version of happiness*” will ultimately conflict with a unique and

individual personality. Therefore, it is recommended to place priority importance upon “*principles before personalities*”.

Professional help for alcoholics is available from the fields of medicine, religion and psychiatry. Each professional is a specialist who has been trained in their specific discipline. There is no challenge to their expertise or competence in their chosen field of study. However, recognize that alcoholism impacts every major area in the life of the alcoholic. Therefore, no single discipline embraces the entire problem.

Because of their limited effectiveness, the professional community has not been able to offer significant demonstrations of success in producing recoveries from alcoholism. Those which do usually have developed close connections with or reliance upon the AA program of recovery. However, the AA program is not allied nor affiliated with any of them. (AA Preamble & Appendix I - Tradition 6).

Historically, “*the reformed drunk*” is known to the drinking society with a zealous religious outlook upon life. Experience indicates such emotional upheavals are usually temporary in nature and hold little long-term appeal to most alcoholics.

This author *believes* that it is difficult, if not impossible, to maintain that strong emotional intensity over any extended period of time. Eventually the intelligence of the alcoholic and the reality of life, on life’s terms, will interject to disrupt that high emotional pitch. Then the emotional pendulum swings to the depths of depression and despair.

“All of us felt at times that we were regaining control, but such intervals– usually brief– were inevitably followed by still less control, which led in time to pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization.” (pg. 30)

Accordingly, when considering any religious or other professional approach to recovery from alcoholism, it is recommended that the interested alcoholic apply an old familiar nursery rhyme by asking:

“Pie man, Pie man - let me taste your wares”. “May I speak with some alcoholics who have recovered by using your methods please?”

This is considered an intelligent request, before spending substantial amounts of time and money on a solution. First consider the results being offered. Then decide if those results are what you want for yourself.

In San Francisco, California in May 1951 the surviving co-founder of AA related his earlier encounter with the John D. Rockefeller Foundation to obtain financing for facilities to deal with recovery from alcoholism. The man, who had provided much money for humanitarian purposes, wisely declined saying:

“This is the workings of the good will of one human being for another, and money would louse it up”.

Human nature has changed little since then. Money, power and prestige can be an alluring diversion from the *primary purpose* of Alcoholics Anonymous. With the tradition of being self-supporting, AA escapes those distractions from recovery produced by the allure of “*other people’s money*”.

*“Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help
other alcoholics to achieve sobriety”* (AA Preamble)

The “*blind acceptance*” that a “*close minded belief*” a particular religious concept of God alone is sufficient to produce recovery from alcoholism is yet another distraction. While many religions may offer useful *ideas, emotions and attitudes* about life, on life’s terms, none is complete. Many newcomers have difficulty with this when seeking to improve understanding of “*a power greater than ourselves*”. (see pgs 12, 23, 27, 42, 45, 53, 55, 59, 68, 95, 164 & Appendix II).

Be aware there is no “Official God Club” for AA. There is no difference between a Buddhist hangover and a Christian hangover. The reasons why AA has not stamped itself as a “*Christian movement*” are clearly defined in the writings of AA’s co-founder. Some specific comments can be located on *page 34* of the AA publication “*As Bill Sees It*”. To avoid emotional confusion between the objectives of AA and “*other outside activities*” it is recommended those comments be read with an open mind.

Individual AA members frequently comment on what is in the basic text for recovery. Before relying upon “*what they say*”, it is useful to consider “*why they say it*”. Those statements may not be correct, and are still only personal interpretations which sometimes are inaccurate. If it is important, then check it out first with the basic text and decide if it means the same to you.

There can be a difference between what the text says, and a personal *belief* of what the text means. Because AA accepts anyone, who claims to have a desire to stop drinking, your own intelligence will confirm that you are apt to find a wide variety of people in any AA meeting. Unless you know precisely what is and is not included in AA’s basic text for recovery there is no intelligent means of separating a solid foundation for recovery from the personal views of individual members.

Be cautious about relying upon “*second-hand information*”. It can be perilous when it comes from an equal human being who is capable of being mistaken. Obviously you cannot know the difference without first enlarging your own understanding. (pgs 14-15, 35, 58 & Steps 10 & 11).

Where “*Sponsorship*” is concerned, this author suggests that you first read AA’s basic text for recovery. (Pages 1 - 164). Then read the world-wide experience of AA set forth in the pamphlet “**Questions and Answers on Sponsorship**” (P-15). One provides the “*minimum essential requirements for recovery*” from alcoholism. The other contains

a variety of different approaches which will be helpful in selecting the kind of sponsor you want for yourself.

Before blindly selecting someone you wish to label as “*your sponsor*”, this author makes the following suggestions and recommendations:

1. **Get a personal copy of the basic text “*Alcoholics Anonymous*” to highlight comments about “*Sponsorship*”.**
2. **Open your book to the Frontispiece and highlight the portion that reads:**

**“How Many Thousands of Men and Women
Have Recovered from Alcoholism”**
3. **Underline the word “Recovered”.**
4. **Read the basic text (through page 164) and carefully highlight each and every comment on “*sponsorship*” so you will know, with certainty, what is and is not contained in the basic text for recovery.**
5. **Review the AA pamphlet noting the various approaches to “*sponsorship*” and decide what kind of a sponsor you want.**

This Study Guide can serve “*as a sponsor*” to walk you through some things found by the author, within the basic text. The reader is welcomed and encouraged to do so. Like a “*safari guide*” this author will point out some areas considered worth noting during your journey. They reflect the value judgment of the author. You may or may not place the same value or importance on what you are being shown.

It is inescapable that you will be exposed to the personality of the person you choose to be “*your sponsor*”. Be aware that agreement with their personality is not essential for your recovery. Acceptance of the principles of recovery in AA is indispensable. (Appendix I - Tradition 12 & Appendix II).

Most members of AA are *willing, honest and open minded* about their desire to be *happy, joyous and free*. (see pg 133). Most alcoholics are willing to “*trade up*” to something better if it can be intelligently established that it is an improvement. (see Step 11). Therefore, if you *believe* that your own “*success story*” already has elements of value to others, then sharing that *new knowledge* may have mutual value and usefulness. (pg 77).

Hopefully there will be some personal enrichment gained from use of this Study Guide of the AA basic text for recovery. The reader is encouraged to accept, utilize and share anything which provides value in the personal recovery process for any alcoholic. It is being freely offered for that purpose.

Just remember that what is offered here comes only from a single member of AA. (see Forward to First Edition). And, never forget that it is your own choice to accept or

reject the observations of any other individual. It is the use of your own intelligence which decides what has validity and is acceptable for you.

This author suggests your own successful methods for recovery be offered to others “*cafeteria style*” with the recommendation that they “*take what they like and leave the rest*”. Not everyone is able to use the same information effectively in the same manner. The only real measure of value of any approach to sobriety is in how well the information works for the individual alcoholic seeking recovery. As equals, there is always more to be learned. (pgs 53 & 68).

IF KNOWLEDGE IS INFINITE - THEN SO IS IGNORANCE

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SECTION A06:

“TO THE SERIOUS STUDENT OF THE AA BIG BOOK”

COMMENTS:

When this “Study Guide of the AA Big Book” was prepared, the author anticipated different degrees of interest by readers. The material is primarily intended for those individual members of AA who, like the author, have difficulty intelligently reconciling what they find in AA’s basic text with various religious concepts of “*a power greater than ourselves*”.

The purpose of this Study Guide is to provide those members with any value they can obtain from a half-century of experience in AA by this author. The reader is encouraged to take what they can utilize and leave the rest for anyone else who may find it has value in their recovery from alcoholism.

Recognizably, there will be readers who take a more casual view of both the basic text of AA and this Study Guide material. Some portions may either be accepted or rejected according to the personal *belief system* of the reader. A recommendation is made that they freely avail themselves of what is offered, with the open minded recognition that others may find different value in the perspective of the author.

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that each individual member of AA, when writing or speaking publicly about alcoholism, does not speak for the AA Fellowship as a whole. Their comments are no more nor less than that of “a member of Alcoholics Anonymous”.
(see Foreword to First Edition). **They either do or do not believe in their own human equality.**

The comments in this Study Guide reflect the experience, strength and hope of one single member with a desire to be of service and usefulness. (pg 77). Other views exist. They should be given equal consideration in the light of the intelligence which the reader can find within themselves. (see pg 55).

For the serious student of the AA Big Book, what follows are some recommendations from the author of this Study Guide in the approach to take when utilizing this supplemental material.

1. Read the book “*Alcoholics Anonymous*” from the frontispiece through the end of Chapter 11 (“A VISION FOR YOU” pg 164). Then read the Appendices in the back of the book. The personal stories reflect how different alcoholics have utilized the principles of AA in their recovery.
2. Scan through the Study Guide material without paying particular attention to the references provided to specific pages of the basic text. Read the Study Guide to obtain the general perspective of the author. The parenthetical page references are intended to provide confirmation from the basic text of specific points being made.

3. Review AA pamphlet **“Questions and Answers on Sponsorship” (P15)** plus the section “Comments on Sponsorship” provided in this Study Guide. Decide if you desire to have the author of this Study Guide walk you through the basic text. If so, the author will be providing a viewpoint, as a single member of AA, which goes beyond the limits of traditional religious *belief systems*. (see Appendix II).
4. Those who wish to avoid being emotionally disturbed by exposure to *new knowledge* are recommended to set all of this material aside now. This *avoidance of reality* will delay having your established *belief system* challenged by inherent intelligence. (see pg 55). Alcoholics who are sufficiently open minded to consider “*all spiritual concepts*” in their recovery are recommended to continue in the following manner. (see Appendix II).
5. Use this Study Guide of the AA Big Book as if the author were “*a sponsor in print*” who, like “*a safari guide*” is taking you on a conducted tour of the basic text. Each individual section is a single adventure. One where “*your chosen guide*” will point out various items considered to be of potential interest. Over the entire journey through the basic text, there will inescapably be frequent repetition of pertinent points which this author *believes* are important. Other “*guides*” may emphasize other elements found in the basic text. With an open mind, give consideration to them all.
6. The serious student of the basic text of AA is encouraged to first read each individual section rapidly. Then return to the beginning of the section and check the parenthetical page references for further support to each point made in the Study Guide. Consider the basic text “Alcoholics Anonymous” as the authority on recovery, and view any comments made by the author of the Study Guide from that perspective. Use your own intelligence to confirm or reject the validity of any ideas, emotions or attitudes which have been presented for consideration.
7. Do not blindly accept the views of the author, or of any other individual member of AA as being authoritative. First confirm what others tell you with the basic text and your own intelligence. Unless your own interpretation of the basic text is clear, it is well to challenge “*anything you are told about the basic text*”. See if it will stand up to the light of intelligent examination. Reality is what it is without regard to the different *beliefs* of individual alcoholics.
8. Where questions still remain concerning the comments provided in any section of the Study Guide, it is recommended that they be discussed with a wide variety of other members of the AA Fellowship to obtain different perspectives. At some point the serious student of the AA Big Book will make a decision as to what they accept or reject as the ideas, emotions and attitude to guide their own life. (see pg 27).

9. Proceed, at your own pace, through the entire Study Guide, giving consideration to each section. Discuss your questions with others, either privately or in group discussions. Arrive at your own conclusions concerning your personal relationship with “*a power greater than ourselves*”. (see pg 12). Recognize that any “*second hand versions*” reflect the *beliefs* of other individuals, developed at other times, and other places for other reasons. (see pgs 42, 86 & 95).
10. Recognize that “*the Great Reality*” of life, on life’s terms is not negotiable. Continue to enlarge and improve your own conscious recognition and understanding that “*what is, is; and what is not the Great Reality*” will become life on life’s terms. (Step 11). Mentally prepare yourself to survive the certain trials and low spots ahead of your own journey through unknown areas of life you do not yet understand. (see pgs 14-15, 35, 42, 129, 164, Step 11 & Appendix II).
11. Challenge your own *belief system* to determine if “*what you believe*” is a principle, which applies to any alcoholic, anyplace, and at any time. If there are exceptions, consider that your *belief* reflects your “*personal preference*” and defines your personality. (see Appendix I - Tradition 12).
12. Share freely of what you find with others who willingly accept whatever *new knowledge* has enriched your own happiness, joy and freedom. (see pgs 89 & 133).

“Abandon yourself to God as you understand God.
Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows. Clear away
the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find
and join us. We shall be with you in the Fellowship of
the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you
trudge the Road of Happy Destiny.

May God bless you and keep you - until then.”

(pg 164).

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SECTION A07:

ABOUT THE AUTHOR BY THE AUTHOR

COMMENTS:

Any autobiographical comments can quickly become “*a premature obituary*” and scarcely be labeled as “*an objective view of the individual*”. Such must be the case for this portion of the author’s Study Guide of the AA basic text for recovery from alcoholism.

Countless thousands of men and women have recovered from a once seemingly hopeless condition called “alcoholism”. With the possible exception that each individual recovery was “*a miracle*” because something happened which “*was once believed could not happen*”, any experience of this author is now neither unusual nor particularly noteworthy.

Similar experiences of recovery are readily available in other personal stories which follow the basic text for recovery. Like all others, the journey of this author, as an alcoholic, began with birth and will end with death. There is no place for dispute of human equality on that fact of life.

The only significance of that journey is in how much conscious awareness of *the Great Reality* was developed of life, on life’s terms. It is the experience, strength and hope of a single individual. What is offered here was acquired by a careful study of the AA basic text for recovery from alcoholism. That is the essence of this writing, and all else is incidental. Any value it may have will be found from viewing the AA basic text of recovery through the eyes of this author.

This Study Guide material was written for those alcoholics who are seeking answers.

The author recognized a need for “*a power greater than himself*” but was unable to intelligently reconcile “*a conception of God*” with the way it was presented by most traditional religions.

Other alcoholics experience similar difficulties. This Study Guide is part of a continuing an effort “*to be of maximum service to God and the people about us*”. (see pgs 12, 55, & 77). It is not intended as “*the answer to recovery*” for everyone. However, it is an available option for those who can use “*the experience, strength and hope*” of another alcoholic to enlarge their own spiritual life. (pgs 14-15).

Many alcoholics who come to AA experience sudden and dramatic spiritual experiences or religious conversions, however most do not. The material in this Study Guide is directed to those seeking “*the educational variety of a spiritual awakening*” which occurs gradually, over a period of time. Of necessity, there is a requirement for a mental attitude of “*willingness, honesty and open mindedness*” when considering different *ideas, emotions and attitudes* without contempt, prior to investigation. (see Appendix II - Spiritual Experience).

The author of this Study Guide is offering, what may be awareness of *new knowledge* for some. It is intended for alcoholics seeking a *spiritual awakening* to the

reality of their relationship to life, on life's terms. Only the individual reader can determine if any portion has value and usefulness in their own recovery.

The journey of this author in sobriety has included a wide range of life styles spread over a large portion of the planet. The similarities of alcoholics in different cultures is amazing. They cut across the boundaries which otherwise would separate human beings from each other. And, so does the AA program of recovery. It can and does produce recovery when it is not being blocked by close minded members attempting to force the AA program to fit into "*their beliefs about how life should be*".

This alcoholic has participated as AA has crossed racial barriers of the '50's in the United States and was able to override the nationalistic attitudes between recently warring Europeans during that same period. Attitudes about alcoholism in West Germany, once were determined by their Catholic or Protestant faith and were overcome by alcoholics seeking recovery in AA. The political walls separating Western Europe from the eastern block and Russia were penetrated by AA in correspondence. Alcoholics in the Far East with religious and cultural attitudes far different from those where AA began, have embraced recovery in AA without abandoning their own unique customs.

As a result of direct experience, this author has reached a conclusion about AA, and the program of recovery outlined in the basic text.

The "universal principles" of AA take precedence over "local tribal customs". Particularly those involving traditional religious belief systems.

This attitude is being reflected by the author in this "*Study Guide of the AA Big Book*". Local or regional attitudes may be important, however that which has universal application is more important. (see pgs 53 & 68).

The way any alcoholic perceives themselves, and their relationship to life, on life's terms, becomes a determining factor in what they choose as actions. (see pg. 27). Each individual has a set of priorities and values. (see pg. 55). This author is no exception.

The priorities of what an individual will or will not do, and when they will do it becomes their *moral inventory*". That *belief system* determines the choices of actions made by each and every alcoholic. It reflects their "*fundamental idea of God*" and is only found within each individual. (see pg. 55).

How an alcoholic "*sees themselves*" is critical to the choices they make. This was dramatically illustrated by a young woman speaking to a large AA gathering in San Diego. She came from a predominately Hispanic community with a strict code of well defined ethnic, cultural and religious values. Her simple but powerful comment concerning her own recovery was:

"I used to be a Mexican, now I'm an alcoholic"

This author has been and still is many things which are used to separate and categorize individuals. What is important here is that "*I am an alcoholic*".

Placing "*a label of alcoholism*" on any individual implies having some idea of what that is. Those ideas can, will and do vary according to whom, when and where you

ask about them. Social, political, religious and legal attitudes will vary according to the “*local tribal customs*” which are currently in effect. Because those views are constantly undergoing changes, any effort to produce stability requires seeking out whatever “*principles*” have universal application “*common to any alcoholic, anyplace at any time*”.

Such was the case for this author. Successful recovery does have “*one single requirement*” which can only be determined by the individual alcoholic. It is the requirement that they develop and maintain a simple desire. One which takes priority precedence over all other desires, and thereby constitutes a fair definition of being “*their prayer*”. Something no one else can do for them. On a daily basis, it is the dominant desire (i.e. “*prayer*”) to:

MOVE INTO LIFE INSTEAD OF AWAY FROM REALITY.

This author made that decision in 1951, and has continued to seek improvements ever since. From that free choice all else follows.

Any problems which followed have all revolved around the lack of sufficient *new knowledge* to cooperate with *the Great Reality* of life, on life’s terms. This author did not know how. No human power had all the answers to all questions. However, it was possible to *seek improvement* by consciously enlarging understanding of life, on life’s terms.

This required abandoning “*old ideas*” and accepting “*new knowledge*”. To do so it was essential to displace and rearrange the *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which had been guiding life activities. The indispensable requirement was a mental attitude of *willingness, honesty and open mindedness*.

The AA basic text of recovery has provided guidance on how to achieve that personality change, sufficient to produce recovery from alcoholism.

“Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a *Power greater than ourselves*. Obviously. But where and how were we to find this Power? (pg. 45)

“Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power---that One is God. May you find Him now.” (pg. 59)

“Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter to the agnostic, and our personal adventures before and after make clear three pertinent ideas:

- (a) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives.
- (b) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.

(c) That God could and would if He were sought.
(pg. 60)

“My friend suggested what then seemed a novel idea. He said, “*Why don't you choose your own conception of God?*”
(pg. 12)

“Therefore, the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than his body.”
(pg. 23)

“Ideas, emotions, and attitudes which were once the guiding forces of the lives of these men are suddenly cast to one side, and a completely new set of conceptions and motives begin to dominate them.”
(pg. 27)

“I knew from that moment that I had an alcoholic mind. I saw that will power and self-knowledge would not help in those strange mental black spots... .. It meant I would have to throw several lifelong conceptions out of the window.”
(pg. 42)

“When we became alcoholics, crushed by a self-imposed crisis we could not postpone or evade, we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else He is nothing. God either is, or He isn't. What was our choice to be?”
(pg. 53)

“He was as much a fact as we were. We found the Great Reality deep down within us. In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found. It was so for us.”
(pg. 55)

“We find that no one need have difficulty with the spirituality of the program. *Willingness, honesty and open mindedness are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable.*”
(Appendix II)

Recovery, from a once seemingly hopeless state of mind and body is and has been the dominant desire of the author. It has included a continuing priority to move into this life rather than to seek oblivion - be it recreational or permanent.

This author *believes* that “*the Great Reality*” is an intelligent definition for that three letter word “*God*”. In the process of seeking improved understanding, there has been acquired a constant flow of *new knowledge* about how to personally cooperate with all life on life's terms. (see Step 11). The need for *new knowledge* has constantly changed as conditions have changed. For example:

I'VE NEVER BEEN THIS OLD BEFORE!

The only life, reality, or “*God*” this author is able to understand is that which is being experienced during “*this lifetime*”. It is increasingly self-evident that there is approaching a point where this author will become “*an expert authority on any next life*”. **Until then, my beliefs about what comes next are equally as valid as those of any other living human being.**

The author of this Study Guide of the AA basic text of recovery from alcoholism has chosen to freely share his personal experience, strength and hope with those alcoholics who can willingly accept whatever value and usefulness it might have in their own recovery process. If it does have any continuing value, then this author will have achieved “*a life after death*”.

Where that help enables some other alcoholics be more *happy, joyous and free*, then it will be in harmony with “*what God wants for an alcoholic*”. (see pg. 133). Those alcoholics with different *belief systems* are encouraged to put forth similar effort to clarify their own thinking for the benefit of other alcoholics who may want what they have discovered in the basic text of AA.

In seeking to improve a conscious understanding of life, on life’s terms, this author discovered an inability to intelligently accept the *ideas, emotions and attitudes* offered as “*the last word*” by spokesmen for traditional religious concepts of “*a power greater than ourselves*”. To “*survive the certain trials and low spots ahead*” it was imperative for this alcoholic to follow the novel idea presented at the beginning of AA and ask myself “*Why don’t you choose your own conception of God?*”. (pgs 12 & 14-15). There was no intelligent reason not to do so **if I believed in my own equality in the eyes of my creator.**

What others *believed* was what impacted their lives. What I *believed* would impact my own. That was equitable and fair, on life’s terms.

“It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a
Power greater than myself. Nothing more was required of me
to make my beginning”
(pg. 12)

My own priority was recovery now - during this lifetime. Any subsequent experience was of secondary importance. Taking a clue from the AA Slogans, about dealing with “*First Things First*”, this author made a decision *believed* to be an intelligent one. It was to focus effort, thought and concentration upon living

“ONE LIFE AT A TIME”.

The result of that decision was relief from the *fear, anger and guilt* which had come from personal inability to live up to the expectations and demands of people claiming to have direct and superior connections to “*the source of all knowledge and power*”. That low self-esteem gradually was replaced by a *belief* in human equality in the eyes of whatever is “*the creative source of all life*”.

With equal access to new knowledge of how to be happy, joyous and free, it was obviously up to this alcoholic to seek it. In the process, it was discovered that new knowledge was being constantly provided on a daily basis.

It comes as “*the daily gift of life*” where all and everything in an infinite universe is made available. It is up to the individual to learn to either accept or reject it.

The only thing to accept or reject is this life, on life’s terms. The simple process of being willing, honest and open minded to let go of old ideas and accept new knowledge of “the Great Reality” has produced satisfactory results.

It became apparent that absolutely everything required for any human being to be *happy, joyous and free* in this life is already being provided with the daily reprieve from oblivion. Having also been provided with brains to use, and the power of choice, it is a personal decision as to what portion of an infinite universe to seek, and then accept or reject. (pg. 86). All and everything which is “*God*” is already there to be claimed, if the alcoholic knows how to claim it. (pg. 53). Some have acquired that *new knowledge*, while others try to hold on to their old ideas.

This awareness of reality provided an intelligent concept of “*a loving God*” which wanted me to be “*happy, joyous and free*”. (pg. 133). Instead of being “*a victim*” it is the responsibility of the individual to determine what they desire to have for themselves. That “*prayer*” then determines what they choose to do. The results are produced “*on life’s terms*”.

The personal problem of this author is continuing to be *willing, honest and open minded* enough to let go of my old ideas of how I *believe* life is, and learn to accept *new knowledge* of “*the Great Reality*” of life, on life’s terms. Such mental effort to “*enlarge a spiritual life*” has proven to be a never-ending process sufficient for the entire journey during this lifetime. Thus far, no one has intelligently established themselves as being an authority on any future experience.

This author has achieved and maintained sobriety for over a half-century of living under widely varied conditions and circumstances. What is significant is that, for the most part, it has been a *reasonably happy, joyous and free* experience.

It is *believed* that other alcoholics, have had similar difficulties with the “*second hand moral belief systems of traditional religions*”. Some may be interested in seeking a similar approach to recovery from alcoholism. If so, they are invited to freely partake of any useful material being offered in this Study Guide of the AA Big Book.

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SECTION A08:

GETTING STARTED WITH AA'S BIG BOOK:

Read: From Front Cover through to "THE DOCTOR'S OPINION".

NOTE: For the serious reader, the author recommends you do not skip this portion. It can be useful in placing the entire "Big Book" into the context of how it was first presented to the general public. This may be helpful in understanding the AA program as it now exists.

* * * * *

1. Open the front cover. If your book is new, you will note the very first page is blank. For the newcomer to AA, a blank page has been suggested as an indication of your personal knowledge of successful recovery from alcoholism.

For the established member, a blank page may indicate your ability to use *new knowledge* before you have it.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE HOW MUCH YOU KNOW, - - IF WHAT YOU KNOW IS NOT SO?

2. The next page contains the title selected for the book, and became the familiar name of the fellowship "*Alcoholics Anonymous*"

At the time of first publication, there was a severe social stigma attached to being identified as alcoholic. At that time, alcoholism was considered by most of society to be both hopeless and incurable. Anonymity, as an alcoholic, was a matter of considerable importance to the earlier members. The principle of anonymity continues to be of major significance. Some of the reasons for emphasis have changed. An article "*Why Alcoholics Anonymous is anonymous*" can be found in the pamphlet "*AA Traditions and How They Developed*".

3. The next page lists Other Books, published by AA World Services, Inc. These provide information about Alcoholics Anonymous, and are "*official AA literature*".

Other printed material has been extremely helpful to some AA members for spiritual enlightenment, depending upon their geographical location. The Bhagavad-Gita, the Koran, the Holy Bible, and other "religious writings" are often considered to contain authoritative definitions of the word "God". Use of such material is a matter of individual preference and *personal belief*.

It should be noted that AA does not use any religious definition of the three-letter word “God”.

The program of Alcoholics Anonymous clearly defines itself as not wishing to engage in any controversy. By the exclusion of *religious ideas of God*, all who suffer from alcoholism may be included in AA without any requirement for accepting a particular concept of God. (see pg 12). Because different religious *belief systems* are frequently controversial, they are clearly outside of the realm of the AA program. By contrast, it is strictly a matter of personal preference as to what any alcoholic chooses to *believe* about “*a Power greater than themselves*”.

4. Frontispiece, The book title page:

In addition to the title "*Alcoholics Anonymous*", this page indicates that the book is "the story of how many thousands of men and women have recovered from alcoholism". Your attention is directed to the use of the word "**recovered**".

Alcoholism, was once considered "*a hopeless state of mind and body*" from which recovery was not *believed* possible. Be aware that the word "*recovered*" is not synonymous with the word "*cured*". This author suggests that, when the condition of alcoholism is no longer "hopeless", an individual has "*recovered*". That they are not "*cured*" is adequately dealt with in "THE DOCTOR'S OPINION" and *Chapter 3*.

The words THIRD EDITION in your present book indicate two previous publishing's. As of this writing, a "Fourth Edition" is being prepared. It is anticipated that page references for Chapters 1 through 11 will remain the same. Therefore, page referrals in this Study Guide are consistent with the Third Edition. Hopefully they will also be consistent with the new edition scheduled for release early in the new millennium.

Some page and format changes were made after initial publication of the FIRST EDITION in 1939, **but the basic text remains the same**. The "*Forward*" to both the first and second editions have been included in the THIRD EDITION for information. It is suggested they be reviewed. There has been growth and development within the AA Fellowship since the initial printing of the basic message of recovery from alcoholism. Personal stories of how different individuals have applied the AA program in their lives now reflect more recent experiences. It is anticipated that **THE FOURTH EDITION** will reflect similar changes to AA membership.

A circle, with a triangle appeared in earlier copies of the THIRD EDITION. It once was a symbol used to identify "*official literature*" of AA.

The three sides of the triangle, "*Unity, Recovery, & Service*", were sometimes thought of like "*a three legged milk stool*", with a need for balance between them. Though popular with many members, it became apparent that AA did not have any valid claim to the exclusive use of that symbol for AA literature. The symbol was also being utilized by other activities for other purposes. Subsequently, the "*circle and triangle*" to identify "*official AA literature*" was discontinued.

Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., New York City, indicates the corporate entity holding legal title to the AA Big Book. This became modified with the passage of time.

5. The reverse side of the Frontispiece page contains data on copyright dates, and printings.
6. The next pages provide the table of contents for the entire book.
7. The Preface is self-explanatory. It introduces the THIRD EDITION which will likely be replaced when the next edition is published.
8. The Foreword To First Edition, states the objective for publishing the original textbook for recovery from alcoholism.

"We, of Alcoholics Anonymous, are more than one hundred men and women who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. To show other alcoholics precisely how we have recovered is the main purpose of this book."

9. The FORWARD TO SECOND EDITION clarifies that:

"Alcoholics Anonymous is not a religious organization. Neither does A.A. take any particular medical point of view, though we cooperate widely with the men of medicine as well as with the men of religion."

10. The FORWARD TO THIRD EDITION - indicates the experience that the AA program has transcended traditional barriers of language, culture and other obstacles which frequently separate people from each other. That unity of action by uniquely individual human beings with the problem of alcoholism continues to date.

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SECTION A09:

THE DOCTOR'S OPINION

Read:

From the beginning of "THE DOCTOR'S OPINION" to the beginning of page 1 of Chapter 1, "Bill's Story".

At the time this endorsement was written on AA's methods for recovery from alcoholism, the "*unorthodox approach*" was often *believed* to be "*unscientific*". Doctor William D. Silkworth, MD placed his professional reputation and credibility on the line with his support for the results being produced. Today, some of that viewpoint continues, in some medical circles. However, to their professional embarrassment, it is difficult to argue with or duplicate the success produced by those who follow the AA program of recovery from alcoholism.

One of the more significant observations made in THE DOCTOR'S OPINION is that:

"---the action of alcohol on these chronic alcoholics is a manifestation of an allergy; that the phenomenon of craving is limited to this class and never occurs in the average temperate drinker"

Despite efforts by the professional community, to find "a medical cure", that physiological condition still remains a valid difference between "*normal drinkers*" and those who drink "*as alcoholics*".

In terms of the professional community finding a "*medical solution*" to the ever-present physical problems of alcoholism, the comment made was that:

"Frothy emotional appeal seldom suffices. The message which can interest and hold these alcoholic people must have depth and weight. In nearly all cases, their ideals must be grounded in a power greater than themselves, if they are to re-create their lives."

That observation was provided as part of THE DOCTOR'S OPINION in 1939. It has not yet been surpassed by any other approach to recovery.

While much more has been learned, his observation of that one common denominator that physiologically separates the alcoholic from others, is as valid today as it ever was. In regard to the various types of individuals afflicted he observed:

"All these and many others, have one symptom in common: they cannot start drinking without developing the phenomenon of craving. This phenomenon, as we have suggested, may be the manifestation of an allergy which differentiates these people, and sets them apart as a distinct entity. It has never been, by any treatment with which we are familiar, permanently eradicated. The only relief we have to suggest is entire abstinence."

The doctor closes his comments with personal observations of recovery by an alcoholic who became "sold" on the ideas presented in the basic text of "*Alcoholics Anonymous*".

The ideas, provided in the basic textbook for AA, work now as well as they did in 1939. They reflect some universal principles which function successfully for anyone, anyplace, at any time. The resulting recoveries demonstrated by the AA approach to recovery from alcoholism are unsurpassed.

This success story has resulted in those same principles being copied and used in dealing with "*problems other than alcoholism*". While those problems are beyond the scope of the AA program, any individual, seriously interested in the recovery process, is encouraged to carefully study the book "*Alcoholics Anonymous*". Hopefully, this Study Guide will be useful in recognizing some of what that book contains.

Use your own intelligence to confirm or deny the validity of the comments you find when reading this Study Guide of the book "*Alcoholics Anonymous*".

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SECTION A10:

ABOUT THE BASIC TEXT

The comments provided here are in no way intended to be read as being “Officially Approved AA material”. No member of AA speaks for the Fellowship as a whole. That specifically includes the author of this Study Guide of the basic text for recovery.

Comments provided here are intended to be viewed as coming from one single established member of AA. Accordingly, it is recommended that written material provided by AA General Services Offices always be given priority consideration for accuracy. This is the source of “*the best information available about AA*”. Other interpretations, specifically including this Study Guide, may have usefulness in “*filling in gaps*” or answering other questions. Take what you can use and leave the rest.

Whenever any member of AA shares their view and understanding of the program of recovery in AA, it is unavoidable that their view will reflect any errors which exist within their own mind. (see pg 23). Any reader interested in the historical background of AA will find numerous publications are available from the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous. Complete order forms are available from them at Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, N.Y 10163.

The reader should clearly understand that the comments provided in this Study Guide are not an official interpretation of AA’s basic text for recovery from alcoholism. Instead, they provide the interested individual with the viewpoint of only one single member of AA. (see Foreword to First Edition).

This Study Guide was specifically prepared as an offering to only those members who have difficulty reconciling that emotionally volatile “*three-letter word God*” with traditional religious concepts. Hopefully, the reader will use whatever open-minded intelligence they have available when giving consideration to comments offered by the author. (see Appendix II). With an *educational variety of a spiritual experience* it is possible that some of the ideas, emotions and attitudes which are guiding forces in life will be improved, enlarged and enriched. It has happened to other alcoholics, and could happen to you. (see pgs 12, 14-15, 42, 53, 55, 133, 164 & Appendix II).

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SECTION A11:

“ABOUT THE PERSONAL STORIES”

The personal stories which follow the basic text for recovery indicate how different individuals have applied the principles of AA in their own lives. They are essentially “*a speaker meeting in print*”. Their experience, strength and hope is able to be shared on a broader scale than would otherwise be possible. (review Foreword to First Edition).

The essential message of recovery from alcoholism is contained in the basic text for recovery which is provided in the first 11 chapters of the AA “Big Book” Alcoholics Anonymous. These chapters contain the minimum essential requirements for recovery from a “*once seemingly hopeless state of mind and body*”. The personal stories which follow indicate that those principles have been applied by a wide range of individuals *with a desire to stop drinking*. They clearly establish the AA program will work for anyone who is capable of being honest with themselves.

Contrary to the pronouncements of some of AA’s more religious members:

THERE IS NO SECOND REQUIREMENT FOR AA MEMBERSHIP

Personal stories, which follow the basic text, indicate how various individuals applied the principles of AA in their personal life. They share, in a general way, what it was like before coming to AA, what happened to them, and what their lives were like when those stories were written.

Each personal story provides information on how alcoholics dealt with their own lives to produce changes. As the “*AA message of recovery*” reached more and more alcoholics, the personal stories, published in the first three editions changed to reflect the changing composition of AA membership. A forthcoming “Fourth Edition” will undoubtedly provide even more variations in how the AA program has been utilized.

NO INDIVIDUAL SPEAKS FOR AA AS A WHOLE.

All any AA member can do is to point out, what they have found in the basic text and clarify their own personal interpretation and application of that material. This specifically applies to any comments made by the author of this Study Guide.

Other views exist, and each member of AA is encouraged to share their personal view of the basic text with other interested alcoholics. The readers are encouraged to consider all viewpoints in the light of their own intelligence.

“We find that no one need have difficulty with the spirituality of the program. *Willingness, honesty and open mindedness are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable.*”
(Appendix II)

Regardless of common acceptance, it is recommended that any material, other than the AA basic text for recovery, be clearly identified. Obviously there are matters of religion, medicine, and philosophy which overlap in the problem of alcoholism. Because

alcoholism impacts every one of those areas their respective approaches should be allowed to stand on their own merits.

It is recommended that the alcoholic reader allow the Fellowship of AA to stand on it's own record of results in producing recoveries. Doing this without any demand that AA be incorporated into some other pre-established concept will reduce conflicts with religion, medicine and philosophies which produce different results.

ALLOW SUCCESS TO SPEAK FOR ITSELF!

In reading the personal stories, this author recommends that they be considered as **“A Speaker-Meeting in Print”**. In earlier times, the wealth of information now available about alcoholism was not easily accessible to newcomers interested in the AA Fellowship. Therefore, efforts were made to provide the *“experience, strength and hope”* of a wide variety of AA members.

Some areas large enough to have *“regular speaker meetings”* strove to provide a contrast to emphasize personal differences. Speakers who were well educated were contrasted with semi-literate alcoholics, street-walkers were paired with socialites, atheists with devoutly religious, and the wealthy with impoverished ex-drunks. This enabled any newcomer to recognize and understand the problem of alcoholism cuts across all social barriers, and so does the AA solution. This helped them to clarify the universality of the problem, and their own place as being more ordinary than special. The need to conform to some pre-established standard was reduced as a result.

Personal stories still serve much of that same purpose. The first three editions of the *“AA Big Book”* provide an indication of the changes which occurred since AA began in the late 1930's. At this early part of the 21st Century, membership in AA continues to grow, and a Fourth Edition will undoubtedly continue that trend.

As it was in the beginning, it is recommended that the reader

TAKE WHAT YOU LIKE AND LEAVE THE REST FOR THOSE WHO MAY BE INTERESTED.

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SECTION A12:

ABOUT THE APPENDICES - I - VI

COMMENTS:

As with all else in this “Study Guide of the AA Big Book”, the comments provided by the author are not intended as any official interpretation of any part of the AA program of recovery from alcoholism. The comments are strictly those of “*a member of Alcoholics Anonymous*”. (see Forward to First Edition).

It is the clear understanding of this author that “no one speaks for AA as a whole”. Similarly, all comments by any other member about the AA program are personal, individual and should be considered accordingly, except when endorsed by the AA General Services Office,

The Appendices I - V which are found in the back section of the basic text present the official position of AA on a variety of “*outside issues*”. A careful study of “**The AA Traditions**”, (Appendix I), will provide the reader with a definitive explanation both of “**WHAT AA IS**” and equally important “**WHAT AA IS NOT**”.

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APPENDIX I:

“THE AA TRADITION”

The Short Form:

The “short form” of the AA Traditions is frequently read at meetings and provides a handy reminder of what AA has established as its primary purpose. This is more concisely stated by AA’s own definition of itself.

“Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help
other alcoholics to achieve sobriety” (AA Preamble)

A careful study of “The Long Form” of “The AA Tradition” is strongly recommended. This will help to avoid diversion from what the AA program has been able to accomplish, with superior results over any other approach to the problem of alcoholism for the alcoholic.

The reader will note that the Traditions of the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous has succeeded in doing what no other human activity has accomplished with equal results. It has provided a framework which has enabled alcoholics to successfully join together, for “*a common purpose*”, despite their innumerable personal differences which might otherwise produce conflicts and disrupt the recovery process.

The experience of this author, in over a half-century of active participation with AA activities in a large part of the world, is that those differences of race, religion, language, political philosophy, and ethnic cultural values exist.

Differences tend to be divisive and create conflicts between *ethnocentric groups*. They tend to escalate in importance in areas where one group holds a dominate majority over smaller groups with an equal desire to get sober and stay sober. This frequently creates the impression that “*if you are not doing it our way, you are doing it wrong!*”.

The Long Form:

“*The Long Form of the AA Tradition*” has always provided an equitable and fair resolution of any and all conflicts and differences disputed by groups within Alcoholics Anonymous. Therefore, a careful and thoughtful personal study of the “*Traditions*” is strongly recommended to any alcoholic seriously interested in their own sobriety and survival. This author cannot emphasize this single point strongly enough to convey it’s significance.

***One - Our common welfare should come first;
personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.***
(Tradition One)

* * * * *

The candid view of this author is that the AA program is highly effective in dealing with it’s primary purpose. It is strong medicine for recovery from alcoholism. Regardless of how noble other objectives may be, by diluting the basic purpose of AA with “*other considerations*” reduces AA’s effectiveness and is a diversion from the one primary purpose which AA accomplishes with superior results to any other approach to recovery from alcoholism.

A “*vital spiritual experience*” appears to be one essential ingredient to recovery from alcoholism. Many alcoholics have erroneously assumed this required accepting “*a conception of God*” in the form of an established “*second-hand belief system*”. Usually it gets provided by some self-appointed spokesman for one of the many different traditional religions. Fortunately, for all alcoholics, this is not the case. (see pgs 12, 27, 42, 95, 129, 164 & Appendix II).

It is the understanding of this author that the AA program has provided a solution to alcoholism which is based upon universal acceptance of anyone with a desire to stop drinking. A careful reading of “The AA Tradition - (The Long Form)” will provide intelligent reasons why “*conformity*” is not required and can be in conflict with “*universal acceptance of God as being everything*”. What is your choice to be? (pg. 53). Remember:

THERE IS NO SECOND REQUIREMENT FOR A.A. MEMBERSHIP

The solution to the specific problem of alcoholism, provided by AA, is still the most effective in terms of results, and it is difficult to argue with the success. Therefore it is counter-productive to dilute the effectiveness by attempting to incorporate it into the different primary objectives of many tradition religious *belief systems*. Those objectives are finite and limited to their own definitions of who and what they are. However, other pursuits can be freely retained by individual AA members once they reconcile what objective holds priority importance. (pg. 23).

The reader should be aware that AA's Twelve Traditions provide a framework for recovery for alcoholics who otherwise might never ever mix.

The clearly defined path of action by AA provides for maintaining recovery from a once seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. (see pg 95). "*Conformity to any particular concept of God*" is not a requirement. (see pgs 12, 27). Accepting this fundamental approach can avoid much personal conflict while still drawing strength from "*a power greater than ourselves*".

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APPENDIX II:

"SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE"

There appear to be two distinct varieties of "*the vital spiritual experience*" required for recovery from alcoholism. (see pg 27).

One is the "*personality change, or religious experiences*" in the nature of sudden and spectacular upheavals. These "*transformations*" though frequent, are by no means the rule.

Most "*vital spiritual experiences*" are of the "*educational variety*" because they develop over a period of time. (see Appendix II). Those differences in timing to accepting "*a power greater than ourselves*" create confusion for many newcomers to the AA program.

Many newcomers to AA, especially those who are not familiar with what is written in AA's basic text for recovery, will get confused about a "*fundamental idea of God*" they can only find within themselves. (see pg 55). Instead of utilizing the brains God gave them, (pg 86), they continue to "*hold on to old ideas*" by reliance upon a "*second-hand belief system*" developed by some other person, at some other place, and at some other time, for some other reason.

Personal freedom of choice allows many newcomers to futilely attempt to force-fit an infinite source of power into their already established, but nonetheless finite *belief system*. The resulting frustrations work against the very thing they most desire, which is to "*do God's will*" and be "*happy, joyous and free*". (see pg 133).

Some alcoholics even abandon the indispensable ingredient of "*being honest with themselves*" in order to gain the acceptance of an *ethnocentric group* with a limited *belief system*. This can be contrary to their own best interests when relying upon a source of power that wants them to be "*happy, joyous and free*". (see pgs 12, 23, 27, 42, 53, 55, 58, 68, 86, 95, 129, & 164).

Some alcoholics seeking recovery cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program of AA. Instead of letting go of their "old idea of God", they attempt to conform to those "second-hand concepts" created by others. They erroneously believe others

have a **“monopoly on God”** and many attempt to **“fake it until they make it”**. (see pg 95).

With that freedom many abandon a genuine desire to “*seek God*” and learn how to be “*happy, joyous and free*”. (i.e.: “*God’s will*” see pg. 133). Instead, they decide to “*seek conformity with a second-hand version*” created by some other equally fallible human mind. (see pgs 23, 42, & 60(b)).

Without dispute, there is much benefit to be gained from the precepts of many traditional religions. However, it is the *belief* of this author that there is infinitely more available. (see pg 68). What is your choice of priorities to be? (see pg 53).

AA recommends the acceptance of new *ideas, emotions and attitudes* as one way to acquire the *vital spiritual experience* required to displace and rearrange the *guiding forces* in the life of an alcoholic. (see pg 27). Those who accept the proposition that “*God is everything or else He is nothing*” will readily recognize that rejecting any part of reality is equivalent to “*rejection of God*”.

Acceptance may require *new knowledge* and improved understanding of *the Great Reality* (i.e.: “*God*” pg. 55 & Step 11). There are others who will insist upon “*special favoritism*” over “*all those who disagree with their belief system*” thereby denying them human equality in “*the eyes of their Creator*”.

The essential and indispensable ingredients for the “*educational variety of a spiritual experience*” are the mental attitudes of “*willingness, honesty, and open mindedness*” The alcoholic, seeking recovery either does or does not have that mental outlook upon “*a power greater than themselves*”. (see pg 23).

Accordingly, this Study Guide attempts to point out some elements which may be helpful in developing new ideas, emotions and attitudes about that power. It is definitely not intended to be considered as “*the last word*” on any aspect of the AA recovery program.

“Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us. Ask Him in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the man who is still sick. The answers will come, if your own house is in order. But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven’t got. See to it that your relationship with Him is right, and great events will come to pass for you and countless others. This is the Great Fact for us.”

(pg 164).

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The principles which guide modern medical practices recognize individual differences in human beings. Nowhere are unique individual differences any more significant than when dealing with recovery from alcoholism. Why the differences exist may not be completely understood. However, accepting that they do exist is crucial to recovery for the individual alcoholic.

It is the *belief* of this author that any attempt to produce any “*One Size Fits All*” approach to recovery is doomed to failure if it omits recognition of physiological differences between alcoholics and social drinkers. Medical science already recognizes a wide variation in the body processes of different individuals. For example, some individuals absorb fluids from their stomach to their blood stream more rapidly than others. Some have differences in how equitably their bodies distribute what they have absorbed to various parts of the body. Other variations exist in how rapidly their body processes utilize and eliminate what they take in. Those differences apply to the infinitely variable supply of substances available to them as part of a daily diet.

Inherent in every individual is some intelligence which can and does take what is consumed, process it, and produce that which is the physical body of the individual. This occurs, be they alcoholic or not. No one needs to attend classes of instruction in order to learn this process. It is automatic, and will differ by individual in the way it works.

Some understanding of DNA structure has enlarged the ability of the medical profession to deal with some of those differences. Other differences are less well recognized or understood. Recognizing the existence of those differences can be important to the extent that *new knowledge* is useful in providing relief from alcoholism.

The point here is recognition that some intelligence, unique to each individual, is operative to take the nourishment they consume and change it into something which produces the physical body of each individual alcoholic.

What that is and why it does what it does, in the way it does it, is still beyond the realm of complete understanding by the medical profession. That is precisely the point. There is more to be understood. Seeking understanding of an infinite source of all *new knowledge* (i.e.: “*God*”) is the essence of all scientific study.

Neither science nor religion has been able to demonstrate that they have “*all the answers*” to the problem of recovery from alcoholism.

Where traditional religions seek *new knowledge* only when it is compatible with their definitions of their group, science seeks *new knowledge* without any such limitations.

Both contain some understanding, neither can intelligently claim to have “*the answer to explain everything*”. The AA program readily accepts from either whatever produces desired results.

This author proposes that seeking more *new knowledge* is equivalent to seeking power to improve cooperation with the Ultimate Reality of life on life’s terms. *Willingness, honesty and open mindedness* are essential and indispensable ingredients. Scientific investigation is concerned with those principles which have equal application to anyone, at any place and at any time.

The AA program of recovery from alcoholism has transcended barriers which otherwise separate human beings from each other and indicates it is utilizing principles which have universal application. Some of those same principles were also discovered and incorporated into some religious *belief systems*. Unquestionably, there is more to be revealed.

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APPENDIX IV: “THE LASKER AWARD”

Now, over a half-century later, the value of Alcoholics Anonymous is still recognized as “*a great venture in social pioneering which forged a new instrument for social action; a new therapy based on the kinship of common suffering; one having a vast potential for the myriad other ills of mankind.*”.

The numerous “*spin-off Twelve Step programs*” are a testimony to the effectiveness of the AA program. Imitation truly is the most sincere form of flattery.

When the Lasker Award was first received, there was a significant decision made, which is *believed* to be crucial to the success of the AA program. **This was the refusal of AA to accept the monetary award accompanying the trophy.** While the trophy itself was accepted, **the money from outside sources was respectfully declined.** The absolute insistence upon being “*self supporting through our own contributions*” was considered crucial to the continued survival of the then budding fellowship. This was a decision made by alcoholics who had all too often relied upon financial support from “*other people’s money*”.

The Lasker Award trophy remains a tribute to early AA members deciding to accept responsibility for their own actions and being willing to clean up the wreckage of their own past

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APPENDIX V:

“THE RELIGIOUS VIEW ON A.A.”

The most significant element of any religious view of the A.A. Fellowship is the extent it *believes* in the equality of every human being in the eyes of their creator. AA does, many religions do not.

Anything less than total equality is a matter of personal judgment. Any personal judgment is based upon what the individual *believes* to be their personal relationship to that creative power. It is self-evident that this is a power which is greater than themselves.

The *belief system* of any individual may be one of superiority to others. Be it as an individual, or as the *ethnocentric belief* that “*our group is superior to any other group*”. Whenever a *belief* in superiority is established, then equality is lost to that individual or group. A concept of “*a power greater than ourselves*” is impacted accordingly. (see pgs 12, 23, 27 42, 53, 55, 62, 68,86, 93-95,129,164 & Appendix II). Conflict is created with the decision to *believe* that “*my concept of God is superior to your concept of God*”. Resolution of the conflict is found in “*how well it works*” rather than arguments of “*how well it would work if only others would do it my way*”. What is your choice to be? (see pg. 53).

This author *believes* that, as children, anyone is capable of being **taught to believe** just about anything which the dominant adults in their life present to them. As they mature, their own minds are then free to accept or reject **what they have been taught**. (see pg. 23). This then becomes a power struggle over a matter of personal choice. The maturing child either accepts or rejects themselves, **as equal human beings**.

Eventually a *belief system* becomes a guiding force in life. (review pg 27). Unfortunately there are frequently errors which require correction. (review Appendix II). Almost any religious interpretation of “*a power greater than ourselves*” can be accommodated within the AA program. The alcoholic in AA seeks *new knowledge* from some infinite source which is all and everything in *the Great Reality* of life, on life’s terms. (see pgs 12, 23, 27, 42, 45, 53, 55, 68, 86, 95, 129, & 164). With most traditional religions, that same mental condition of open mindedness is not necessarily encouraged.

AA seeks to understand and cooperate with all of *the Great Reality*. Most religions attempt to define it and induce conformity to their limited concept. This, they do to the exclusion of anything outside of their own definition.

Herein lies the potential for conflict within the individual alcoholic. This author *believes* the AA program offers them an intelligent method for resolving such conflicts by enlarging and improving their conscious contact with that infinite source of *new knowledge and power*. (see Step 11).

It is proposed here, that if any particular “*religious conception of God*” were really “*the only valid path to recovery*” then no alcoholic could or would ever recover without it. World-wide experience has indicated that any alcoholic can and many frequently do recover without conformity to any particular “*idea of God*”. The

inescapable fact still remains that, at the very beginning of AA, there was the suggestion made of:

“Why don’t you choose your own conception of God?”
(pg 12)

That idea of mental freedom was presented and accepted. The success of utilizing that approach with alcoholics will speak for itself. Alcoholics Anonymous continues to cross the borders of diametrically opposed religious *belief systems* to produce successful results in recovery.

While AA accepts any alcoholic with any fundamental idea of God, not every religion is willing to accept alcoholics with “concepts of God” which do not conform to their own well-defined and exclusionary belief system. (pg. 55).

When following the AA program of recovery, the alcoholic is not expected to “*throw out the baby with the bath water*” and abandon their religious *belief system*. That which produces “*God’s will for the alcoholic to be happy, joyous and free*” (see pg 133) is obviously worth retaining. Whatever works does not require fixing. However, there is always room for improvement in how to cooperate with life, on life’s terms. No religious *belief system* relieves the alcoholic from the consequences of their own personal ignorance.

The power of necessary *new knowledge* comes from some “*greater intelligence*” which is the source of all knowledge and all power. The AA program offers each individual alcoholic a “*tailor-made personalized approach to the reduction of their personal ignorance of reality*”. This is considered preferable to accepting on blind-faith the “*second-hand belief system of traditional religions*” which often have some other “*primary purpose*”. Not everyone agrees with this observation.

For those alcoholics who desire to be happy, joyous and free in sobriety, they must decide if it is to be their own version or that of some other “*second hand belief system*”. This author recommends that any alcoholic honestly seeking recovery to approach both religion and AA in the same manner.

TAKE WHAT YOU CAN USE AND LEAVE THE REST

That recommendation applies equally to any comments found in this Study Guide of AA’s basic text for recovery.

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APPENDIX VI:

“HOW TO GET IN TOUCH WITH AA”

There is increased public awareness of Alcoholics Anonymous as an available method for recovery from alcoholism. With the increased speed of communication, alcoholics seeking recovery can more easily locate A.A. groups and meetings.

There is also an increase in the erroneous interpretation of what AA is and is not. Some views are that AA is opposed to drinking alcohol by anyone. Others suggest that a particular “*concept of God*” is required for participation. Still others assume that the AA program is an arm of the local judicial system. Fortunately none of these is accurate.

For any alcoholic seeking recovery, it is recommended that they rely upon the official literature authorized by AA’s General Service Office to interpret the position of Alcoholics Anonymous on any issue or question of importance.

While each member is qualified to speak from their own personal viewpoint, as an individual, no member is qualified to speak for AA as a whole. That specifically includes the comments provided by the author of this Study Guide who is merely attempting to point out what one single member has found in the basic text of recovery. Hopefully it will be of value and usefulness to others who are seeking happiness, joy and freedom in their own recovery from a once seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. (pg 133).

“When writing or speaking publicly about alcoholism,,
we urge each of our Fellowship to omit his personal name,
designating himself instead as ‘a member of Alcoholics
Anonymous’.
(Foreword to First Edition)

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SECTION B: THE BASIC AA TEXT

SECTION B01:

Chapter 1

BILL'S STORY

READ: *Chapter 1: BILL'S STORY* - Pages 1 - 16.

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This is the story of AA co-founder Bill W.

Because the focus of this Study Guide is upon spiritual considerations, anyone experiencing resistance to the word or idea of "God", may benefit from the approach, presented to him.

"Why don't you choose your own conception of God?"
(Pg 12).

This is a fundamental approach to recovery. It has opened the door for recovery from alcoholism to all who suffer. Because conformity and agreement with any particular interpretation of the meaning of the word "God" has been excluded, the AA program has been able to transcend the finite limits of traditional religions. It also avoids the conflicting boundaries of a multitude of different religious beliefs.

"When, therefore, we speak to you of God, we mean your own conception of God. This applies, too, to other spiritual expressions which you find in this book."
(Pg 47)

Understanding the depth and weight of this message can be enhanced by referring to page 34 in the AA publication "As Bill See's It". The significance of the non-alliance of AA to any particular religion is officially clarified for all to see.

This is what co-founder Bill W. used, as a starting point. It is as valid for you as it was for him. As, with many, your own spiritual experience may be of "*the educational variety*", as referred to in Appendix II. Conformity is not and never has been required for recovery. (Tradition #3, - the long form).

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SECTION B02a:

Chapter 2

THERE IS A SOLUTION

PRELIMINARY COMMENTS:

You, the reader, have made a decision to consider the ideas, emotions and attitudes being presented by the author of this Study Guide. If so, consider them for their possible benefit to your own recovery process. From reading the Preface and Forward to the Study Guide you will probably have recognized some idea of the personal bias of the author,

If you were not offended, or did not reject it, then you likely continued and read "How To Use This Study Guide". If so, you discovered the concept of "Sponsorship" was addressed. Also, that there is a separate section in this Study Guide offering a viewpoint on that subject. (see Section A05). It includes possible implications to your own recovery. You would do well to read it before continuing.

The Forward to printings of the AA Big Book, preceding the Third Edition, provide the reader with a sense of the changes that have occurred, since the beginning of AA. That was a time when a handful of alcoholics discovered a solution to their seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. Changes continue to occur up to and including this present time. Placing the contents of the AA Big Book into the context in which it was written is significant. It is a step toward understanding the intent of what was written, when it was written, and why. As of this writing, a Fourth Edition is in process of being published.

The personal story of the co-founder of AA, is *Chapter 1 - "BILL'S STORY"*. It is well to recognize he was simply another human being. One fully equipped to fall into the pit of despair from his own alcoholism and to experience the fulfillment of recovery from that once seemingly hopeless state. If you allow yourself equality, as a human being, his message of recovery is and can always be available to you - if you want it.

This author's primary suggestion is to give priority to the message of recovery. The messenger, being a human being, is subject to human error. No individual has total awareness of that **Ultimate Reality of Life** which some refer to as "**God**". If you wish to disagree with the messenger, you will find areas for disagreement. However, there are also similarities. They are found in the message itself. It is a message which may contain useful information to enrich and improve the quality of your own life. That *choice* to give that message your thoughtful consideration is your own.

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STEP ONE:

"We admitted we were powerless over alcohol--
that our lives had become unmanageable." (pg 59)

READ: *Chapter 2* THERE IS A SOLUTION Pages 17 - 29

This chapter deals primarily with *Step One* of the AA program:

Having read *Chapter 1 - BILL'S STORY*, you are aware of some of the details related to his personal recovery. Conformity was not and is not a requirement for recovery. However, some concept of a power, greater than that of the individual, is essential.

The co-founder was free to choose his own concept of what the word "God" meant to him. (pg 12). That message was valid then, for him. It is equally valid now, for you.

The single most significant message is, that there is hope for recovery, if you want it. Your personal chances for recovery are near 100% if you are willing to do what the first members did.

The first thing you will hear read at many meetings is the Preamble of what AA is. AA's own definition of itself includes the simple statement:

"The only requirement for membership is a desire
to stop drinking." (AA PREAMBLE)

There is no second requirement for membership. No one else really knows if you do or do not desire to stop drinking.

The experience of the first members of AA, is read at the beginning of most meetings.

"Rarely have we seen a person fail, who has
thoroughly followed our path." (pg 58)

Therein lies the secret of their success and your own freedom to choose the direction you take. Either you want what they have, or else you do not. What they have is recovery from a seemingly hopeless state of mind a body, called "*alcoholism*". Is that what you really want?

"If you have decided you want what we have and
are willing to go to any length to get it - then you are
ready to take certain steps" (pg 58)

* * * * *

The following comments, address themselves to **STEP ONE**:

We are people who normally would not mix.
The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have
discovered a common solution. We have a way out on
which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can
join in brotherly and harmonious action." (pg 17)

The AA concept of alcoholism, as an illness, is presented on page 18. Though incurable, by traditional methods, the ex-problem drinker with a solution, is able to accomplish quickly, what professionals have failed to do, with any comparable degree of success.

This appears to be the common bond that has held the fellowship of AA together. It is based upon mutual desire and enlightened self-interest. It includes recognition that none has all the answers. Each individual example of recovery contains elements of value and usefulness to some, though not necessarily all others who wish to recover. This is an attitude, embodied in the AA approach to dealing with a newcomer. However, it should be noted that not every individual who identifies themselves as a member of AA reflects that attitude in their own personal dealings with newcomers.

**THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HAVING A ANSWER
AND HAVING THE ANSWER.**

One approach allows **other solutions** to exist which you may wish to consider. The other implies that "***my way is the only way***". The latter attitude is difficult to reconcile with any claim to **open-mindedness**. (see Appendix II).

The reader will note that, as AA members, none make a sole vocation of working with others (page 19). This is sometimes confusing to those who have encountered hospitals, treatment programs, or social service activities which **use** the AA program. Usually, there is money involved in those programs, and many have attempted to incorporate AA into their activities. Where money becomes an object of primary interest, the reader should be aware that

THERE ARE NO DUES OR FEES FOR AA MEMBERSHIP.

Many of the professionals have their own personal AA experience which enables them to be more effective in their chosen field of work. Anyone unclear about the separation between the AA program of recovery and other methods will do well to review **The Twelve Traditions - The Long Form**. (see *ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS* - Appendix I).

Similarly, it is well to remember that, as AA members, no individual alcoholic lays any claim to professional qualifications, "*we merely have an approach that worked with us*" with alcoholism. (see pg 95).

There is a different and more practical reason AA members try to be helpful to the alcoholic who is still suffering from the malady.

“Our very lives, as ex-problem drinkers, depend upon our constant thought of others and how we may help meet their needs.”

(pg 20)

Occasionally some AA members consider themselves qualified to offer advice in professional areas where they have no expertise. A newcomer would be well advised to exercise caution and intelligence when deciding who has experience to produce the kind of results they desire. Some help others as a profession for money. Others, with no professional qualifications, try to help others in order to help themselves. The important element for attention of the alcoholic is the result which is produced.

The program of Alcoholics Anonymous has produced successful recoveries, which are unsurpassed by the professional community. If you are interested in what you have to do in order to have those results produced by AA, be aware that this is the purpose of the AA “Big Book”.

The purpose of this Study Guide is to point out what the author has found in that basic text. Other interpretations may have equal or better value and usefulness to individual readers. If so, you are encouraged to utilize whatever may be helpful to you. After all, that is what you are looking for isn't it?

Pay particular note to the need for mutual assistance in the recovery process. Then consider the significance of **ignorance and misunderstanding**. Particularly when directed to differences between moderate drinkers and the alcoholic.

Remember that many different *ideas, emotions and attitudes* about drinking get developed in a society where the majority react physically to alcohol in a different way than does the alcoholic. (see pg 27). The thoughtful reader will recognize a thread of ignorance and misunderstanding running through many of their old ideas. Especially those concerning their personal relationship to *“a power greater than themselves”*. Some will come to recognize there is an *infinite source of all knowledge* which they may eventually describe by use of the word **“God”**. (see pgs 53, 55 & 68).

The moderate and even the continuous hard drinker is different than the alcoholic in one notable way. Unlike the real alcoholic, the average drinker does not lose all control of his liquor consumption, once he starts to drink. (pg 20).

The inescapable conclusion remains, that once an alcoholic takes any alcohol into his system, it is virtually impossible for him to stop, on his own! This reflects the *“phenomenon of craving”* which separates the alcoholic as distinct from other drinkers. (see “THE DOCTOR'S OPINION”).

Not everyone who drinks, even to excess, is necessarily an alcoholic. Opinions vary as to why some are different. However, it is certain that some are. **Either you are one of them or else you are not.**

“We do not like to pronounce any individual as alcoholic, but you can quickly diagnose yourself. Step over to the nearest barroom and try some controlled drinking. Try to drink and stop abruptly. Try it more

than once. It will not take long for you to decide, if you are honest with yourself about it. It may be worth a bad case of jitters if you get a full knowledge of your condition.” (pgs 31- 32)

There is a description of the real alcoholic in *Chapter 2* on-pages 21 & 22, which existed when the AA Big Book was written. Successful recovery by those first members is meaningful. It is important because it has allowed countless others to find a solution before reaching that stage. They recovered earlier in the progression of their personal problem with alcohol. Demonstrated results since then are a tribute to the effectiveness of the AA program.

When evaluating your own problem with alcohol, it is suggested you consider similarities. Does any part of their experience apply to you and your drinking?

Your attitude and what you believe about your own drinking will become a determining factor in your own recovery process. While others may point out to you what they see needs changing, it is only when you see something you desire to change that you will voluntarily take action to do so.

A relatively simple formula exists for changing your life, where alcohol is concerned.

This is what is available in AA. Individual members share their experience, strength and hope with you. You decide if you do or do not want some part of what someone else has to offer. The choice is yours. No one else can, nor will do your wanting for you. That recipe for change may, at your own discretion, be used to make changes in other areas of your life as well.

PRINCIPLES WHICH WORK IN ONE AREA MAY WORK IN OTHERS

Any responsibility for making a choice of what to accept or reject is your own. It is individual and personal. The only valid measure of success is in how well it works - for you.

The consequences of any choices made will also be your own. Either by a conscious selection, or by default by **choosing not to choose**. Therefore, you, the individual, are ultimately responsible for the results that follow the choices you do make.

The proposition is clearly stated, that “***the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than his body***”. (see pg 23).

Any physical reaction to alcohol is not operative until alcohol is introduced into the body. For whatever reason, a choice got made to pick up a drink. Short of being forced down his throat, it is the mind of the alcoholic which decides there is some “*desirable element*” connected with the choice.

As an illustration, substitute a different substance. After a hard day of work, few would decide, to treat themselves to “*a nice cold glass of bleach*”. They consciously recognize the consequences as being totally undesirable. (see Step 11). Accordingly, they

have little difficulty refusing this option. It is clearly understood that “*drinking bleach*” will make them sick, quick, and there is no temptation.

However, because alcohol has produced something desirable, in the past, they have a different attitude. (see pg. 27). They may attempt to temporarily recapture a condition that is now gone from their life. **This is the insanity of alcoholism.** Doing the same thing over and over while expecting different results. You may recognize the role of **ignorance and misunderstanding** about reality. (syn: “God” - see pg 55).

While it may be obvious that the main problem of the alcoholic is a mental one, consider the significance of taking the first drink. Particularly with a demonstrated inability to stop, once started.

DON'T GET IN THE ROLLERCOASTER IF YOU DON'T WANT THE RIDE

At this point, the reader is directed to a careful study of *Chapter 3* - “MORE ABOUT ALCOHOLISM” (see pgs 30-32) to emphasize the experience and suggestions made by earlier members of AA concerning this mental attitude.

It is undeniable that some individuals get a physical reaction which is different from others, when drinking alcohol. Volumes of medical literature have been written about differences in body processes among individuals and the way they react to different substances. Those uniquely individual physical differences are not significantly changed by the use of will-power. Neither is there any medical “*cure*” available at this time.

Science may one day accomplish this, but it hasn't
done so yet. (pg 31)

So, where is the problem? Is not” “***lack of power***” the dilemma of most alcoholics? (see pg 45).

The alcoholic lacks the power of choice where taking the first drink is concerned. If the alcoholic already knew how to stop drinking, and stay stopped, then that knowledge could and would be utilized by choice. It seems self-evident a need for the power of *new knowledge* is required. (see pg 59).

The problem is a mental one, impacting the power of choice. The message of AA is **not** “*how to change the physical condition*” which is a matter of interest to the scientific community.

The message of AA is that if you are one of those who is bodily and mentally different, there is a solution. (review pg 30).

For the indecisive reader, the crucial question is

WHICH ONE ARE YOU?

You either know the truth about yourself, or you do not. If you have doubts, then try some controlled drinking. (see pgs 30-32).

“The fact is that most alcoholics, for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice in drink. Our so-called will power becomes practically nonexistent. We are unable, at certain times, to bring into our consciousness with sufficient force the memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. We are without defense against the first drink.” (pg 24)

You may, at this point, be consciously aware of some **ignorance and misunderstanding** concerning your relationship to alcohol where choice is concerned.

New knowledge of the truth (i.e.: “improved awareness of God” - see Step 11) **is “a power greater than yourself”.**

Power is something you cannot utilize until you have it. There are others who had solved their problem and their solution continues to be found in a deep and effective spiritual experience. (see pg 25). They offer any alcoholic “*a simple kit of spiritual tools*” which will be effective if you want to utilize them.

Be cautious about confusing or equating the term “spiritual” with “religion”. No one has a monopoly on the infinite power of consciously understanding “*the Great Reality*” of all life, on life’s terms. (review pgs 53, 55, 68, 95, Step 11 & Appendix II).

It may be helpful to consider some universally accepted synonyms used to describe what that three-letter word “**God**” means to the mind which encounters it. One is “**omniscient**” - or “**all knowing**”. Another is “**omnipotent**” or “**all powerful**”. Some other common meanings to describe that word “**God**” are that “**God is Truth**”, “**God is Good**”, and “**God is the Ultimate Reality of Life**”.

Those terms, and meanings will be utilized with frequency in this Study Guide. While you, as an individual, may disagree in the use of those terms for yourself, they are commonly used in communication by others and have been chosen by the author to illustrate the message found in the basic text of AA.

The reader who dares to question traditional religions or their claims to special knowledge of other characteristics about the word “God”, may find it useful to substitute those synonyms. This may make it easier to have the same kind of “*deep and effective spiritual experiences which have revolutionized our whole attitude toward life, toward our fellows and toward God’s universe.*” (pg 25).

There is a phrase, often heard around AA.

**“WE HAVE LEARNED THE TRUTH
AND THE TRUTH HAS SET US FREE”**

Consider the extent you are “**all-knowing**” or “**all powerful**” in your ability to both control and enjoy your own drinking. It may be beneficial for the alcoholic reader to seek the power of *new knowledge* from the source. (see pg 59, 60(c), 164, & Appendix II). Once again, , the reader who is alcoholic is referred to *Chapter 3* - “**MORE ABOUT ALCOHOLISM**” (see pgs 30-32). This may help clarify your own answer to yourself.

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SECTION B02b:

Chapter 2

THERE IS A SOLUTION

STEP ONE - Cont'd:

“We admitted we were powerless over alcohol--that our lives had become unmanageable. (pg 59)

READ:

Chapter 2 - THERE IS A SOLUTION - Starting on page 26 with “A certain American business man. ” to the end of Chapter 2.

COMMENTS:

Information on page 26 and page 27 of ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS repeatedly appears in this Study Guide of the basic text for recovery from alcoholism. It embodies a fundamental principle related to recovery from alcoholism and the way the mind of an alcoholic works.

The author of this Study Guide strongly recommends that anyone interested in recovery from alcoholism give those comments serious consideration. Do not skim over them lightly. It is recommended you give intense thought to the significance of displacing and rearranging the **ideas, emotions and attitudes which are the guiding forces in your life**. It may well be the essential ingredient to freedom from the bonds of alcoholism.

* * * * *

A consistent thread of a principle has been found in the basic AA text for recovery from alcoholism, which is the book ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS. The reader will find it on pages 26 and 27 of that book.

Here is outlined the plight of one alcoholic individual who availed himself of the best medical and psychiatric help available at that time. (the psychiatrist, Dr. Jung) As an alcoholic, his acquired self-knowledge was useless. He was dominated by **ideas, emotions and attitudes** which were self-destructive.

The doctor had tried and failed to produce an **emotional displacement and rearrangement** of those **guiding forces**. Those mental processes dominated the life of the alcoholic. He was considered a hopeless case.

The only known exception to that otherwise hopeless state of mind and body were found in those who had **a vital spiritual experience** which displaced and rearranged the **ideas, emotions and attitudes** which had previously been the **guiding forces** in their lives.

The individual seeking help felt relieved because he considered himself to be “*a good church member*”. That, however, was not the necessary vital spiritual experience required for recovery. It was also necessary that he remained “*willing to maintain a certain simple attitude*”.

“We find that no one need have difficulty with the spirituality of the program. *Willingness, honesty and open mindedness are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable.*” (Appendix II)

The reader of this Study Guide should be aware of a simple truth.

**TRADITIONAL RELIGION DOES NOT HOLD A
MONOPOLY
ON THE SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE REQUIRED
FOR RECOVERY FROM ALCOHOLISM !**

A multitude of ways exist by which individuals have successfully recovered from alcoholism in the AA program. This has occurred both with and without association with some religious body. The AA program does not embrace one in preference to any other. **Therefore, caution should be used when it is proposed that there is only one valid path to a vital spiritual experience in AA.** This simply is not so. If it were, no one could or would recover without it.

For the person approaching AA for the first time, there may be a critical difference in what that word “God” means to you now, and a new idea you may acquire as you continue.

When the AA program began, the co-founder Bill W was presented a novel idea now used by many other alcoholics. It was the suggestion

“*Why don't you choose your own conception of God?*”
(pg 12)

The reader of this Study Guide is equally free to willingly “*maintain that same simple attitude*”.

“*It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a Power greater than myself. Nothing more was required of me to make my beginning.*” (pg 12)

Most traditional religions have some finite boundaries about what they do or do not believe. This defines them as a group. You either do or do not accept their definitions when the word “God” is used. By contrast, a concept exists of the word “God” within AA which does not have those limitations which embrace some alcoholics while excluding others.

“When we became alcoholics, crushed by a self-imposed crisis we could not postpone or evade, we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else He is nothing. God either is, or he isn't. What was our choice to be?”

(pg 53)

“Perhaps there is a better way---we think so. For we are now on a different basis; the basis of trusting and relying upon God. We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves.

(pg 68)

In order to be a legitimate member of any traditional religious group, the personal *belief structure* of the alcoholic is inside the limits of that organization. It is not outside of those boundaries for those who are honest with themselves about it. Embrace a particular idea of God and it is yours. However, recognize that your idea may not be the only valid one.

For those who are open minded, it is inescapable to recognize the existence of other versions. Some of those other ideas about God may possibly have desirable qualities not included in your own chosen belief.

Willingness to “*trade up*”, whenever and wherever another version produces superior results will enlarge the “*fundamental idea of God*” which has been a **guiding force** in the life of the alcoholic. (pgs 27 & 55). That willingness allows a new freedom to consider *new knowledge* beyond the finite boundaries of old ideas. (pg 58).

“If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.”

(pg 83)

Many alcoholics encounter the AA program of recovery with a **disbelief** in the fundamental idea of God. This is not unusual. It is an arrogant claim that what they now *believe* about the word “God” is all there is to be known. This **attitude** can be applied to “*believers*” and “*non-believers*” equally. Such a “*belief system*” can be a **guiding force** in the life of that individual. Fortunately, those old **ideas, emotions and attitudes** also can be **displaced and rearranged**.

Consider the experience of the disillusioned minister's son who asked himself the simple question:

“*Who are you to say there is no God?*”

(pg 56)

That thought can have particular importance to someone encountering other alcoholics who proclaim “*they know the only true version*”. Different interpretations of the word “God” are available to those who recognize equality in their relationship to the source of all life. Those troubled by the pronouncements of religious alcoholics may ask another simple question:

WHO ARE YOU TO SAY THAT “GOD” IS WHAT THAT WORD MEANS TO YOUR FINITE MIND?

The author of this Study Guide has discovered and is presenting to the reader a fundamental idea for consideration about the AA program. Some AA members may disagree with this approach to recovery from alcoholism.

It is the basic premise of this Study Guide that the program of AA is sufficiently broad and flexible to include any religion. None incorporates the entire potential of the AA program. There is always more *new knowledge* to be learned and understood by anyone who seeks it. (pg 60(c)).

The author of this Study Guide has found this ***fundamental idea of God*** to be consistent and compatible with the basic text for recovery. The alcoholic reader may wish to refer to the basic text of “*Alcoholics Anonymous*” (pg 55) for emphasis. In the FOREWORD TO SECOND EDITION it is clearly stated “Alcoholics Anonymous is not a religious organization”. Comments in officially approved AA literature explain why AA is not allied with any religious *belief system*. (Suggested reading - “*As Bill Sees It*” - pg 34). It provides comments written by the co-founder of AA.

“**Truth**” is a universally accepted synonym for the word “**God**”. An alcoholic who has learned the truth about his condition and an option for recovery may still choose to continue drinking. However, the understanding of that truth has set him free from what previously was a seemingly hopeless condition.

There has been a **revelation of truth** (syn: “God”) in the form of *new knowledge* of reality. With it there is produced enlarged freedom of choice to use that *new knowledge*. There is an endless supply of more truth available for anyone. The *new knowledge* is recognizably “**a power greater**” than previously possessed. At a conscious level of understanding, there is **more truth**, hence **more God** available for anyone to seek and use. (see pg 60(c) & Step 11)

INFINITE TRUTH = INFINITE GOD

For the individual with strong religious ties, it is suggested that no individual, nor any group of individuals, has a monopoly on all and everything that is Truth about the **Ultimate Reality of Life on Life’s terms**. (see pg. 95). That is something recognizably **infinite** and beyond the capacity of any **finite human mind** to understand. However, more can always be revealed. (pg. 164).

UNDERSTANDING REALITY = UNDERSTANDING GOD

(Step 11)

However, the reader should be “*quick to see where religious people are right*”. (pg 87). Most traditional religions were developed because their human founder had

discovered some truth. However, accuracy about one area of infinite knowledge does not mean accuracy in all other areas as well. Many religious alcoholics have erroneously assumed their chosen *belief system* embodies **all truth**. (i.e.: “*all of an infinite God*” - see pgs 53 & 68).

For purposes of this Study Guide, improved conscious awareness of *new knowledge* is the essence of a “*spiritual awakening*”.
(Appendix II).

A new awareness and understanding of the *Ultimate Reality of Life* (syn: “God”) becomes *new knowledge*. Understanding that *new knowledge* provides an enlarged range of choices, with new power to improve the selection of what is available to be used. (pg 85). Therefore the very process of seeking more truth from an infinite source becomes a practical means of “*seeking God*”. (pg 60(c)).

But, where do we go to look for **more**?

“We found the Great Reality deep down within us.
In the last analysis it was only there that He may be
found. It was so with us.” (pg 55)

What does the word “**only**” mean to your mind? (pg 23).

“Most of our experiences are what the
psychologist William James calls “the educational variety”
because they develop slowly over a period of time.”
(Appendix II)

Education occurs in the mind of the individual. There is a thinking process involved. One which confirms, that an idea is valid to the mind of the alcoholic. An **idea** is *believed* to be true because it stands up to the light of the intelligence inherent within every individual. (pgs 55 & 86). Anything else will be a “*second-hand belief system*” based upon the **unthinking emotional acceptance of the beliefs of other equal human beings**. Many “religious alcoholics” will disagree.

Recognition of a human capacity to learn *new knowledge* can be equated with an educational variety of a spiritual awakening. Furthermore, an expanded awareness of the *Great Reality* (syn “God” - pg 55) can be equated with the option to “*improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him.*” (Step 11).

To illustrate the inherent ability to improve conscious contact with reality, the reader is asked to consider the following:

?? **Do you believe everything that anyone tells you?**

?? **Do you believe some things some people tell you?**

?? **By what process do you decide what it is you will believe?**

This author suggests that things you *believe* are **guiding forces** in your life. They form the **ideas, emotions and attitudes** upon which your life operates. (pg 27).

Unless your *belief system* includes all knowledge, and the power of that knowledge, “*a huge emotional displacement and rearrangement*” may be required for “*the necessary vital spiritual experience*” which is essential for recovery from alcoholism. (pg 27).

The alcoholic reader is challenged to contemplate their finite limitations from a lifetime of learning as a single individual. Moreover, consider the ultimate and finite limitations of all human awareness acquired thus far. The only understanding possible is that conscious awareness of the Ultimate Reality which is synonymous with the word “God”. It should be self-evident there shall always exist more which is to be known.

IF NOTHING CHANGES, NOTHING CHANGES.

From a practical standpoint, enlarging the awareness of reality by the individual is a more intelligent approach than attempting to restrict awareness of the Ultimate Reality of Life on life’s terms. (syn: “God”).

While the alcoholic reader may not know how to make personal changes, there is ample evidence from AA that other alcoholics (i.e.: “*equal in the eyes of God*”) have changed the guiding forces in their lives. The reader of this Study Guide has the capacity to learn what others have learned. Using the power of that *new knowledge* then becomes a matter of personal choice.

Obviously no one can use knowledge they do not possess. (pg 164). The vital spiritual experience required for recovery from alcoholism is made clear by “**three pertinent ideas**”:

- (a) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives.
- (b) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.
- (c) That God could and would if He were sought.

(pg 60)

If this is valid, then it follows that an alcoholic acquires the necessary vital experience by seeking God. (pg 60). The only place they can find that *Great Reality* it is within themselves. (pg 55). The ability to improve conscious contact with reality requires *willingness, honesty and open mindedness* to seek more *new knowledge* than is already possessed by the alcoholic or any other human power. (review pgs 14-15, 45, 55, 68, 129, 164, Step 11 & Appendix II).

“Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.”

(pg 58)

The only place a change can occur is within the individual. It involves their “*fundamental idea of God*” (pg 55) and what that word means to their mind. The author of this Study Guide has found a fundamental idea of God, within the basic text of AA which is consistent with “God” as being an infinite source of *new knowledge* and the power that goes with it.

“....we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else He is nothing. God either is, or He isn't. What was our choice to be? (pg 53)

The reader may ask of themselves:

?? **Does my fundamental concept of God include all of reality?**

?? **Does it exclude some part of all that is life?**

?? **Is there something in life which is not God?**

Further consider, that the only place any change to a fundamental idea can occur is within your own mind. Involved is what that three-letter word “God” means to your mind, **and what you believe about it** when that word is used by others.

At this point the alcoholic reader may well be asking:

?? **What is it that I really do *believe* when encountering the word “GOD”? Is it intelligent to my own mind?**

(see pg 23)

Some traditional religions reject portions of the Ultimate Reality of Life because it is not part of their concept of God. **AA has no opinion on the issue of sectarian religion.** (Tradition 11). No AA member nor AA group is qualified to speak for AA on this controversial matter. That specifically includes the author of this Study Guide. (Appendix I - Tradition 10 - The Long Form).

Nonetheless, it is obvious that conflicts do occur, in the minds of some alcoholics. (see pg 23). It is the purpose of this Study Guide to point out material in the basic AA text which may be helpful in resolving those difficulties. It should be noted that many sectarian religions do not embrace all and everything which is life. (pg. 53). The choice of *what to believe* will be the personal desires of the individual alcoholic, because there is nothing in the basic AA text which rejects any sectarian religious beliefs.

By contrast, the AA program is all-inclusive, and anyone with a desire to stop drinking is a member, by their own decision. (see Appendix II - Tradition 3 - “The Long Form”).

THERE IS NO SECOND REQUIREMENT FOR MEMBERSHIP IN AA

For the alcoholic reader experiencing conflicts between *sectarian religious beliefs* and the AA program, it is advisable you first carefully examine the *belief system* which has become a **guiding force** in your life.

Some traditional religions deny validity to any spiritual concepts except their own specific definition of “God”. In so doing, they block out all other *spiritual ideas* in order to stay within the finite limits of their own *existing old ideas*. (see appendix II). This may not always be sane thinking for an alcoholic confronted with the proposition that *either God is everything or else He is nothing*. (page 53 & Step 2).

We have no desire to convince anyone there is only one way by which faith can be acquired. We think it no concern of ours what religious bodies our members identify themselves with as individuals. This should be an entirely personal affair which each one decides for himself in the light of past associations, or his present choice.

(pg 28)

The reader may discover that identification with any particular religious body is of no concern by the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. Recognition of this may help avoid confusion and placing limitations on the word “God”. Consider this when reading the basic text of “*Alcoholics Anonymous*”. It may be helpful when seeking “*the vital spiritual experience*” essential to recovery from alcoholism. (pg 27).

As you understand this truth about the AA program of recovery, you may also say to yourself:

“YES, I AM ONE OF THEM TOO; I MUST HAVE THIS THING”

(page 29)

* * * * *

SECTION B03a:

Chapter 3

MORE ABOUT ALCOHOLISM

STEP TWO:

“Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves
could restore us to sanity.” (pg 59)

READ:

Chapter 3 - MORE ABOUT ALCOHOLISM - Starting on page 30 with “Most of us have been unwilling to admit we were real alcoholics.” to the end of the first paragraph on page 32, ending with “It may be worth a bad case of jitters if you get a full knowledge of your condition.”

COMMENTS:

The AA program of recovery, from a once seemingly hopeless state of mind and body, is contained within the first 164 pages of the AA Big Book. It is:

The Story of

How Many Thousands of Men and Women

Have Recovered from Alcoholism

(Frontispiece)

The author of this Study Guide wishes to point out the word “*recovered*”. The condition of alcoholism may not be “*cured*”, but it is no longer a hopeless condition for which nothing effective can be done.

When the AA program first appeared, it was an unorthodox solution for many in the scientific and religious communities. Because it produced results which they were unable to duplicate, the effectiveness of AA was difficult to dispute.

Over half-a-century later, that same recovery process is no longer surprising. Public focus has shifted from asking “*does AA really work?*” to asking “*what does that have to do with me?*”? And, “*what else can it do?*”

Because the AA program has worked well on the universal problem of alcoholism, there is sometimes an erroneous tendency to assume it is also “the answer” for numerous other problems. No such claims are made by Alcoholics Anonymous. Some AA members combined the AA program with their religious *belief systems* causing erroneous ideas to get voiced by some individual members. Therefore the alcoholic reader is advised to use extreme caution when establishing any individual as an authority on alcoholism.

This is particularly important when dealing with any of the medical or spiritual elements involved in the recovery process. To avoid misunderstanding of what AA is and is not, this author recommends a careful review of the long form of the **AA Traditions**. They are contained in **Appendix I** of the basic text for recovery. The officially sanctioned AA pamphlet “*Problems Other than Alcohol*” will also be informative.

Any non-AA material should be considered an outside opinion. It may be valid, or it may be that someone simply *believes* it is valid. That specifically includes the comments found in this Study Guide which provides the view of one individual. That viewpoint may not have value to every alcoholic reader seeking recovery. That choice of what to *believe* is individual. The use of caution and intelligence is recommended.

In this Study Guide, the alcoholic reader will be asked, *again and again*, to examine the ideas, emotions and attitudes which are the guiding forces in their life. (pg 27)

The serious reader will be shown portions of the AA Big Book which clearly suggests they have personal access to some inherent intelligence within themselves. (page 55) That inherent intelligence permits any alcoholic to displace and rearrange the guiding forces in their life. (pg 27). Particular emphasis is placed upon changing that thinking process which creates a desire to distort personal perception of reality with the use of alcohol.

If the alcoholic reader thoroughly follows the suggested steps of recovery provided in the AA program, their lives can become dominated by a completely new set of conceptions and motives. (pgs 27 & 58). That change can, will and must eventually produce different conditions.

IF NOTHING CHANGES, THEN NOTHING CHANGES

Certain promises have been made which will always materialize for those who painstakingly follow the path of action outlined by the AA program for recovery from alcoholism. (see pgs 83-84). They are available to any alcoholic who really wants what the writers of the basic AA text found for themselves. Any desire for those conditions is personal. Because mind-reading is an imperfect art, no one else can be completely certain what it is you really want for yourself. (see pg 58 & Appendix II).

Regardless of any disputes about what produces recovery it is clear that, for the drinking alcoholic, continued drinking will eventually lead to confinement or a premature death. This makes the choice of action a very personal matter to anyone with a drinking problem.

As an individual understands the seriousness of their personal condition, there is increased motivation to do something about it. (see Steps 3 & 11).

SOME ARE MOTIVATED BY INSPIRATION, OTHERS BY DESPERATION!

For some, hospitalization and treatment by professionals with medical qualifications may be required. That treatment is well outside the scope of the AA

program. Many members of AA may have a sincere desire to be helpful, as individuals. However, when offering professional or technical advice:

**WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IS MAKE
HOW SINCERELY YOU ROW YOUR BOAT
IF YOU ARE ROWING IN THE WRONG DIRECTION?.**

Therefore the use of intelligence is recommended when accepting advice. This author suggests looking for principles which have universal application. They tend to be more reliable than personal preferences or beliefs. That specifically includes comments the alcoholic reader finds in this Study Guide.

Once free from the physical craving for alcohol, a newly motivated individual often discovers a new willingness to re-evaluate ideas, emotions and attitudes affecting their life. (Appendix II). When personal survival is involved, that willingness to replace old ideas with a new set that works becomes an intelligent decision. Holding onto old ideas about drinking is non-intelligent and is frequently an emotional choice. Such a choice is difficult to claim as sanity in the light of any intelligent self-examination.

Recognition of this potential for a personal conflict of motives, occurring within the alcoholic brings us to **STEP TWO**.

STEP TWO :

*“Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves
could restore us to sanity.”* (pg 59)

The mental attitude by which the alcoholic reader approaches Step Two may be critical to their recovery. (see pgs 23, 27 & 58). For the individual with a drinking problem, recognition that some individuals cannot safely drink alcohol is tantamount to acceptance of a personal problem. Physiological differences may account for the *phenomenon of craving* which differentiate alcoholics from their fellows. (see The Doctor’s Opinion). Thus far, no one has discovered any way to change the body processes of an alcoholic that may differentiate them from others who can safely engage in “*recreational oblivion*” with the use of alcohol. (see pgs 30-32).

After the *phenomenon of craving*, has been dealt with, by hospitalization or other means, **the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind rather than in his body**. (page 23). For the alcoholic, the recognition they cannot safely start drinking alcohol again is essential. It must be dealt with regardless of any physical differences which may exist.

The physical *phenomenon of craving* must be dealt with first. After that, any alcoholic who honestly desires to get sober and stay sober can successfully deal with their problem. (pg 58). No assistance from anyone else would be required unless they lacked power of the knowledge of how to do so. (see pg 45).

**IGNORANCE OF A SOLUTION
IS LACK OF POWER TO SOLVE A PROBLEM**

With *new knowledge*, that same individual gains a greater power of choice. An available solution which was previously unrecognized is *new knowledge*. This may help illustrate that effective recovery is primarily centered in the mind. (see pg 23).

JUST BECAUSE YOU DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER DOES NOT MEAN THERE IS NO ANSWER

New knowledge enlarges the power of decision to accept or reject reality. (syn: "God" - pg 55) It is the power of choice to recognize and accept "what is and what is not". (i.e.: "The Ultimate Reality of All Life" - "God" - see pg 53). An improved conscious awareness of that reality is always available. (Step 11).

Inability to recognize and accept reality may qualify as a definition of "insanity". Any conscious choice to knowingly hold onto old ideas which leads to confinement or premature death would probably be another.

Step Two focuses upon the insanity of drinking - *for the alcoholic*. Various examples of insane thinking, are provided *by recovered alcoholics*. Chapter Three describes how that mental condition manifested itself to early members of AA. An ample supply of additional examples are constantly available from other members in AA meetings.

Self-knowledge, when unchanged, is not sufficient for recovery. (pg 39). There is an obvious inability to use the power of *new knowledge* which the alcoholic does not possess. (see pg 164). This is continually illustrated by failures of alcoholics to both control and enjoy drinking. (pgs 30-32). There exists an obvious need for the introduction of some *power, greater than themselves*. (pgs 43 & 45).

Thinking, which is restricted to the *finite limits of self-knowledge*, does not produce results for new situations. (pgs 14-15). The word "God" implies the power of all new knowledge. However, that idea, when utilized by traditional religion, gets limited, confined, and restricted to whatever is their specific *belief system*. Their ethnocentric group concept may also contain something which is "not God". (i.e.: "not part of the Great Reality" see pg 55). That chosen *belief system* is not all inclusive of everything in life. (syn: "God" - see pg 53). As such it is a finite belief system. (see pg 68).

Upon intelligent examination, what is known or *believed* may not be valid. "*You don't know unless you know*". Lack of *new knowledge* blocks the power to choose a *belief system* which is in perfect harmony with the Ultimate Reality of All Life. (pg 60). To avoid mistaken choices would require knowledge equal to an "*omniscient God*". Anything less than perfection is subject to error with room for improvement.

To date, this author has not found any such experts. (pg 60(b)). However, both in and outside of AA, there does seem to be an abundance of individuals who claim "*second-hand knowledge*" which they *believe* to be valid. Their claims of expertise frequently come from sources of questionable authenticity. It is possible this may be their own choice of a self-centered *belief system*. (see pgs 42, 46, 62, 95, 164 & Appendix II).

Many AA groups read a portion of Chapter 3 as part of their meeting format. (pgs 30-32). This has special benefit for any alcoholic who may still be seeking a way to both control and enjoy drinking. This author recommends that the alcoholic reader imbed upon their mind (pg 23) a portion of the first paragraph of Chapter 3. Pay particular attention to the statement:

“The idea that somehow, someday he will control and enjoy his drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker. The persistence of this illusion is astonishing. Many pursue it into the gates of insanity or death” (pg 30)

That single illusion can and frequently does reappear in the mind of alcoholics in disguise. It is an old idea which can be like the actor in a *one-man-play* who constantly reappears in different forms. One time as a young man, then as a girl, an old man, or the villain. Each new character is in a surprisingly deceptive new costume. However, on close intelligent examination, nothing real has changed. It is all an elaborate mental deception. (pg 23).

What you see is merely another aspect of an old *belief system*. There are an endless variety of ways an old idea can be presented to any mind which is not paying attention to reality. Therefore, it should not be surprising that the deception frequently succeeds. Nonetheless, in reality, it is still the same old idea. It is a personally chosen *belief* that there is something beneficial to be obtained from drinking alcohol. Constant vigilance and the use of inherent intelligence (pg 86) is required to prevent that old idea from becoming a guiding force in the life of an alcoholic.

THE PRICE OF FREEDOM IS ETERNAL VIGILANCE

For the alcoholic seriously interested in staying alive and being able to carry their own keys, this is, and must remain a top priority. Experience has indicated that nothing is quite so effective as working with other alcoholics. (pg 89). This is a very practical and available means of survival.

Therefore, by it's own definition, as AA members:

“Our primary purpose is to stay sober, and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety”. (AA Preamble)

The difference in motivation and primary objective between AA and “*expensive treatment programs*” may partially explain why they seldom accomplish significant results when compared to the “*cost-free*” approach of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The *false belief* that sufficient money will buy desirable results is not necessarily a valid one. That error has been borne out by many, with seemingly unlimited financial resources, who have destroyed themselves after attempting to buy personal happiness. (see pg 133). That concept of the power of money has limitations and is a *false belief* held by many members of the professional community.

Most alcoholics need to cast aside that old idea. While expensive treatment programs cater to the affluent, many have depleted their resources before considering

recovery. Few professional treatment programs can offer continual “*cost-free exposure to new knowledge*”. Most traditional religions also have a limited ability to provide a constant flow of *new awareness* of reality. (syn: “God” - pgs 14-15). Their boundaries are defined and within the finite limits of what they have to offer. To the best knowledge of this author, the AA program has no such limitations. Especially for those alcoholics who are seeking the power of new knowledge of reality. (pg 60(c)).

“Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little.”

(pg 164)

Old ideas do reappear in an infinite variety of new ways. If they are allowed to remain unexamined and unchecked, they easily become familiar habit patterns of thinking. Those habit patterns of thought then encroach upon the lives of the inattentive. Eventually, they may become guiding forces in the mind of the alcoholic. (see pgs 23 & 27). When recovery from alcoholism is desired, making conscious intelligent choices of priorities about drinking alcohol is a continuing requirement. (pgs 14-15). Recognizing this seemingly automatic mental process is an important part of maintaining recovery.

HOW SAFE DO YOU WANT TO BE?

Continued self-examination is an inherent part of the AA program. (Step 10). It incorporates growth in self-awareness on a continuing basis. It is continually available from the freely given time and attention which gets offered by other members of AA, as individuals. *New knowledge* is available to those seeking demonstrations of success and failures. The supply of that information is seemingly endless. (see pg 68).

Active participation in the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous is both available and affordable to any and all who want it. There is no profit motive to distract it from a clearly stated primary purpose.
(see AA Preamble).

* * * * *

SECTION B03b:

Chapter 3 - Cont'd

MORE ABOUT ALCOHOLISM

STEP TWO:

“Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves
could restore us to sanity.” (pg 59)

READ:

Chapter 3 - MORE ABOUT ALCOHOLISM - Starting on page 32 with “*Though there may be no way of proving it,*” to page 39, ending with “*This is a point we wish to emphasize and reemphasize, to smash home upon our alcoholic readers as it has been revealed to us out of bitter experience.*”

COMMENTS:

At the time the AA Big Book was written, many of the early members were what was once referred to as “last-gaspers”. They had pursued their drinking to extreme lengths. Early on in their drinking careers, most alcoholics could have stopped. This is significant to those coming to AA sooner in their drinking than those first members.

It is still not fully understood why some individuals respond to alcohol differently than others. There is however, no dispute that alcoholics are affected differently. It is clear that differences do exist.

With the substance *alcohol* remaining measurably the same, any *differences* are to be found within the individual. Unless that individual makes the choice to pick up the drink, the physical *phenomenon of craving* is not activated. This indicates that “*the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind*”. (pg 23). That problem then becomes a matter of personal belief about the ability to safely consume alcohol.

For the alcoholic reader, there comes the question of application. This author suggests that at least part of the answer to a drinking problem is to be found in some **idea, emotion or attitude** that is a **guiding force** in their life. (page 27)

With that thought in mind, in all honesty, ask yourself:

?? **How do I decide what I *believe* is valid?**

?? **Is what I *believe* the result of my thinking or someone else?**

?? **How do others become an authority to me?**

?? **Does their thinking produce results that work for me?**

?? **Do I *believe* better results are possible?**

?? **If so, why don't I have better results in my life?**

?? **Could there be something better neither knows about?**

?? **What do I believe is the source of *new knowledge*?**

(see pg 60(a-c))

In the simplest of terms, consider that you, the reader, do not possess all knowledge about everything in life. Similarly, no group of individuals, knows everything about everything. Some source exists to which individuals have equal access to *new knowledge* and the power that goes with it. (see pg 59).

Any decision to accept or reject reality does not change “*what is and what is not*” the truth. It is the *belief about reality* within the alcoholic which determines their free choice of action. (see pg 55).

WHAT YOU DO AFFECTS WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU.

Where alcoholism is concerned, the reader probably already knows where they stand. If in doubt, the earlier members of AA suggested:

“..... try some controlled drinking” (pg 31).

If you have already done sufficient research, you are probably aware that once an alcoholic starts drinking, they are unable to control when or where they will stop drinking. When left to their own limited resources, they will continue to drink. Without outside interference, the real alcoholic will do so unless they are locked up or die prematurely. (see page 26). That *phenomenon of craving* has been considered a physiological difference. One which separates the alcoholic from his fellows because of the way his body processes alcohol. (see pg 30). Those bodily differences cannot be changed anymore than the color of their eyes.

“The fact is that most alcoholics, for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice in drink. Our so-called will power becomes practically nonexistent. We are unable, at certain times, to bring into our consciousness with sufficient force the memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. We are without defense against the first drink.” (pg 24)

This author suggests that, as long as a sufficient quantity of alcohol is present in the system of the alcoholic, that *phenomenon of craving* continues. This author *believes* any attempt to reason with an alcoholic, while they are drunk, is wasting time. Until sufficient alcohol is eliminated from their system, the alcoholic is functioning with distorted intelligence as their personal defense against continued drinking. The craving continues until there is overwhelming interference produced by some unavoidable personal priority. Therefore, it is not surprising that earlier AA members have said:

**WHEN THE DESIRE TO STAY ALIVE IS EQUAL TO
THE DESIRE FOR ANOTHER DRINK, THEN
AN ALCOHOLIC IS READY FOR AA.**

If, the reader is an alcoholic, this will apply to you. Earlier members pursued their drinking into the gates of insanity or death. No matter how intelligent you may be in other areas, no matter how morally good or financially wealthy and powerful, those qualities are insufficient to produce a change in those unique individual body processes which make you an alcoholic. (pg 38).

Thus far, the only demonstrations of recovery in any significant quantity come from “*a vital spiritual experience*” capable of *displacing and rearranging ideas, emotions, and attitudes* which are *guiding forces* in the life of the alcoholic. Being “*a good church member*” **is not the message of recovery** which this author has found in the basic text. (see pg 27).

If you have reached the fellowship of AA early in your drinking career, it may be possible for you to stop by other means. That was the *belief* of those “last gaspers” responsible for the book “*Alcoholics Anonymous*”. They also qualified that *belief* with recognition of a bit of reality.

“Though there is no way of proving it, we believe that early in our drinking careers most of us could have stopped drinking. But the difficulty is that few alcoholics have enough desire to stop while there is yet time.”

(pg 32)

There are both *risks* and *benefits* to be considered by the alcoholic when deciding if they honestly desire to stop drinking. In making a personal choice, the reader would do well to ask themselves:

“WHAT DO I STAND TO GAIN, AND WHAT DO I STAND TO LOSE?”

Neither age, sex, length of drinking, nor the quantities consumed seem to determine who is and who is not alcoholic. Neither does language, ethnic or religious background nor differences of race and culture make that determination. Nonetheless, the AA program provides a means of recovery which works for any individual who is an alcoholic. (pg 58).

“We are people who normally would not mix.”

(pg 17)

Alcoholism cuts across boundaries which otherwise separate people from each other. The concept of a physical allergy, described in “The Doctor’s Opinion”, has not yet been replaced by any better explanation. Neither has there been any other approach to

recovery which has produced results comparable to the AA program. A predominate *belief* within the AA program, by those who have recovered from alcoholism, is:

“ONCE AN ALCOHOLIC, ALWAYS AN ALCOHOLIC”

Science may one day prove that *belief* to be erroneous, but it hasn't done so yet. (see pg 31). In “*real life terms*” the results will remain the same. Any alcoholic is free to accept or reject that idea as a guiding force in their life. The choice is only as important as their desire to stay alive and carry their own keys.

The reader should recognize the professional community is under great pressure to find “*a cure for alcoholism*” because of the cost to government and society. That is a matter of interest to those concerned with such issues, and is outside the scope of the AA program for recovery.

Individual alcoholics, who find sufficient personal benefits from drinking may allow their lives to be used for trial and error experimentation. The value placed upon drinking over survival is personal. As alcoholics, it is their own life they are gambling with, and it still belongs to them. However, with sufficient continued drinking, even that may get changed without their permission.

Anyone questioning the benefits and risks of drinking would do well to examine their thinking on the subject. (pg 23). Of special importance is the idea that somehow, someday it will be possible to both control and enjoy drinking alcohol on a risk-free basis. (see pg 30). When benefits outweigh risks, that decision becomes the definition of sanity you desire (syn: “pray for”) to have applied to your life. If so, that idea has become a guiding force in your life. (see pg 27 & Step 11).

To date neither science nor religion has produced any method by which alcoholics can both control and enjoy drinking. Until that occurs, any *belief* that drinking can be indulged in, on a risk-free basis, is an illusion. Where control is possible the alcoholic does not enjoy drinking. When they enjoy drinking there are no controls, restrictions or limitations.

The Ultimate Reality of Life is not changed by “*wishful thinking*”. Individual alcoholics, who claim sanity for themselves, make their own choices between illusion and reality. Those choices may qualify as the difference between “*God's Will*” (syn: “the Ultimate Reality”) and “*self-will run riot*”.

The alcoholic individual is directly impacted by their own definition of sanity. Other people may have different thoughts on the same subject. They too are free to act upon what they believe and this becomes the basis for the choices they make. That principle implies human equality. (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”). Alcoholics frequently find themselves in conflict with that equality of choice and the freedom to take action according to what they believe.

Human error is possible. It is equally possible for anyone who does not know everything about everything. This will include expert authorities in the fields of science and religion. The author of this Study Guide is no exception.

The reader may not question their own judgment regarding their relationship to alcohol. However, many are willing to stake their life and freedom on the limited and finite degree of knowledge they now possess. Perhaps their best interests would be better

served by an attitude of willingness, honesty and open mindedness to understand more *new knowledge*. (Step 11 & Appendix II).

More *new knowledge* is always available. Short of attaining “*spiritual perfection*” there is always room for “*spiritual progress*”.
(pg 60).

A review of *Chapter Three* of the basic text illustrates how one alcoholic knew what he knew about alcoholism. He had made a beginning improving his life and then found himself drunk again. The potentially fatal error was in *the belief* that he had acquired sufficient knowledge to maintain sobriety. The flaw was that he failed to enlarge his spiritual life. (review pgs 14-15, & 35).

FOR EMPHASIS: This author repeats the word - “ENLARGE”

Changes and new conditions are the inevitable result of living life, on life’s terms. (pg 85). The idea that what is now known is enough to deal with any new situation is an egotistically attractive but “*erroneous false belief in personal omniscience*”. That “*all knowing*” quality generally gets reserved for an idea of “God”. (pg 55). Old ideas may not always apply to new and different conditions. (pg 58). The desire to enlarge awareness of “*the Great Reality*” (i.e.: “God” - pg 55) is a personal desire for more “*spiritual growth*”. (pg 60).

HOW MUCH MORE KNOWLEDGE DO YOU WANT?

Because everything in life changes, constantly improving conscious awareness of reality (syn: “God” - see Step 11) is a critical factor in recovery from alcoholism. The total knowledge acquired in a single lifetime is never enough to deal with everything which comes along that is new and different.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE IS NOT ENOUGH FOR RECOVERY.

Similar limitations can be applied to all human knowledge. The sum total of all human awareness since the beginning of time is not only finite, but it also has limitations. More *new knowledge* can and will be revealed to those seeking to enlarge their understanding of “*the Great Reality*” (syn: “God” - see pgs 55 & 60(c)). It is recognized that spokesmen for traditional concepts of “God” may disagree. (see pg 12).

Herein lies a noteworthy difference between reality and many religious interpretations of life, on life’s terms. Most traditional religions view “**God**” within the confines of their own definition and *belief system*. **This precludes intelligent adjustments to accommodate *new knowledge* and excludes the introduction of additional information.** (see pgs 53 & 68). That “*closed-minded belief system*” is difficult to reconcile with life, on life’s terms. (i.e.: “God”) and usually requires an attitude referred to as “**blind faith**”.

What is your choice to be?

(pg 53)

A very specific interpretation of the word “God” is a fundamental part of most traditional religions. Accordingly, what they believe about “God” must be defined in finite terms and that gives their *belief system* limited application. Unless they also claim spiritual perfection, that *ethnocentric belief system* is incomplete. Other views can and do exist. Some may even produce improved results. (pgs 53, 55, 68, 164, & Appendix II).

There is always more *new knowledge* to be obtained about an infinite universe. (pg 68). Only someone in possession of “*all knowledge*” (i.e.: “*an omniscient God*”) would have the power of choice to fully cooperate with principles governing all life. (syn: “God” see page 53).

“But there is One who has all power -- that One is God.
(pg 59)

It is a principle with equal application to all life, on life’s terms, that each new day of living life presents new and previously unknown conditions. (pg 85). To intelligently respond to changes requires seeking new knowledge. (pg 60(c)). It is one of the “*Laws of Life*” that apply equally to all, regardless of any other differences which may exist between them as individuals.

It seems self-evident that accommodating new, and previously unknown conditions demand new knowledge. The “*ONE SIZE FITS ALL*” approach, offered by many traditional religions, has limited application. There is no dispute about the value they do have. (pgs 87 & 89). However, there is the inescapable recognition that more may be revealed. (pg 164).

Should there be conflict with that view, the alcoholic reader may wish to answer some questions about their *beliefs* involving their relationship to an ever-changing universe.

?? Is yesterday’s knowledge all you require for today?

?? If you need more *new knowledge*, where do you believe original ideas come from?

?? Where do you believe the first person got their original idea?

Observe how some old ideas continue to prevail as a guiding force even when they may have potentially life-threatening consequences. Frequently there are some *beliefs* which need to be displaced and rearranged to *produce “a vital spiritual experience”*. (pg 27). While anyone can *believe* anything they choose, when it comes to understanding “*the Great Reality*” (i.e.: “God” - pg 55 & Step 11) it is self-evident that “you don’t know unless you know”.

Limited “*self-knowledge*” is always insufficient to overcome an old idea which is producing insane behavior because it is incomplete. There is an obvious requirement for new and different thinking. There is a need for *new knowledge* and “*a vital spiritual experience*” capable of producing a personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism. (see pgs 23, 27 & Appendix II).

New ideas are an essential ingredient in making intelligent choices under changing conditions. Unintelligent emotional decisions can be self-destructive. “*Spiritual progress*” requires an intelligently and realistically enlarged awareness of improved results, on life’s terms. (see pgs 14-15, 35, 60 & Step 11).

INSANE BEHAVIOR OVERLOOKS CONSEQUENCES

(see pgs 37 & 38)

Absence of a conscious contact with reality is commonly considered as insanity. The implications can be disturbing when it is recognized that no one has total awareness of all and everything that is reality. The implication is that insanity is a matter of degree related to conscious awareness of “*life, on life’s terms*”.

It is worth noting that Step Two does not suggest “*a Power greater than ourselves could turn alcoholics into social drinkers like all those others*”. However, when sober the alcoholic reacts, to life, much as others do. (pg 22). This presents questions about the relative sanity of society as a whole.

In significant contrast to much of society, what is claimed by AA is that:

“No one among us has been able to maintain perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is, that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.”

(pg 60)

**“BUT OBVIOUSLY YOU CANNOT TRANSMIT
SOMETHING YOU HAVEN’T GOT.”**

(page 164)

So, where is the problem and where is the solution? Power to make intelligent and sane choices includes recognition of the consequences of actions taken. That may require more *new knowledge*.

IF I KNEW BETTER I WOULD DO BETTER

The power to consciously choose a better answer must come from some source of *new knowledge*. (i.e.: “God”). It does if a more intelligent decision is to get made. This is because the present level of self-knowledge is inadequate. In order to “*trade up*” to “*improved spiritual progress*”, open-mindedness is an indispensable attitude. (see pgs 42, 60, 129, 164 & Appendix II). Despite the value of many *belief systems* and their old ideas, this becomes an important factor when making the best possible choice. It is worth recognizing that:

THE GOOD CAN BE THE ENEMY OF THE BEST

Perhaps a story, making the rounds, will lighten the significance.

A man attended the funeral of a business associate. Surprised by his premature death, he inquired of the cause. The widow related her late-husband drank over a fifth of whiskey daily for several years, developed liver disorders, high-blood-pressure, kidney failure and had a heart attack. The friend asked "hadn't he ever heard of AA?". Pulling herself up with great dignity, she replied "well he wasn't that bad".

Like the widow in the story, some alcoholics have erroneous ideas and attitudes about drinking. They ignore the fact that some people cannot drink without creating potentially life-threatening conditions.

As a consequence of their ignorance of reality, many alcoholics die prematurely because they sincerely applied an erroneous *belief system* to their own lives.

This author *believes* this mental condition merits serious and intelligent examination. There are others who may disagree.

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SECTION B03c:

Chapter 3 - Cont'd

MORE ABOUT ALCOHOLISM

STEP TWO:

“Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves
could restore us to sanity.” (pg 59)

READ:

*Chapter 3 - MORE ABOUT ALCOHOLISM - Starting on
page 39 with “Let us take another illustration.” to the end of
Chapter 3 ending with “His defense must come from a Higher
Power.”*

COMMENTS:

If the reader has accepted the views of the previous section, there should be little doubt that:

“the actual or potential alcoholic, with hardly an
exception will be *absolutely unable to stop drinking on the
basis of self-knowledge.*” (pg 39)

“Self-knowledge” is finite and is limited to the amount of information one individual can acquire during a single lifetime. In an endless universe there is always more *new knowledge* available than any individual mind, or group of human minds can consciously understand about life on life’s terms. (see pgs 53, 60, 68, 164, & Step 11).

Of necessity, traditional religions have finite and limited concepts of God, which exist *within the framework of their own belief systems*. While there is nothing in AA in conflict with efforts to define the infinite, (see pg 68), a significant difference between religion and AA is their effectiveness with recovery from alcoholism. If a religious *belief system* is able to produce the kind of recovery desired, the alcoholic should use it to the fullest extent of its value and usefulness. However, it is well to recognize that there is more. When a chosen religious *belief system* does not produce desired results, then a different concept of “God” may be more beneficial. (pg 12).

In AA, every alcoholic eventually becomes faced with the proposition that:

“God is either everything or else He is nothing.
(page 53)

That concept is the same as saying:

THERE IS NOTHING THAT IS NOT GOD!

It is a “*concept of God*” that equally includes every man, woman and child within whom there is a “*fundamental idea of God*” (pgs 12 & 55). The AA program makes clear some pertinent ideas, including “*God could and would relieve alcoholism if He were sought*”. (page 60). Short of science discovering some “*God-gland*”, or other physical solution, the problem of alcoholism is within the mental processes of the alcoholic. (pg 31).

“.....the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind rather than in his body. (pg 23)

For the alcoholic seeking recovery, it is suggested they examine their “*fundamental idea of God*” which exists deep down within themselves.

In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found. (pg 55)

If the word “**only**” means “*there is nothing else*”, then this author submits that:

**THE THING YOU ARE LOOKING FOR IS
THE THING YOU ARE LOOKING WITH**

That proposition makes certain assumptions about the mental capacities of the alcoholic reader. They are that:

- ?? **God is All Intelligence - you have some intelligence.**
- ?? **God is the Source of All Truth - you recognize some of that truth.**
- ?? **God is all that is Good -, during your limited lifetime, you have some of what is good.**
- ?? **God is the Ultimate Reality - your own mind can recognize some differences between reality and fantasy.**
- ?? **God is the Source of All Creation - you have some creative abilities.**

If your concept of God includes any of the above you have direct access to some “infinite intelligence” which is described by using the word “God”. It may be self-evident there can be more than you, or any group of finite human minds, is now able to understand. (see pg 68 & Step 11).

As an equal human being, your own fundamental idea of God is no more nor less valid than any other. The only validity is **if it is or is not true**. Anyone can be mistaken. No one really knows everything, nor does any group have total understanding of “*the Great Reality*” which is called “God”.

Within that context, all traditional religions will have a limited view of reality.

‘WE LEARN MORE TRUTH - AND IT SETS US FREE FROM “OLD IDEAS”.’

New awareness of reality includes new freedom from the limitations of “*old ideas*”. That *new knowledge* provides for an enlarged awareness of reality. It is “*spiritual growth*” which allows for greater freedom of choice. (see pgs 14-15, 35 & Step 11).

This author suggests that acceptance of “the Ultimate Reality of All Life” requires recognizing an infinite concept of God. (see pgs 42,49 & 68).

The alcoholic experiences relief from a seemingly hopeless condition in life as he understands more truth about his relationship to life, on life’s terms. (see Step 11). **From a viewpoint that “God is everything”,** (pg 53), **ignorance of any truth is equivalent to “ignoring God”.**

New knowledge of reality provides an enlarged spiritual life. (pg 35). This implies that old ideas, emotions or attitudes may require rearrangement to accommodate the discovery of *new knowledge*. (pg 27). It is not by accident that Appendix II “SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE” contains the following quotation:

“There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance--that principle is contempt prior to investigation.”

-- Herbert Spencer
(Appendix II)

In an ever-changing world, any alcoholic will encounter new conditions. If they are to be dealt with intelligently, new thought, new ideas, and new solutions may be required. Old *beliefs* about the reality of life may be inadequate. New conditions may open the doors to awareness of something new which is true. Therefore an open mind is indispensable to “spiritual growth”. (pgs 14-15, 23, & Appendix II).

Self-knowledge and reliance within the finite limits of what is now known is not sufficient for continued recovery. (pgs 14-15, & 68). This makes it difficult to accept any of the traditional religious *belief systems* which are unable to demonstrate significant results with alcoholics.

A close minded attitude is particularly difficult to maintain when other approaches offer better results. As a consequence, any conscious effort to do so requires some degree of contempt - with or without prior investigation.

IT IS DIFFICULT TO ARGUE WITH SUCCESS

Where the word “God” is synonymous with “the *Great Reality*”, (see pgs 53 & 55), then, as Aristotle once observed:

“WHAT IS - IS; AND WHAT IS NOT - IS NOT”

Some alcoholics consider “the Ultimate Reality of Life” to be the same as “God’s Will”. From that viewpoint, any conscious refusal to accept valid *new knowledge* will become a mental block and barrier to the recovery process. (see pg 42 & Appendix II). When “God is Truth”, then:

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE HOW MUCH YOU KNOW, - IF WHAT YOU KNOW IS NOT SO?

However, within that same context, when dealing with recovery from alcoholism:

“But the ex-problem drinker who has found this solution, who is properly armed with facts about himself, can generally win the entire confidence of another alcoholic in a few hours. Until such an understanding is reached, little or nothing can be accomplished.” (pg 18)

The significant point is that the “*ex-problem drinker*” has acquired some *new knowledge*, which is now sufficient to stay sober. That *new knowledge* was not available until it was sought and accepted. (pg 60). Constant changes and new conditions in life may require even more *new knowledge*. (pgs 14-15). Therefore:

“We are not cured of alcoholism..... What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition.” (pg 85)

With the increased power of more *new knowledge* comes increased freedom of choice. An alcoholic with that increased power is then able to intelligently displace and rearrange “*old ideas*”. (pgs 27 & 58). That freedom from mental limitations is acquired by developing an attitude of being *willing* to go to any length to recover from alcoholism. (pg 58 & Appendix II).

As an enlarged awareness of reality is sought, relief gets provided, on a daily basis, from some endless supply of *new knowledge*. That power is equally available to all. (i.e.: “God” see pgs 14-15, 45, 55, 60, 164, Step 11 & Appendix II). This mental process is not a cure for alcoholism. However, it does provide relief, from a once seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. (page 60).

As an alcoholic improves their understanding of reality, (i.e.: “God” - Steps 3 & 11), they gain freedom to let go of *erroneous beliefs and old ideas* in order to accept something better. (i.e.: “Let Go and Let God” -see pgs 82-84). That alcoholic consciously improves what is “good for them”. (i.e. “God’s Will for them”- see pg 133 & Step 11).

**IF KNOWLEDGE IS INFINITE,
THEN IGNORANCE IS ALSO INFINITE!**

Expanding the horizons of their own mind is “*spiritual growth*” available to any alcoholic who seeks it. (see pgs 58-60). Will-power alone does not replace ignorance nor

“those strange mental blank spots” due to incomplete awareness of reality. (see pgs 39, 42 & 85). Any alcoholic can obtain a daily reprieve from alcoholism by maintaining an attitude of *willingness, honesty and open-mindedness* to enlarge their awareness of reality. But, first they must learn how. This is accomplished by seeking conscious contact with the source of all *new knowledge*. (i.e.: “God”- see pgs 14-15, 35, 42, 85-86, Step 11 & Appendix II).

This “*fundamental idea*” of a personal relationship to “*a power greater than ourselves*” is consistent with AA’s basic text for recovery. (pg 55). Authorities and spokesmen for traditional religious concepts of God may disagree. Those experts on religion may be able to better explain their differences in producing successful recoveries. The alcoholic reader is always free to agree or disagree with anyone they choose.

“Why don’t you choose your own conception of God?”
(pg 12)

Any alcoholic who wants to stop drinking will encounter suggestions from a wide variety of sources. Comments in this Study Guide are only intended for those alcoholics who desire to choose their own conception of “God”. This is in direct contrast to other alcoholics who prefer “*a second-hand concept of God*” developed for them by someone they consider an authority on the infinite. (see pg 68). Ultimately the choice of “*who and what to believe*” becomes a matter of personal responsibility.

THE ALCOHOLIC READER WHO CHOOSES NOT TO EXAMINE THE “OLD IDEAS” GUIDING THEIR LIFE, SHOULD NOT PROCEED FURTHER WITH THIS STUDY GUIDE.

Blind faith requires conscious thought and effort to have emotional desires over-ride inherent intelligence. Mental confusion and emotional turmoil is the price paid whenever reality forcefully displaces and rearranges the *belief system* which has been the guiding force for an alcoholic who has chosen not to think. (review pg 27).

The approach to the AA program offered here presumes *willingness, honesty and open-mindedness* to consider *new knowledge* about recovery. (see Step 12 & Appendix II). Any preference to hold on to “*old ideas about God*” may be better fulfilled by some traditional religious *belief system*. However, this author recommends first evaluating their success record with alcoholics.

Alcoholic readers who choose to continue will also note a similar inability of doctors and psychiatrists to successfully provide any permanent solution to the problem of alcoholism. To their surprise, “*a bunch of alcoholics*” discovered and demonstrate “a way to stay sober that works”. (pg 95) Their “*professional know-how*” may have great value in other areas, but the professional community frequently lacks the “*real-life experiences*” which are well-known to many recovered alcoholics. (pg 18).

There is a big difference between finding “a way to live” in contrast to knowing “the only way to live”. This becomes one of the more significant differences between AA

and many other approaches to recovery. For the alcoholic betting their life on a recovery program it may mean their survival and freedom

Experience indicates a necessity for an alcoholic to constantly enlarge their spiritual life. They must continually improve their conscious understanding of reality. (i.e.: “God” see pgs 14-15, 35, 86 & Step 11). A daily reprieve from alcoholism is contingent upon maintaining this attitude at a conscious level. (pg 85 & Step 11).

That mental condition requires maintaining an “*open mind*” about the endless changes constantly occurring in life. (pgs 14-15, 23, 27, 35, 42, 45 129, 164, & Appendix II). This includes a “*fundamental idea of God*” which is compatible with “God” being “*everything*” rather than “*nothing*”, hence “the source of all knowledge”.(pgs 53 & 55).

It is obvious no one can utilize the power of knowledge they do not have. Making changes to accommodate new conditions requires some new knowledge. If the realities of life demand “know how” an alcoholic does not possess, then in that situation they are powerless. (pg 164).

Without knowing everything required, for every new situation, more *new knowledge* will always be required for continued recovery from alcoholism. Any concept of “God” as being “a source of all knowledge and all power” will fit that idea. (pgs 12, 53, 55, 59, 68, 164, & Appendix II). However, the reader will note that:

THERE IS NO ARRIVAL POINT FOR A “CURE”

An effective mental defense can come from the power of new knowledge. (pg 59). This author maintains that *new knowledge* is continually required for a continual “*daily reprieve*” (pgs 14-15, 35 & 85). More *new knowledge* is always available. More than all human experience has acquired since the beginning of time.

Now, imprint upon your mind a concept of paramount importance.

“Once more: The alcoholic at certain times has no effective mental defense against the first drink. Except in a few rare cases, neither he nor any other human being can provide such a defense. His defense must come from a Higher Power.” (pg 43)

The significant difference that separates individuals, in regard to recovery from alcoholism, is relatively simple.

THERE ARE THOSE WHO KNOW, AND THERE ARE THOSE WHO DON'T KNOW

For an alcoholic seeking more power to cooperate with life, on life’s terms comes the question:

?? **Why close your mind to new ideas?**

?? **What do you stand to gain?**

Some alcoholics may already have everything in life they desire (i.e.: “pray for”) in order to be happy, joyous and free. (i.e.: “God’s will for them” - see pg 133). They will not be reading this material, or need to seek anything more, because they will already have all they want from life, within their established limits. However, most alcoholics are more like “*nice honest street-hustlers*”, because they are constantly looking for a way to “*trade up*” to something better than what they already have.

“LET GO AND LET GOD”

To reconcile any conflicts with “old ideas” about the meaning of the word “God”, consider the following:

- 1. Words are used to communicate ideas.**
- 2. The three-letter word “God” communicates an idea.**
- 3. That idea exists within your own mind.**
- 4. What exists in your mind is not identical to any other mind.**
- 5. Your “*belief about God*” is no more nor less than “your idea of God”.**

Your “*fundamental idea of God*” exists within your own mind and “*it is only there that He may be found*” (pgs 23 & 55).

This author calls your attention to the word “only”. It is suggested your “*old idea*” of what the three-letter word “**God**” means to your mind may benefit from being “*displaced and rearranged*”. (pg 27 & Step 10). Unless the reader knows everything about everything, it might be possible to improve what you already *believe* about that word “**God**”. (pgs 14-15, 23, 35, 42, 45, & 164). With conscious improvement, your concept may better agree with the **Ultimate Reality of All Life**, (pg 46), and qualify as “*spiritual progress*”. (pg 60 & Step 11).

Toward that objective, this author suggests the alcoholic reader honestly ask, and answer, to their own mind, the following questions:

- 1. Is your “*idea of God*” producing results you desire?**
- 2. If not, what needs to be changed? God, or your “*idea of God*”?**
- 3. Is your “*idea of God*” an “*old idea*”?**
- 4. Do you know where you got it?**

5. Was it “*your idea*” or “*a second-hand belief*” you blindly accepted from someone else”?
6. Have you ever evaluated “what you *believe* about God” - in the light of your own “god-given” intelligence?
7. Do you *believe* you have “*equal access to God’s knowledge and power*”?
8. Do you want to improve your own life?
9. Does *new knowledge* produce improvements in your life?
10. Could that *new knowledge* be “*a power greater than yourself*”?

* * * * *

SECTION B03d:

Preliminary to Chapter 4

WE AGNOSTICS

STEP TWO: - Cont'd

“Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves
could restore us to sanity.” (pg 59)

READ:

Having just read *Chapter 3 - MORE ABOUT ALCOHOLISM*,
this section is preliminary to Chapter 4 - WE AGNOSTICS.

COMMENTS:

Before beginning Chapter #4 “*WE AGNOSTICS*”, it may be useful to give some separate attention to Step #2 “*Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity*”. This section will examine some ideas, emotions and attitudes which accompany that mental process.

As a child, I believed a number of things which did not stand up to intelligent examination. The concept of “*a fat man somehow magically coming down a chimney with a huge bag of toys*” at the Christmas Holiday was once *believable*. My own inherent intelligence eventually forced the question of “*how does he do that?*”

As the result of intelligent inquiry, my *belief* in Santa Claus eventually was displaced by a more realistic view of the seasonal activities. It was a new view of the holidays that was very different from the “*old idea*”, and much more in line with reality.

How did such a change occur within my own mind? On the premise that:

***“ANY PROBLEM CAN BE SIMPLIFIED, IF IT IS
BROKEN DOWN INTO SMALL ENOUGH PARTS”***

changing a *belief* suggests a mental process of letting go of an “*old idea*”. (i.e.: “Let Go and Let God” - see pgs 12, 23, 27,42,58,164, & Appendix II).

This mental process includes a fundamental basic idea which seems self-evident. Namely that a *belief* compatible with reality is **more sane** than one based upon fantasy, speculation, or wishful thinking.

An honest examination of “*old ideas*” which were guiding my life produced the obvious conclusion that some of them might be erroneous. (see pg 27, Steps 4 & 10).

“I NEVER MADE A MISTAKE BEFORE, BUT THIS MIGHT BE ONE!!

For example:

?? If I *believe* something I also *believe* it is true.

?? Because I *believe* it is true, I also *believed* it can not be changed.

?? If something cannot be changed, then others *should agree*.

?? When others disagree with *my truth*, then they are wrong.

Where sanity is concerned, this is where the trolley gets off the track. (Step 2). It is an “erroneous old idea” that a *belief system* is correct when it conflicts with reality. (pgs 23, 27, & 37-38). Many religions have that problem. It particularly includes the expectation that others either do agree, or else they should. Any expectations about what others “*should believe*” produces conflict. (pgs 60-62). Those conflicts block being “*happy, joyous and free*”. (syn: “*God’s will*” - pgs 75-76, 84 & 133). This is a potential problem, for the alcoholic, when related to alcoholism and recovery.

EXPECTATIONS ARE A DOWN-PAYMENT ON A RESENTMENT

When **reality** does not conform with *what I believe about reality*, my tendency is to force the issue. That includes trying to force agreement from others. (see pgs 60-61). Disagreements destroy any real harmony, balance or compatibility with **life, on life’s terms**. This mental action produces conflict. (pg 23) When a resentment accompanies that conflict, the desire (i.e.: “prayer”) for **escape from reality** is not far behind.

Most alcoholics have experienced the “*recreational oblivion*” produced by drinking. They may not be aware that other solutions are also available to resolve conflicts created within their own mind. *New knowledge* can provide relief from those same conflicts with reality.

Understanding all of reality is beyond the practical limits of any single lifetime. Seeking to improve conscious awareness of reality is synonymous with seeking “*God’s Will*”. (see pg 133 & Step 11). When there is a conflict with reality, any emotional resistance to retain an erroneous belief qualifies as “*insanity*” in the form of “self-will run riot”.

“Selfishness--self-centeredness! That we think, is the root of our troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity, we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate. (pg 62)

Retaliation comes from those other “equal human beings” (i.e.: “in the eyes of God”) who get pressured to abandon independent thinking. This denies them their equality by the expectation they will agree with what another “equal human being” *believes* to be true. The retaliation seems unjustified because of the *belief* which claims “*I am right and they are wrong*”.

There is significant difference between demonstrating a better answer and claiming to have the only right answer. Equality goes out the window whenever someone insists they are right, and others are wrong. This happens, and resentments arise when individuals, or groups, allow a close-minded *belief system* to become the guiding force in their lives. While the reader may be exempt,

“Resentment is the “number one” offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else. From it stem all forms of spiritual disease, for we have been not only mentally and physically ill, we have been spiritually sick. When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically.”

(pg 64)

Strong emotional desires have fueled many *erroneous beliefs*. Wanting life to be a certain way is not always the way reality is. By improving conscious contact with reality (i.e.: “God” see Step 11), it became apparent that beliefs about “Santa Claus” were an illusion which existed in my own mind. It may have been shared by others, but like it or not:

FANTASIES GET REPLACED BY ACCEPTANCE OF REALITY

There is an abundant supply of established experts on that topic within the professional community. They usually charge a fee for their services. The AA program differs from professionalism in that regard. (review Appendix I - The Twelve Traditions (The Long Form). The author of this Study Guide makes no claim of any professional expertise in the fields of mental health, physical illness or spiritual sickness. The observations that are made are based upon a study of AA’s basic text for recovery from alcoholism. They are freely shared with any alcoholic who may find them useful. They are equally free to be discarded by those who do not.

It can be emotionally painful for an alcoholic to replace their fantasies with reality. (“Let Go and Let God”). Therefore it is worth recognizing that:

?? Loss of an illusion can be a disappointment.

?? Disappointments are emotionally painful.

?? Avoidance of pain is natural behavior.

?? Alcohol temporarily masks the pain of disappointments.

An intelligent choice will produce long-term results. (see pgs 37-38). The “*temporary relief*” received by drinking alcohol is akin to someone peeing their pants during a blizzard because “*they wanted to feel warm for a little while*”. No one disputes that it works.

A desire to *believe* in Santa Claus is both childish and self-centered when it includes an emotional demand to be right. However, when the *belief* conflicts with the facts of life, it does appear someone has to be wrong. As a child, my own ego insisted that it wasn't going to be me. Alcoholics have been described as being "*sensitive, childish and grandiose*". If so, that attitude produces confrontation and conflict with reality which disturbs personal happiness. (see pg 133). Resistance to reality lasts only as long as "*old ideas*" can be retained by the inherent intelligence which is part of the alcoholics own mind. (see pgs 23, 53, 55, 68 & 85-86)

A close-minded attitude obliges an alcoholic to shut out anything which does not fit what they *believe*. While retaining that attitude, they can only allow themselves to see what they want reality to be. That **is** "*self-will run riot*". Mentally and emotionally a close minded alcoholic is unable to admit being wrong. (see Step 10).

Repeated reliance upon emotional attitudes creates a habit pattern of thinking. (see pg 68). One which produces a childish demand to be "right", and includes automatic rejection of new or different ideas. "*The Great Reality*" is a reasonable synonym and concept for the word "God". (pg 55). Unhappily for some, any personal efforts to defend erroneous beliefs eventually yield to the Ultimate Reality of life, on life's terms. For others, it can be a welcomed opportunity to "*trade up*" to something better. (i.e.: "God's will" - see pg 133).

By seeking an expanded awareness of reality (syn: "God"- pg 60(c)) it is possible to experience relief from problems caused by erroneous *beliefs*. This occurs by improving a conscious understanding of how to relate to that Ultimate Reality (see Step 11). All that is required is to place a demand upon ones own mind for an enlarged awareness of the truth (syn: "God"). If this is a dominant desire (syn: "prayer") it is possible to "*let go of old ideas*". (pg 58). By that personal choice an alcoholic can change *beliefs* which had previously been guiding forces in their life. (pg 27). There was a time, for this author, when that equality and freedom of choice seemed impossible. However, with new knowledge of reality, that personal *belief system* was changed.

Many alcoholics *believe* it is impossible to be happy, joyous and free without being able to drink alcohol. What gets lost in sobriety is the temporary distortion of reality which is based upon yet another "*erroneous belief*". Namely, that there is nothing in life worth doing unless there is a drink connected to it. Within their own mind a *belief* exists that not drinking means being deprived of something worthwhile.

Such a moral value system is a mental attitude that can be a guiding force when making decisions. (review pgs 23, 27, Steps 4 & 10). It incorporates the idea that "**what**" is *believed* is not only correct, but also is not subject to change".

It is stupid and illogical to consider as valid something you honestly *believe* will not work.(see pg 49, 53, & Appendix II). However, when an alcoholic uses "*their own inherent intelligence*", it is difficult for a "*false belief*" to stand up to demonstrations of success. (see pgs 23, 37-38, 42-43,46,49,86, & 164).

REALITY IS MORE POWERFULL THAN FANTASY

No human power has yet been able to produce any appreciable number of alcoholics who can control and enjoy their drinking. (pgs 30-32). Personal efforts often fail due to lack of understanding of the physical phenomenon of craving which affects

alcoholics but not others. (see “The Doctor’s Opinion”). On that matter there is no personal choice involved. To date, it is not yet possible to change whatever unique individual physical body processes produce that phenomenon of craving. (pg 60(a-c)).

“Science may one day accomplish this, but it
hasn’t done so yet.” (pg 31)

Until such a “*revelation of new knowledge*” occurs, alcoholics have no more choice about how alcohol affects their physical body processes than they do about changing the color of their eyes. The AA program provides alcoholics with a choice of how that bit of reality impacts their life. That personal choice is:

?? YOU CAN BE A DRINKING ALCOHOLIC

OR

?? YOU CAN BE A SOBER ALCOHOLIC.

This is a fact of life once *believed* impossible and is now known to be possible. The fact that thousands of men and women have recovered from a once seemingly hopeless state of mind and body is now a reality. (see “Frontispiece”). It is a bit of reality even the most stubborn minds have difficulty rejecting.

Recovery from alcoholism is now a clearly established option. Those alcoholics who still claim their situation is hopeless are like the man who:

**“STOOD ON HIS LEFT FOOT WITH HIS RIGHT FOOT
AND COMPLAINED BECAUSE HE COULD NOT RUN”**

New knowledge of Reality (i.e.: “God”) has displaced that old *belief* in limitation. The still-drinking alcoholic remains powerless over alcohol, but not the consequences of drinking. Anyone who is alcoholic may never ever be able to control and enjoy drinking. However, they can begin to learn how to be happy, joyous and free without drinking now. That choice is individual based upon what is the alcoholics most important priority. (i.e.: “prayer” - see pgs 53, 68, Steps 4 & 10).

The operative “*old idea*” recognized personal limitations and lack of power. However, the real problem is a mental one, found in the erroneous or limited *belief* about changing conditions that can be changed. (pg 23). With an enlarged awareness of reality, (syn “God”), many alcoholics now understand what others have done to produce a successful solution. (pgs 14-15, 42 & Step 11). That successful solution is “*a power greater than themselves*” because it is derived from *new knowledge* which they previously did not have.

New freedom requires letting go of the limitations of old ideas, emotions and attitudes which is reflected by the sum total of “*self-knowledge*”. (“Let God & Let God” - see pgs 27, 58, 68, & 83). As the alcoholic is “*relieved of the bondage of self*”, the doors of their mind are opened to accept the power of *new knowledge*. (pg 63 & Step 10).

Until that change occurs, that “*power greater than ourselves*” remains lacking and unavailable. (see pg 59 & Step 2).

“Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a *Power greater than ourselves*. Obviously. But where and how were we to find this Power?”

Well, that’s exactly what this book is about. Its main object is to enable you to find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem.” (pg 45)

?NOTE: THE BASIC AA TEXT FOR RECOVERY SPECIFICALLY INDICATES WHERE THAT POWER IS TO BE FOUND.

“We found the Great Reality deep down within us. In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found. It was so with us.” (pg 55)

Any “traditionally religious alcoholic reader” is always free to disagree or hold on to other ideas. (see pgs 27- 28).

The word “**only**” often creates emotional problems for alcoholics who *believe* their traditional religion has an exclusive path to power. Especially when that “*old idea*” is part of a consciously chosen *belief system*. They have an emotional stake in “being right”. Under those conditions any problems they experience are caused by their personal choice to limit or exclude some portion of reality. (i.e.: “God”). That mental illusion seldom creates a problem when what is believed is compatible with the Ultimate Reality of All Life (syn: God).

“Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.” (pg 58)

An alcoholic is always free to *believe* anything their mind can conceive that they want to believe. (pg 23). However, what is believed may not always agree with “*the Great Reality*” of life, on life’s terms. The real problem is when a *belief* is erroneous it conflicts with life, on life’s terms. (i.e.: “*God’s will vs. self-will run riot*”).

REALITY DOES NOT CHANGE, - BUT BELIEFS DO.

Comparing a *belief system* with reality allows an alcoholic to be honest with themselves about what is believed. That open mindedness helps them become willing to “*trade up*” to a new set of conceptions and motives which produce successful results. (see pg 27 & Appendix II). *New knowledge* and more power is always available for those seeking it. (pgs 42 & 46).

“Thus we grow. And so can you, though you be but one man with this book in your hand. We believe and hope it contains all you will need to begin.

We know what you are thinking. You are saying to yourself: “I’m jittery and alone. I couldn’t do that.” But you can. You forget that you have just tapped a source of power much greater than yourself. To duplicate, with such backing, what we have accomplished is only a matter of willingness, patience and labor.” (pg 163)

Consider that *new knowledge* is a source of power to be tapped to gain an enlarged awareness of reality (syn: “God”). That enlarged spiritual life is available to anyone seeking to learn more than they already know. Any previous understanding of reality (i.e.: “*old ideas and beliefs*”) will always have limitations. Improved conscious awareness of reality produces a spiritual awakening to more of that power which some refer to as “God”. (see Step 11).

Regardless of what any alcoholic now *believes* about reality, there is more. More *new knowledge* (i.e.: “*new truth*”) is available for discovery. There is access to more power than now exists in the mind of any individual or group of individuals. There is enough more to be understood, that a concept of infinite reality can be applied to it. That infinite concept of “God” opens the door for any alcoholic to endlessly enlarge their spiritual life. (see pgs 12, 14-15, 35, 68, 129 & Step 11).

For this author, that revolutionary concept pointed to an unfamiliar path of enlarging a spiritual life by improving conscious awareness of reality. It was a “*new idea*” that no one need be limited by their “*old ideas*”. Of greatest significance was, that an existing *belief system* could be changed. Something once *believed* to be impossible could be changed into a *belief* that it was possible.

That *new idea* suggested freedom of the individual who wanted to do so to change any *belief* by placing a demand upon their own mind. For this author, that implied complete freedom to “***believe anything I wanted to believe***”, regardless of how well it agreed with reality. It was also self-evident that anyone lacking all knowledge and perfect intelligence could easily *believe* something that was not true.

For many alcoholics, that unstable concept of reality (i.e.: “God”) can be emotionally disturbing because the universe they live in is the one their mind *believes* it to be. (pg 23 & Step 2). Their *belief system* includes their personal power to create changes. For an alcoholic, the new concept can be pretty “heady stuff”. It implies a new freedom and a different relationship about who does what to whom as a “*fundamental idea of God*”. (see pgs 12, 23, 55, 83, 133 & 164).

One bit of reality, which is equally available to all, became self-evident.

**“YOU HAVE THE CAPACITY TO CHANGE THE UNIVERSE-
BUT ONLY BY THE COUNT OF ONE”**

For an alcoholic, this is the freedom to eliminate one drinking alcoholic from the universe and replace it with one sober alcoholic. Changing others may not be possible, but

the chances for personal success are nearly 100%. It is possible, to let go of *erroneous beliefs* and accept reality. The experience of others has already demonstrated this is possible. Their statement to any alcoholic is:

“Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path”
(page 58)

For alcoholics who still *believe* they lack power to change, (see pg 45) those early members go on to suggest:

“But there is One who has all power - that One is God.
May you find Him now!” (page 59)

If the reader is asking - “*Where do I go to get power to change the universe?*” (pg 45). Successfully recovered alcoholics have stated:

“We finally saw that faith in some kind of God was a part of our make-up.....We found the Great Reality deep down within us. In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found.” (page 55)

Consider the word **“only”**, and what that word means when changing a *belief structure* guiding your life. It suggests individual access to the intelligent power of some *new knowledge* which is greater than you now possess. Also consider that same power in relationship to *“three pertinent ideas”* about how the AA program works. (see pg 60). Paraphrased, they suggest that:

- ?? (a) The individual alcoholic does not have all the answers.
- ?? (b) Neither does any group of humans, including the spokesmen for traditional religions.
- ?? (c) But, if you choose to seek more *new knowledge*, you find relief within your own mind as you improve your personal understanding of reality.

Relief comes by tapping into some infinite source of power you find within yourself. (pg 163). **If you choose**, this can become your own “*fundamental concept of God*” and what the word “God” means to your own mind (pg 12 & 55). Should you choose to hold on to “*old ideas*” which have exclusive limits, then any *spiritual progress* will include those same restrictive limitations.

**THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN “BEING A POWER”
AND “GIVING A POWER A DIRECTION”**

What any power does is determined by the direction provided by the user of that power. The fundamental nature of a power does not change to suit any *belief system* or a desire to be right. Those principles stay the same, regardless of how well it is understood. Power just works the way it works according to whatever principles apply. (review Appendix I - Tradition 12 "The Long Form").

For an alcoholic, this relationship is akin to having access to a cross-country high-tension electrical power cable. That power can be used to light cities or destroy lives. Direction given to any power relies upon knowledge and understanding of that power. Any consequences are determined by the way the power receives direction. Those decisions will be limited by *beliefs* about how the power works. An alcoholic is free to use any available power to do what they want done. (i.e.: "their prayer" see pg 59). In the hands of a child or a fool, access to infinite power can be applied with dangerous and destructive consequences.

Restrictive thinking and a limited *belief system* creates a concept of "*a power greater than ourselves*" that overlooks making improved choices. (Step 11). *Spiritual progress* enlarges that *belief system* and allows something previously *believed* to be impossible to be changed into a *belief* it is possible.

A MIRACLE IS SOMETHING WHICH HAPPENS YOU DIDN'T *BELIEVE* COULD HAPPEN?

Personal experience follows about using this principle which merely illustrates a potential for any alcoholic to tap into an unlimited source of "*power greater than ourselves*". It implies that any alcoholic has a potential, within themselves, to use power to produce miracles. (i.e.: "*the miracle of recovery*" see pgs 55 & 163).

This author first scoffed at the idea and suggestion that *beliefs* could be changed. Especially when it was suggested that a demand upon my own mind could change a *belief* something was impossible into a belief it was possible. With a heavy streak of defiance, the suggestion was rejected as unintelligent, ridiculous, hence *unbelievable*. The honest emotional desire was to establish that "*what I already believed*" was correct. However, my own inherent intelligence did consciously recognize that personal improvement was possible. (Steps 10 & 11).

There was a strong emotional need to prove any personal problems were not of my own making. That *belief system* implied being the victim of some intelligence which had singled me out for special attention. At the time, that old idea fit a *belief* about a very special relationship to some "*power greater than ourselves*". That somewhat self-centered attitude never considered that a personal choice to create "*self-improvement*" might also be available. (see pgs 14-15, 35, 53, 55, 62, 68, 133 & 164).

Exposure to the AA program produced overwhelming evidence that "*other equal human beings*" (i.e.: "*equal in the eyes of God*") had changed their lives. Many claimed to have once *believed* many of the same things that had been guiding my life. If I wanted equal understanding of *new knowledge* others had, then, there was a need to follow their path to success with an open mind. (pg 58). A strong desire to "*stay alive and carry my own keys*", (i.e.: "a prayer") made it important to know if they were speaking the truth.

(syn: "God"). Especially so when they said "*you have the freedom to change what you believe is impossible into a belief it is possible*"?

With a strong streak of defiance, the most ridiculous and impossible thing imaginable at that time was "*a belief in flying elephants*". Certainly that was so outrageous no one could ever even argue about it. My task was to change that *belief* of *the impossible* into a new *belief* that it was possible. This was all supposed to occur based upon my own desire (i.e.: "prayer") to "*change my belief*". Though more than a little skeptical, I decided to give the idea my best shot by *demanding my own mind* reveal that "**it was possible for elephants to fly**". Here is what happened.

Soon, I recalled having read about someone in Nevada who had bred horses to the size of a large dog. It had taken time, but it had been done. "*Why not elephants too?*". "*Just how small could they eventually become?*". That was an *unknown* open to speculation.

A Zoology professor in college had shown that certain tree squirrels had developed skin flaps to help them leap long distances for food. Those that got food were able to breed offspring. Eventually, some of their offspring were able to glide through the air, and that was "flying". "*Why not elephants?*".

Today, DNA engineers manipulate and modify many life forms. "*Why not the physical characteristics of elephants?*". Was it totally inconceivable that science might one day be able to reduce elephants to the size tree squirrels? Or, manipulate other genetic changes where tiny elephants might fly as some squirrels now do? Certainty was being displaced and rearranged. (review pg 27).

The next change in my *belief system* was to acknowledge that if government had a security interest in elephants that could fly, then time and resources would be applied to producing results. Though it probably would not happen overnight, it could happen. Other projects, once believe impossible, had become possible. "*We put a man on the moon, didn't we?*".

My own mind recalled that, many years ago, when taking high school *Chemistry*, the experts then believed that "*the atom was the fundamental building block of the universe and indestructible*". Soon after, that *belief system* got shattered at a Cyclotron in Berkeley, California by the Galileo of our modern era. Humanities view of reality and the universe (i.e.: "God") is now quite different. Our view of reality, as a result of that new knowledge of the power of atomic energy has improved. Obviously, in the hands of a fool it can create problems.

By placing a specific demand upon my own mind for *new knowledge*, I had to acknowledge something I once believed to be **impossible** could be changed into a *belief* that it was possible. The resulting conclusion was that:

IF KNOWLEDGE IS INFINITE, THEN IGNORANCE IS ALSO INFINITE!

From a practical standpoint, the reader will readily recognize that they are not apt to be making any serious decisions based upon having access to flying elephants during their lifetime. That would not be intelligent. However, it is important to acknowledge

that some of our most sacred beliefs are subject to change. Therefore, any choice to hold onto “*old ideas*” is a matter of your own personal preference.

The great obsession of every abnormal drinker that “*somehow, someday he will control and enjoy drinking*” is included. It is **possible** that science may one day accomplish this. However, it is also **very apparent** that “*it hasn’t done so yet*”. (pgs 30-31). How intelligent it would be for an alcoholic to bet their life and freedom on an unproved theory is their personal choice of how to use their brains. (pgs 55 & 86).

Just how valuable such a new discovery might be is open to speculation. Perhaps akin to recent discoveries of how older women, past menopause, can now conceive and bear children. That “blessing” may hold little appeal for many women now freed from raising small children. With that behind them, some have discovered a new freedom and new happiness which they now prefer.

Drinking for an alcoholic is no less demanding than parenting upon their time and freedom. They either want to drink or they want to do something else more. No one else does their “*wanting*” (i.e.: “*praying*”) for them. The price paid for drinking is the loss of freedom to do other things, or make alternative choices, at the same time.

Though only the alcoholic makes the decision to drink, it has been suggested there are only seven basic reasons for making that choice. For those who don’t know what those reasons are, they are: “Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday - etc.”.

Any intelligent choice will have certain requirements for understanding what is to be gained and what is to be lost by the choice. It is important to have an intelligent basis for comparison of differences. Without that awareness, any choice will be made in ignorance of available *new knowledge*.

Many alcoholics ignore the power of *new knowledge* and the practical experience acquired by recovered alcoholics. This personal choice to ignore *new knowledge* leaves them powerless to compare sobriety with a drinking way of life. They have automatically excluded themselves from any advantages to sobriety. (see pgs 12, 23, 27, 42, 45-49, 53, 56, 62, 83-87, 93, & 133).

Some valuable lessons can be learned from the exercise of “*changing a belief*”. One is the discovery that there is *new knowledge* about anything which is now a guiding force in your life. (pg 27). The supply appears to be infinite. (see pg 68). Another lesson is in how to utilize *new knowledge in all our relations and all our affairs* to improve being happy, joyous and free. (see pg 133, & Steps 10, 11, 12).

Before a *spiritual experience* can produce a *fundamental change* in ideas, emotions and attitudes guiding an alcoholic, some indispensable elements are required. They are a mental state of *willingness, honesty and open-mindedness*. The **only** place to find that power is “deep down within yourself”. (See pages 23, 27, 55 and Appendix II).

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SECTION B03e:

Preliminary to Chapter 4

WE AGNOSTICS

STEP TWO: - Cont'd

“Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves
could restore us to sanity.” (pg 59)

READ:

Scan the entire *Chapter 4 - WE AGNOSTICS* to gain familiarity with the entire contents of the chapter. More specific page readings will follow.

COMMENTS:

This next portion of STEP-TWO is focused upon the **idea** of some sort of “*a Power greater than ourselves*”. With that thought comes the implication some sort of intelligence actually exists and human beings are connected to it in some manner. Furthermore, that, as individuals, they have the capacity to utilize that Power to produce changes in their personal lives. That is the essence of Step Two.

For adherents of many traditional religions, there is no question about such matters. Oftentimes, those individuals will speak with great authority, even claiming to know precise details about what that power is, where it is, what it wants, and how to gain special favor with it.

In contrast, there are others who claim, with equal certitude, that no such power exists. Both are doing the same thing. They are claiming knowledge which is beyond the scope of human intelligence. They do this either as “*devout believers*” or “*emphatic non-believers*”. Both are voicing their personal *belief system*. Something based upon what they believe and their personal right to believe it. In this Study Guide there is no argument against the right of anyone to *believe* anything about anything.

Between the two extremes of the devoutly religious and the atheists, there are a large number of alcoholics with an honest desire to stop drinking. Many have questions or doubt the accuracy of what other equal human beings are telling them. Being sufficiently *honest* with themselves, they are *willing* to admit they do not know. (see pg 53). They are seeking answers they do not possess, and suspect that what others claim to know is not much better. However, if they are *open minded*, this allows them to consider *new knowledge* and *new ideas* about different answers. (see Appendix II).

Many alcoholics come to AA questioning the accuracy of *ideas, emotions* and *attitudes* which have been guiding forces in their lives. Usually, their old ideas reflect a *belief system* acquired during early childhood which has never been challenged by their own inherent intelligence. (see pgs 27 & 86). Many of those concepts came from well-meaning, but frequently mistaken adults. Many develop a “*show-me*” attitude which includes *willingness* to accept new ideas if someone can demonstrate they are an improvement to which they can “*trade up*”.

Many alcoholics who proclaim to adhere to “*traditional religious beliefs*” are, in all honesty, a bit skeptical. They have nagging doubts over “*too many unanswered questions*”. Nonetheless, they remain nominally religious on the surface. However, once engaged in an honest self-examination many simply discover that “*they just do not know*”. (pg 53). Their religion does not provide intelligent answers to questions existing in their own mind. Many alcoholics are uncomfortable when a very religious person asks them to abandon their own inherent intelligence to accept, with “blind faith”, something they are being told by some equal human being. For many of them the unhappy choice is to be gullible and agree, or else be excluded from the group. (see pgs 47 & 86).

Fear of exclusion is frequently aggravated by “pressures to conform”. (see Tradition 3 - long form). Often what gets overlooked is that there may be others, within that same group who also have similar doubts. They too are unwilling to display their own ignorance and lack of conformity. This leads to superficial relationships where each one is being “phony” with the others when expressing their *beliefs* about “*a power greater than themselves*”. Such a personal *belief system* can create a great deal of inner turmoil. (see pg 23).

In the book “*Alcoholics Anonymous*” Chapter 4 “*WE AGNOSTICS*” addresses some of those questions. It may contain valuable information for many alcoholics by providing them a concept of the word “God” as a source of “*infinite intelligence*” available to anyone. (pgs 12, 46, 53 & 68).

This author suggests the reader ponder the sky on some starlit night for a recognizable demonstration of order in the Universe. It is something which is still beyond the limits of human comprehension.

Where there is order, there is evidence some intelligence produced the orderliness. Inability to completely understand that intelligence seems to be one common denominator for any and all human minds. One *belief system* is as valid as another unless it is based upon principles supported by facts and reality.(syn: “God”).

For the alcoholic reader who may *believe* they know precisely what that intelligence is, a few questions are worth answering. They involve the *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which are guiding forces in your life. This is the thinking process which determine actions that impact your life. (see pgs 23, 27 & Step 11).

1. **How much knowledge of the Universe do you now possess?**
2. **Is it adequate, or could there be more?**
3. **If so, how much more?**
4. **Could there be more to life than you now understand?**
5. **Can you utilize knowledge you do not possess?**
6. **Are you ignoring knowledge you don't yet have?**

7. **Is there any intelligence greater than your own?**
8. **Do you desire (syn: “pray”) to cooperate with it?**
9. **Could you improve on that cooperation?**
10. **Would your life be improved if you did?**

What follows are a few observations which suggest awareness already exists of “*a power greater than yourself*”.(pg 55). It does not require agreement or conformity with many of the traditional religious *belief systems*.

If you burn your finger, it blisters, and you lose skin. Some intelligence immediately goes to work to replace it, without you even having to ask. Whatever that intelligence is, draws upon infinite resources from the universe. It utilizes food, water and air. You are directly involved in the process by your own personal choice of what gets taken into your physical body.

The “*stuff of life*” gets processed within your body in a manner already operative within you. (review pg 55). Some intelligence converts what was previously unrelated to you, into new skin for your physical body. Not only does that occur, but it happens with great precision. The exact amount of skin required is put in the precise right place. The color is uniquely your own containing your specific fingerprint and DNA pattern. That process involves *new knowledge* which is not completely understood by any human being. (see pg 164).

The significant point is that the intelligent orderly process operates automatically. It is not something you must learn to do. It does not require the prior approval of anyone. It is operative in your life without you having to ask, plead, pray or do something pleasing. Nonetheless, there is a personalized element involved when you choose to cooperate or resist.

DO YOU BELIEVE THIS IS RANDOM COINCIDENCE?

That intelligent orderly process can be relied upon to work unless action is taken to interfere with it. Blocking that natural healing process can be done by choice. Few alcoholics would consciously choose to take “*self-inflicted wounds*” if they understood what they were doing. (see Step 11).

The alcoholic reader will note that interference with the natural inherent healing power can occur as the result of ignorance. Actions can be taken to block improvements without total awareness of those consequences. This conflicts with the most intelligent process which is operating automatically in an effort to put your life into order with the rest of the universe.

Consider the implications of unintentionally resisting that intelligent healing process. It occurs because actions get taken based upon the “*mistaken belief*” that some other choice was better. That “*erroneous belief system*” is an example of “*self-will run riot*”, and may qualify as being “*insane behavior*”.

STEP TWO of the AA program for recovery suggests that we:

“Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.” (pg 59)

The results of chosen actions remain the same despite any amount of “*sincerity or good intentions*”. The reliable orderliness, which operates automatically, has been blocked by “*some other concept of a power*”. One that does not produce the same results. (see pg 55).

When that natural orderliness is blocked by some “*erroneous belief system*”, that idea has become “*a power greater than yourself*”. The results are a matter of personal choice and preference. (i.e.: “*self-will run riot*”). When that *belief system* is a guiding force, (pgs 23 & 27), there is great significance to the application of Step Ten

“Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it” (pg 59)

Step Two suggests that some power “*could restore us to sanity*”. (see pg 59). This process has value when applied to “*a fundamental idea of God*”. Especially any “*second-hand idea*” based upon traditional religious explanations of what that word *should* mean to your mind. (see pgs 12, 23, 53, 55, & 68). This author suggests that:

IF YOU KNEW BETTER YOU WOULD DO BETTER!

There is also the implication in Step Two that sanity previously existed, and that an alcoholic could be restored to that state by some power greater than they now possess. This author suggests a departure from sanity may be the result of resisting the inherent intelligent power already within us. Such resistance would be based upon a “*mistaken belief*” about reality. (syn: “God”).

This is where the alcoholic confronts their own “*belief system*” within their own thought processes. (pg 23). This is where their “*fundamental idea of God*” defines whatever intelligence produces orderliness in an infinite universe. (pg 55). On the assumption that the universe is all and everything, the alcoholic has a choice between doing their own thinking, or accepting a “*second-hand concept of God*” on “*blind faith*” according to what they have been told by some equal human power. (see pgs 12, 23, 53, 55 & 60(b)).

A sane and more intelligent choice would be to improve conscious understanding, and learn to cooperate with whatever that power might be. (Step 11). Conversely, it would be “*insane behavior*” if they did not cooperate with whatever knowledge and understanding is available until it is intelligently established that something better is available.

If there really is something more than an “infinite universe” to be considered, then whatever that might be would currently be based upon speculation. Until something is established as factual, one speculative idea is just as valid as any other. On that point, freedom of belief is unrestricted and is strictly a matter of personal preference.

Many alcoholics *believe* the way an infinite universe operates represents “*the Will of God*”. Those who have other ideas may substitute any other interpretation they prefer. The only criteria for any intelligent evaluation is the results produced by the *belief system*.

TO THINE OWN SELF BE TRUE

Most humans view “other animals” as “lesser beings”. However, it is generally recognized that animals are endowed, by their creator, with basic instincts. They already possess some inherent knowledge of how to be what they are. They have been provided with some fundamental intelligence of how to live in the universe, as it gets presented to them.

Dogs do not attend meetings to learn “*how to be a better dog*”. That observation may appear ridiculous on the surface. However, that *belief system* changes when it gets applied to the *ideas, emotions and attitudes* some alcoholics have about other alcoholics. In actual practice, both dogs and small children get trained to conform to different standards of behavior established by human beings. All human beings are equals. (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”).

DO YOU BELIEVE YOU WERE ANY DIFFERENT?

At some time in the past, a human power decided what was best for you to *believe*. (see pgs 60(b) & 62). Admittedly, they probably possessed more awareness of reality (syn: “God” - pg 55) than you had acquired at that time. However, many alcoholics never ever challenge their source of information. (Steps 10 & 11). For an infant, the caring adult in their life is their “God”. This remains so until the child gains sufficient knowledge and experience to claim human equality. Some alcoholics never do.

Many children *believe* the adults in their life always know what is best for them. That *belief* may or many not be so. However, from a position of authority and control, the adult is able to impose beliefs upon a child the same way they would train a dog. Once trained, those *beliefs* become the *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which govern the child’s behavior. (pg 27).

Few alcoholics escape some sort of that training. Because their trainer lacked complete knowledge of all and everything, gaps will exist in their *belief system*. As a result of that lack, mistakes get made which conflict with reality. (syn: “God” - see pg 45).

When conflicts with reality exist, there is usually some pressure to eliminate them. To reduce conflict, there is a need to discard and replace old ideas, emotions, or attitudes. (see pg 27). That can be difficult when they are already firmly established as guiding forces for decisions to take action. Some alcoholics call this process “*learning to grow up and become a responsible individual*”. It is obvious that not every alcoholic wants to free themselves from the *beliefs* they received from the dominant adults of their childhood.

However, there are many other alcoholics, who were trained to conform, but find they cannot accept the proposition that “other human beings” are their superior. (i.e.: “*in the eyes of their creator*” - see pg 55). Some inherent intelligence deep down within themselves recognizes their own human equality. Often, their response is to rebel in order to express their own individuality. As a result of this “*thinking process*” many are easily

manipulated. When someone says “yes” they automatically will say “no” in some highly predictable fashion.

Rebellion can become a chosen method of response in life. For many alcoholics it is their response which is still being dictated by the same source of “*old ideas, emotions and attitudes*”. (pg 27). It is their continuing response to the dominant adults who trained them in childhood. It is no longer important if that mental training was by conscious intent, ignorance, or even by default. They are still reacting emotionally to “*what others believe*”.

This “*second-hand belief system*” specifically includes the meaning of the word “God” to the alcoholic. While it usually occurred with “*sincerity and good intentions*”, that is not always the case. Sometimes a “*second-hand belief system*” has been forcefully imposed upon a child without them ever being consulted for any in-put about their own desires. (syn: “*prayers*”). Any freedom to disagree either gets stifled, or else produces “*open rebellion*”. Oftentimes the child gets forced to “*stuff their honest feelings*” and become “*a phony*” by conforming outwardly in some superficial manner. Many alcoholics carry that pattern of thought and behavior into their adult life. (see pgs 12, 23 & 27).

Because some adult controls the activities of their life, most children intuitively recognize that resisting a superior force is not sane behavior. For some, conformity becomes such a firmly entrenched mental habit it is difficult to change. (pg 23). Not only are they taught “*right and wrong; good and evil; and how to act*”, but they get told **what and how to think** by individuals who *believe* they are “*expert world authorities*” on those subjects. Sadly, for many alcoholics, those *ideas, emotions and attitudes* are not compatible with reality. (see pg 27).

THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BEING TOLD WHAT TO THINK AND LEARNING HOW TO THINK!

Recognition of the difference produces a new freedom to choose different directions when future thinking is involved. (pg 83). That new direction of thinking is directly related to Step Two of the AA program.

Serious mental conflict exists when **what you have been taught to believe**, is not **the reality of life, on life’s terms**. One choice to resolve the conflict involves seeking to improve understanding of those principles which apply to anyone, at any place, and at any time. The only other option is to rely upon speculative wishful thinking based upon *beliefs* which are not necessarily valid. (pg 68). The reader can decide for themselves which choice they believe would be most sane.

The author of this Study Guide *believes* that:

INTENTIONAL CONFLICT WITH REALITY IS INSANE BEHAVIOR

It is not sane behavior to stubbornly let “self-will run riot” by insisting upon holding onto old beliefs, in the face of the Ultimate Reality of Life. (syn: “God” see pg 58). Consider this scenario from a practical standpoint of personal survival for a “**Booze-fighter**”.

You are in a boxing ring with an opponent of endless strength, energy, and stamina. One who knows how to deal with every trick in the technique of boxing. You, on the other hand, may know some tricks, perhaps even a lot, - but certainly not all there is to know.

In the early rounds of your fight, you make a good show for yourself. You show skill and promise, and even land a few spectacular blows. This produces cheers and applause from the spectators. Spurred on for more of their approval, you find you are actually enjoying the challenge.

As the bout goes on, you take a punch or two. Still able to shake it off, you continue, you are undaunted. Your confidence remains high. Then, you take a few more hard punches, and they rattle you a bit. But, not enough to upset your desire for more approval from spectators. So, you pull yourself together and attempt to overpower your opponent.

As you continue, you get slammed to the mat. Not once, but repeatedly in a series of successive blows. You attack your tireless opponent with all the skill, courage and energy you possess. And what happens? You get slammed down again, and again, and again. Now what?

It seems to me, the “**Booze-fighter**” has a choice. They can stay in the fight, or toss in the towel, surrender and admit they have been beaten by a superior force. (see pg 30).

The world has lost many valuable lives because a “**Booze-fighter**” tried to stick it out, and “**keep on fighting**” until there no were no longer any choices or options. But, once they “**throw in the towel**” the fight stops. The all consuming “**battle with booze**” is over. Eventually, (with or without aid) the “**Booze fighter**” is free to do other things. In time, scars and bruises heal unless they go back in the ring for more.

If the alcoholic reader identifies with the “**Booze-fighter**” you already recognize this bit of your relationship to life, on life’s terms. By recognizing the reality of your situation, you may have made a decision to change what you have been doing. As the result, you may have already gained new knowledge and learned new and different ways to relate to “**a power greater than yourself**”.

The *old idea* was a *belief* that skill and cunning would enable you to gain applause and approval of others. Money, property and prestige were held in high priority esteem as being of supreme value. (review Tradition 6). This produced a *belief* about being able to wrest satisfaction and happiness out of this world if only you managed well. (see pg 61). However, in the face of “*the Great Reality*”, (i.e.: “God” - pg 55), the emotional desire to win got replaced by a more intelligent and sane desire to survive. (syn: “a prayer”)

THE DESIRE FOR SURVIVAL CAN BE STRONGER THAN THE DESIRE FOR APPROVAL.

This author suggests that change in a *belief system* about personal moral values was prompted by some inherent intelligence, deep down within the alcoholic, which is capable of recognizing the truth. In a very practical sense, it is a mental attitude, referred to as “**surrender**”. (see pg 23). The AA basic text suggests the inherent intelligence to recognize and cooperate with “*the Great Reality*” comes from deep down within yourself. (syn: “God” pg 55).

As a consequence of choices made with improved intelligence, sanity and understanding of “*the Great Reality*”, something happens.

“We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.”
(pg 83)

As the result of valid *new knowledge*, a valuable lesson gets learned about how to accept a new freedom to consciously improve future contacts with reality. (Step 11). This revelation of truth is like the light-hearted comment about a nursery rhyme

**“There was an Old Woman who Lived in a Shoe.
She had so many Children, she didn’t know what to do!”**

AND THEN SHE DISCOVERED WHAT CAUSED THEM!

With an enlarged awareness of reality comes freedom to change and devote attention to other matters. It is no longer necessary to continually repeat making the same mistakes. Not unless there is a return to the automatic habits and behavior of old ideas because the lessons were forgotten. This may be the single most significant reason why some members of AA continue attendance at meetings. *How safe do you want to be?*

It is well to recognize other beatings in life may occur as the result of other failures to cooperate with reality. There are endless other lessons to be learned in life, but the principle is the same.

An alcoholic can end their career, as a “*booze-fighter*”. It can be ended by “*throwing in the towel*”. Any such choice to “*surrender*” would likely be considered an “*enlarged spiritual life*”. Making that choice demonstrates “*an improved conscious contact with God*” (syn: “The Ultimate Reality of Life”) which results in “*being restored to sanity*”. (see pgs 14-15, 35, Steps 2 & 11).

The desire for that kind of sanity, and making the choice to “*surrender*”, belongs exclusively to the individual alcoholic. So do the results of whatever action gets taken.

Fortunately, for any alcoholic reader, the chances for success in the recovery process are nearly 100%.

*“Rarely have we seen a person fail who has
thoroughly followed our path”* (pg 58)

* * * * *

SECTION B04a:

Chapter 4

WE AGNOSTICS

STEP TWO: - Cont'd

"Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

READ:

The entire *Chapter 4 - WE AGNOSTICS* with awareness of preliminary comments made in the two previous sections.

COMMENTS:

The two previous sections have attempted to put this Chapter into context. Specifically, that AA's basic text for recovery does not include the duality of most traditional religions. Any basic belief of "**good and evil**" is not an integral part of the AA program. Instead, the emphasis is placed upon a "**cause and effect**" relationship to "*the Great Reality*" of life, on life's terms. This includes a concept of the word "God" as being an intelligence responsible for an orderly universe of infinite proportions. (see pgs 12, 45, 53, 55, 68, 164, & Appendix II).

This fundamental idea of "*a power greater than ourselves*" is a process which gets developed and improved within the finite limits of human intelligence. For the most part, it is the result of an ever-expanding conscious awareness and understanding of what is and is not life, on life's terms. (Step 11). Furthermore, that any such fundamental idea of God is a personal concept which varies by individuals. (see pgs 12, 23, 27-28, 35, 39, 42, 45-49, 53-56, 77, 85-87, 89, 93-95, 98-100, 129, 133, 152, 158, 161, 163-164 & Appendix II).

Traditional religious *belief systems* are not universal to all who have recovered from alcoholism. This is in contrast to results which are demonstrated by using the principles found in the basic text of the AA program. Accordingly, any "*fundamental idea of God*" is individual. It is a personal interpretation of the meaning of that three-letter word "God".

It is on that point the adherents of many traditional religions find their minds will snap shut. Instead of having *willingness, honesty and open-mindedness* to consider new ideas, many abandon their own "God-given intelligence" and become emotionally irrational. It is precisely that mental action which is the essence of Step Two. (review pgs 23, & 36-38).

"MY INSANITY IS SUPERIOR TO YOUR INSANITY!"

Once again any reader, who finds themselves being emotionally disturbed by what is found in the basic text for recovery from alcoholism, is warned to set aside the material in this Study Guide - now.

This Study Guide will not change anything which is real. However, reading this material may disrupt some old *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which are guiding forces in your life. (pg 27). If you do not want that to happen, then don't continue reading. Any choice to continue is your own.

What follows will address some issues concerning personal *belief systems*” held by alcoholics. There are many who experience difficulty accepting the words "God" or "spiritual", as having any significance in their personal recovery from alcoholism.

"To one who feels he is an atheist or agnostic such
an experience seems impossible....".
(pg 44)

It is suggested that the operative word here is **“seems”**. With *new knowledge* and an enlarged awareness of reality, a different mental outlook can occur. What once ***“seemed impossible”***, now can be viewed as ***“possible”***.

New knowledge has produced a change in the way of looking at reality. The word "God" conveys an "idea" about *“the Great Reality”* of life, on life's terms. (pgs 55 & 161). That mental concept exists in the mind of the alcoholic using the word. (pg 23). That same word “God” may have a totally different meaning to a different alcoholic when they hear it. It is rare to find two alcoholics who will apply identical meanings when that word is used.

If someone tells you they now have *“Buddha in their liver”* the chances are you would not understand what they meant. It may have great emotional significance to them, but not for you personally. But what happens if someone suggests you should find *“Jesus in your heart”*? Is there a difference? Do you really know what that means? Is it not self-evident that what is being said is something highly personal with strong emotional overtones? For that reason, it is an important part of recovery for alcoholics to examine their personal *“belief system”* for errors. (pgs 12, 27, 42,46).

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT
WHAT YOU BELIEVE MORE IMPORTANT
THAN WHAT THEY BELIEVE?

If so, why do you *believe* what you *believe* ? Those *ideas, emotions and attitudes* make up your personal *belief system* and determine the actions taken in your life. They include your *fundamental idea of God* which is a guiding force in your life. (see pgs 27 & 55). From a purely practical view, your personal *beliefs* about the word “God” are either producing results you desire (syn: *“what you pray for”*) or not.

If your *belief system* is working to your satisfaction, then use it. If not, you may wish to seek something different. If your dominant desire (syn: “prayer”) is to be *happy, joyous and free* and you are not, then it is suggested that you take action and make changes to improve and enlarge your spiritual life. (see pgs 14-15, 35, 133 & Step 11). On the premise that *new knowledge* allows an alcoholic to make improvements, there is always more of that power available to anyone.

"Well, that's exactly what this book is about. It's main object is to enable you to find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem." "We found that as soon as we were able to lay aside prejudice and express even a willingness to believe in a Power greater than ourselves, we commenced to get results," "Much to our relief, we discovered we did not need to consider another's conception of God. Our own conception, however inadequate, was sufficient"

(pgs 45-46)

At this point, the alcoholic reader of the basic text for recovery is asked a specific question:

"Do I now believe, or am I even willing to believe that there is a Power greater than myself?" (pg 47)

The answer you give, to your own mind, may well determine success or failure in your recovery from alcoholism. (pg 23). After that, it becomes a matter details and facts about **what** you *believe*. Recognize that your *belief* may not necessarily be consistent with the Ultimate Reality of Life.(syn: "God").

The question gets addressed in the basic text as to "**why**" someone should believe in a Power greater than themselves. To consider limited finite human understanding of an infinite universe as being "**all there is**", smacks of arrogance. It is a mental attitude which is not justified by overwhelming evidence of *new knowledge*. There are too many new facts of life so self-evident that they cannot be denied with any claim of intelligence.

Any denial of reality appears to be an emotional desire rather than any sustainable claim of intelligence. Some emotionally religious alcoholics prefer to abandon their own intelligence in favor of countless vain attempts to force reality into conforming with the way they want it to be. (see pgs 30, 60-62).

When there is a difference between *beliefs* and reality, there will be a conflict. That conflict can block or obstruct personal happiness, joy and freedom when dealing with life, on life's terms. Nonetheless, large numbers of alcoholics insist upon retaining those conflicts for their entire lifetime. However:

THERE IS ALWAYS MORE AWARENESS AVAILABLE TO ANYONE

One problem for many religions is that they rely upon an emotional *belief system* using finite human intelligence in an attempt to understand and explain the infinite reality of life, on life's terms. Such a *belief system* does not stand up well to a concept of God as *infinite intelligence*. (syn: "omniscient" - pg 68). Human intelligence is limited by what is now known and understood. However, it is capable of being enlarged by improved conscious understanding of what is available to be known. (Step 11).

"Instead of regarding ourselves as intelligent agents, spearheads of God's ever advancing Creation, we agnostics and atheists chose to believe that our human intelligence was the

last word, the alpha and the omega, the beginning and end of all.
Rather vain of us, wasn't it?" (pg 49)

As “*spearheads of something greater than ourselves*”, there is always room for *spiritual growth* into the unknown of the universe.

Any concept of *spiritual growth* is difficult to reconcile with many traditional religions when their *belief systems* define boundaries or reject some element of reality. This occurs when some human intelligence claims to possess knowledge of “the Will of God”. The claim itself is personal and is not a problem until what is believed gets imposed upon others. Even that imposition need not be a problem if there is equality given to the *beliefs* of others. (i.e.: “*equal in the eyes of God*”).

There is a problem with a *belief system* when it denies any idea of human equality to those who disagree. When what someone *believes* is harmonious with reality, any conflict can be resolved with sufficient *new knowledge*.

“People of faith have a logical idea of what life is all about.” (pg 49)

The problems with “*blind faith*” occur when what is believed becomes undeniably in conflict with life on life’s terms and how it is being experienced by other alcoholics. Many people with faith in traditional religious concepts find their *beliefs* make intelligent good sense to them. Their *belief system* provides them a fundamental idea of what life is about and it is acceptable to them. While it is useful and valuable to them, they do not expect agreement or that their *beliefs* will be understood by other alcoholics. Their personal idea of what life is about may be logical to their own mind. That is not the point. Something is “true” not because someone *believes* or said it is. It is true because it IS true.

The fundamental premise about life, which supports a *belief system* either does or does not, conform to reality.

This author submits that any limited concept of reality (syn: “God”) will produce a limited *belief system* as the guiding force in life. (see pg 27). Conversely, an unlimited concept (pgs 53 & 68) offers endless opportunity for more spiritual growth. (pgs 14-15, 35, 129 & 164). The result of any *spiritual progress* is an improved understanding of reality. (syn: “God” - see pg 27 & Step 11).

Many alcoholics, experience difficulty accepting limited concepts of reality. (i.e.: “God” - pgs 55 & 161). **Not because the *belief system* is wrong, but because it is inadequate for the needs of life, on life’s terms.**

A desire (i.e.: “*prayer*”) for something “more” creates a need to “seek something more” (see pg 60 a, b & c). That observation can be paraphrased by the statement:

MORE TRUTH NEEDS MORE "GOD" TO EXPLAIN IT

Problems can result from “*blind faith*” within the limited and exclusive framework of many traditional religious *beliefs* about the word “God”. Those kinds of problems became the basis for preparation of this Study Guide for alcoholics with a similar difficulties accepting reality.

As an illustration:

"Some contemporaries of Columbus thought the idea of a round earth was preposterous." Their concept of reality included a *belief* in a “flat earth”, which of itself is a harmless fantasy. But, put that *belief system* into action, and what happens?

One or two of the men who *believe* the earth is flat, get aboard a ship with Columbus at the helm. As Columbus takes them toward what they *believe* to be the edge of the earth, their fear increases.

Ultimately, there is a fear for survival based upon an “*erroneous premise*” that the earth is flat. With that *belief system* operative, as a guiding force in their lives, they may also *believe* it would be justifiable homicide to throw Columbus over the side.

Such action would be a rational decision based upon a logical idea of what life is all about. However, that impeccable logic would be based upon a *belief system* with a false premise that “the earth is flat”.

What was *erroneous* was a *belief* in something which was not consistent with the Ultimate Reality of life.

It should be noted that alcoholics are held accountable and responsible for their actions.

Therefore, the alcoholic reader is advised to consider that:

WHAT YOU DO AFFECTS WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU

Because part of a *belief* is erroneous does not necessarily mean the entire *belief system* does not have some validity. That is a mistake often made by those alcoholics who completely reject all of the values found in traditional religions. This attitude is akin to “*throwing out the baby with the bath-water*”. Some old ideas may be based upon an “*erroneous belief system*” while other elements retain their value and usefulness and continue to have practical application.

As a further example:

Galileo's views were once labeled as religious heresies when he claimed the earth moved. An “*infallible authority on God*” said, “*the earth stands still*”. There was practical proof provided by a method of celestial navigation at sea. The navigator charts a course based upon the movement of the stars in the heavens.

Many of those methods of navigation are still used today. Within certain limits, they continue to have practical application

and are still useful to those functioning within the boundaries of that harmless illusion about reality.

It is also worth noting that, after 300 years of accumulated new knowledge one "infallible authority on God" felt compelled to proclaimed "*the previous infallible authority had been mistaken*".

The point is that there is always "more truth" to be learned about reality. Even by those who are **your chosen experts** on "God".

EVERYONE STANDS ON THE THRESHOLD BETWEEN INFINITE KNOWLEDGE AND INFINITE IGNORANCE.

At this point, the alcoholic reader may have noticed a difference between a personal *belief* and those *universal principles* which govern all life on life's terms. (i.e.: "God" see pgs 53, 68 & Appendix I -Tradition 12).

Such a difference is of no great consequence unless there is a problem. But, when other concepts produce successful results you are unable to duplicate, it becomes obvious they may know something new or different. If their results are desirable, it is difficult to argue with their success.

"When we saw others solve their problems by a simple reliance upon the Spirit of the Universe, we had to stop doubting the power of God. Our ideas did not work. But the God idea did." (pg 52)

For the alcoholic *willing* to examine their personal *belief system*, some questions arise.

?? Are the fundamental *beliefs* guiding your life based upon principles or your personal preferences?

?? Do you ask "is it moral" or "does it work"?

?? Which set of "*standards*" do you use?

?? Why do you *believe* one is better than the other?

There are many choices of moral standards which are available. However, universal principles have universal application which are equal for all. When personal preferences conflict with reality, a change may be required. (see pg 42, Steps 4 & 11).

The alcoholic reader is advised to investigate whom, or what is the "*moral authority*" for their life. How certain are you of their credentials or their validity to be one? Why have you chosen them to guide your actions? "*Are they your God?*" Remember that it is your actions for which you will be held accountable as an individual during this lifetime.

It is recognized that "*other ideas and beliefs*" may have a greater range of consideration. Your present *belief system* may have elements of usefulness. However,

recognize that, just as a concept of this planet being the center of the universe still has value for nautical navigation, that same *belief system* is not adequate for a spaceship landing on the moon.

On that note, you may wish to consider comments and references in Appendix II concerning "*open-mindedness*". What is your attitude when *new knowledge* is presented for consideration? There is a simple "*cause and effect*" relationship involved in recovery from alcoholism.

"It is the work done that is alone of moment, and the way in which it works, on the whole that is the final test of a belief."

Thus far, more alcoholics have become sober by utilizing the principles of the AA program than from any other approach. (see pgs 44 & 45) It may not be "moral" or "good" by traditional standards of medicine, religion or psychiatry, but, it does work, and there is more to be revealed: (see pg 164)

IT IS HARD TO ARGUE WITH SUCCESS

For the alcoholic seeking personal recovery there is a question of personal priority. Is it more important for you:

?? **To achieve successful results?**

or

?? **Conform to a "*second-hand belief system*"?**

Some significant comments about the word "God" are to be found in this portion of AA's basic text for recovery. Being *open minded* to different concepts and *new knowledge* may help the alcoholic who is experiencing difficulty with the way that word "God" gets used by the authorities of many traditional religions.

The observation has been made that *a fundamental idea of God* is an inherent part of everyone's make-up and is to be found within ourselves. Furthermore, that it is only there that idea may be found.
(pg 55)

It has also been suggested that, by thinking honestly, and searching diligently, if you wish, you can join in a recovery process which produces successful results. (see pg 58). This introduces questions about *beliefs* in human equality.

The AA recovery process still works better than any other approach thus far. With emphasis placed upon **the process**, this author suggests that when the alcoholic reader is seeking to enlarge their understanding of "*a power greater than ourselves*":

**THE THING YOU ARE LOOKING FOR, IS
THE THING YOU ARE LOOKING WITH.**

THE POWER YOU ARE SEEKING is your own fundamental idea of God. There is more than exists now which is available from within your present and limited conscious understanding of reality. It is possible there may be an infinite amount more *new knowledge* which can be discovered and revealed from within your own mind, if you seek it. (review pgs 23, 27 & 60).

The alcoholic reader who is serious about their own recovery process may wish to review the entire basic text with this thought in mind. This author strongly recommends that you do so. You may discover you already possess some inherent intelligence and the power to recognize the truth.

Though you may question human equality in other matters, regardless of how morally superior you might consider yourself to be, you cannot utilize knowledge you do not possess. (see pgs 68 & 164). Only a mind *willing, honest and open-minded* to the acceptance of *new knowledge* will be able to improve. What gets improved is a conscious contact with that Ultimate Reality of All Life which gets defined by use of the three-letter word "God". It is suggested that this mental action qualifies as "*spiritual progress*". (see pg 60).

An alcoholic who was emotionally attached to an old idea raised an important question concerning the validity of all beliefs of all religious people. (see pg 56). His problem was not with "God", (syn: "*the Great Reality*"- pg 55), but rather with his own "*fundamental idea of God*", and the claims made by others.

It is worth noting that, from within his own mind came a thought. One which acknowledged there might be finite limitations to his *beliefs.* (review pgs 53, 55-56, & 68). By questioning his own *belief system* he was able to displace and rearrange the *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which had been guiding his life. (see pg 27).

A thought produced the change. That thought came from within his own mind. This is where the real problem existed. (see pg 23).

That change in attitude was a *vital spiritual experience* produced by a *willingness to believe* there was something more than what he already understood. (see pgs 12, 23, 27 & Appendix II).

This "*revelation of reality*" (i.e.: "*God*") occurred by *honestly and open-mindedly being willing to ask of his own mind the question:*

"Who are you to say there is no God?"

This author suggests his own mind discovered a simple truth concerning his personal importance in an infinite universe. Where "*Truth*" is a valid synonymy for the word "*God*", it follows that he acquired "*a conscious contact with God*". It was a revelation of truth and a "*vital spiritual experience*" which included a concept of something which existed beyond the range of human understanding. (see pgs 27, 53, 68 & Appendix I - Tradition 12).

As an equal human being, in the eyes of his Creator, he had enlarged his spiritual life. (see pgs 14-15, 35, 129, 164 & Appendix II) It came by seeking an improved understanding of “*the Great Reality*” which is God. (see pgs 53, 55, 60(c), 161 & Step 11).

The reader may observe that this “*revelation of reality*” occurred while he was thinking about his thinking. That mental action has value as a definition for the word “*meditation*”. (see pg 23 & Step 11). **You may wish to use it in your recovery process.**

* * * * *

SECTION B05a:

Chapter 5

HOW IT WORKS

STEP TWO: - Cont'd

“Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”

READ:

From the beginning of *Chapter 5 - HOW IT WORKS*, commencing with “*Rarely have we seen a person fail..*” to page 60 (c) ending with “*That God could and would if He were sought*”..

COMMENTS:

This is the portion of the basic text for recovery from alcoholism which is frequently read at the beginning of many AA meetings. The reader should be aware that the comments provided in this Study Guide about any portion of the AA Big Book, are those of a single individual speaking or writing as “*a member of Alcoholics Anonymous.*” (see Foreword to First Edition).

No individual member is entitled to speak for the AA Fellowship as a whole. Accordingly, the reader should be aware that these comments are expressing personal ideas, emotions or attitudes. (see pg 27). There are no claims made to be an authority. No endorsement by AA or any other activity is intended or implied. The reader is free to accept or reject any of the contents of this Study Guide according to whatever value they might receive by considering the personal views of this author.

In preceding chapters, the personal powerlessness, insane behavior, and need for power, of the alcoholic, were illustrated. It was established, that other alcoholics had recovered from their condition by tapping a source of power greater than they previously possessed. Power is power and:

ANY POWER FUNCTIONS ACCORDING TO CERTAIN PRINCIPLES

There is no evidence any part of the universe is functioning differently. The reader of AA’s basic text has already been asked to choose a personal concept of an infinite power referred to as “God”. (see pg 12).

“When we became alcoholics, crushed by a self-imposed crisis we could not postpone or evade, we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else He is nothing. God either is, or He isn’t. What was our choice to be?”

(pg 53)

If the reader has chosen to *believe* the proposition that “*God is everything*”, then there is nothing which is “not God”. Of necessity, that would include all power. (pg 59).

Life functions according to certain principles which may or may not be understood by the alcoholic who is experiencing them. (see Step 11). Those principles have endless implications as more *new knowledge* about “*the Great Reality*” is revealed. (pgs 55, 161 & 164). Many alcoholics *believe* those principles are “The Laws of Nature” or “God’s Laws”. (see pgs 93-94). Whatever else they might be, and regardless of how well they are understood, they are non-negotiable conditions. They govern all of life, as life’s terms for human existence. The religious alcoholic should feel free to substitute any concept with a more intelligent explanation of reality.

The "power of God" is either "*everything or nothing*". Any *ideas, emotions or attitudes* about that power are based upon a personal *belief system*. (see pgs 12, 23, 27, 53 & 55). Either all or nothing! That is as much as any human being can comprehend during this lifetime. Whatever life is, that is all there is.

However, during this lifetime, there is an infinite supply of more power to be found by seeking *new knowledge* of reality. (i.e.: “God”- see pgs 55 & 161). Any alcoholic who uses that power with intelligence will seek to improve their understanding of the principles by which that power operates. They have a need to know if they desire (i.e.: “pray”) to minimize personal mistakes in judgment. Anything which may occur beyond this lifetime is still speculation based upon some chosen personal *belief system*. That speculation will quite naturally involve a *belief* about how the principles of power work for them.

“Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a *Power greater than ourselves*. Obviously. But where and how were we to find this Power?”

Well, that’s exactly what this book is about. Its main object is to enable you to find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem. That means we have written a book which we believe to be spiritual as well as moral.”

(pg 45)

A principle works the same for anyone, anywhere, at any time. Principles do not apply only to special groups, and not all others. Whenever someone claims to base their life upon “*God’s Laws*”, they are of necessity referring to “*those principles*” which govern life on life’s terms. This implies they are privy to “*all knowledge and all understanding*”. (see Steps 10 & 11). On that point, this author suggests that:

INFINITE POWER REQUIRES INFINITE KNOWLEDGE FOR COMPLETE UNDERSTANDING.

In most traditional religions, there exist emotional arguments to the contrary. Almost invariably a traditional religious *belief system* will exclude some portion of reality. Any such *belief system* will conflict with the proposition that “*the power of God is everything*” because something in life gets excluded as “not being God”.

The alcoholic reader will decide for themselves what they choose to believe. That choice will be influenced by whomever they have chosen as an authority in their life. Many alcoholics have problems accepting any authority.

Someone demonstrating success with how a principle works is qualified to tell others what they did to produce those results. Alcoholics who have recovered from "*a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body*" are qualified to comment on their own experience. This experience has validity, despite any other differences. However:

**PERSONAL EXPERTISE IN ONE AREA
MAY NOT EXTEND INTO OTHERS.**

In Chapter 5 the reader is offered specific experience of early AA members concerning recovery from alcoholism. With the validity of their own experience and success as the basis of their authority, they inform any alcoholic that:

"Rarely have we seen a person fail who has
thoroughly followed our path."

(pg 58)

The good news for the still suffering alcoholic is that their personal chances for recovery are about 100%. The bad news is they must do what the others did to recover.

This places personal responsibility upon an individual alcoholic to decide if they want what those early members had. If they are "*willing to go to any length to get it*", then that decision and desire becomes a reasonable definition of "*a prayer for new knowledge*". Only the individual can really decide what it is that they want. The choice is a simple one, and personal responsibility is inescapable.

**Some alcoholics cannot or will not make decisions in their own
behalf. Institutions and others will often try to fill their needs.** (pg
60(b)).

There are alcoholics who will prefer to have someone else run their lives for them. Many of them cannot or will not accept the truth about themselves or take any responsibility for the consequences of their own actions. This may be due to some inborn defect which is beyond the scope of the AA program. The early members of AA recognized this:

"Those who do not recover are people who cannot or
will not completely give themselves to this simple program,
usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable
of being honest with themselves. There are such
unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have
been born that way. They are naturally incapable of
grasping and developing a manner of living which demands
rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average.
There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and

mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest." (pg 58)

Serious mental or emotional problems need not completely bar an alcoholic from recovery. Remember, that the capacity to be honest, is essential to the recovery process. A "*limited capacity to be honest*" may only produce "*limited spiritual progress*" (see pgs 58-60). On that point, the alcoholic may question whomever they *believe* is the expert on their mental or emotional condition. How did that person become an authority, in your mind? (pgs 12, & 23).

A general pattern of principles for recovery emerges from the personal experience of alcoholics who have recovered. Those principles have universal application. (pg 95). Sharing their stories of recovery allows others to evaluate their "*personal secrets of success*". Then there is an intelligent basis for deciding, if they want any part of that available *new knowledge*. The newcomer either does or does not want to change.

IF YOU WANT TO CHANGE, YOU HAVE TO CHANGE!

Unless you believe you are "*a victim of God*", your life is your own responsibility. No one else does your *wanting* ("praying") for you. To the degree you have any responsibility for your own life, there is no intelligent reason to live a life you do not want to live. (see pg 133).

Many alcoholics prefer the "*recreational oblivion*" provided by alcohol and do not want what the AA program has to offer. If so, then honestly ask:

"WHAT DO I STAND TO GAIN, - AND WHAT DO I STAND TO LOSE?"

Should the desire to drink come into balance with an equal desire to stay alive and carry your own keys, you may wish to reconsider. (see pgs 31 & 32).

Because a phenomenon of craving makes alcoholics bodily and mentally different from their fellows. (see "The Doctor's Opinion" & pg 30) it is not possible for them to both control and enjoy drinking. Like it or not, for the alcoholic, it is a choice of either uncontrolled drinking, or total abstinence. Some alcoholics disagree and pursue their *belief* into the gates of insanity or death. Those who stop drinking before it is too late are able to accept *new knowledge* of their relationship to reality and then have a different set of options open to them.

With new awareness and understanding (see Step 11) the alcoholic is in an improved position to decide what they want most. While it may not be possible to have it both ways, a dominant desire is a reasonable definition of "*a prayer*". Upon that, there is total freedom. The alcoholic is always free to want to cooperate with life on life's terms. (i.e.: "*praying for God's will*"). They can also demand something else. (syn: "self-will run riot"). While the principles of life may respond to either desire, (i.e.: "*answer either prayer*") the desire to accept or reject reality is personal.

ACCEPTANCE = “*LIKE IT OR NOT, THAT’S HOW IT IS!*”

For those alcoholics who have decided they want a path to recovery, it is available to be claimed now. The AA program has already demonstrated results. They are real and are more successful than any other approach thus far. The extent and depth of a desire (i.e.: “*prayer*”) for sobriety is directly related to how clearly the alcoholic understands the truth about their drinking and their personal relationship to reality. (see pgs 30-32 & Step 11).

That understanding will include some *new knowledge* concerning those principles which govern all life, on life’s terms. They are the same principles which many call, “the Laws of Life” or “God’s Laws” and are something no one understands completely. (pg 68). Few alcoholics would dispute there is more to be understood about their personal relationship to alcohol.

Either you are or are not alcoholic. Reality will not change simply because it is not the way you *believe* it should be. Awareness of reality can be enlarged by including *new knowledge*. (i.e.: “*conscious contact with God*” - see pages 14-15, 35, 68, 129, 164, Step 11 & Appendix II).

A review of Chapter 3 of AA’s basic text may help clarify what is consistent with your experience? Self-honesty is helpful in deciding if recovery from alcoholism is desirable. It will be, unless you do not believe you have a problem. (pages 30 - 32).

Any alcoholic with a strong desire to stay alive and carry their own keys, is usually ready to consider the AA solution at any cost. Having acknowledged the existence of a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body, they will wish to be free from that life-threatening problem. The most intelligent choice is to choose a path of action which produces results. (see pages 83 - 84).

"At some of these we balked. We thought we could find an easier, softer way. But we could not. With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely." (pg 58)

Spokesmen for traditional religions often make questionable promises about receiving rewards in some “*next life*”. Alcoholic’s, who are serious about recovery during this lifetime, will ask of them:

DON’T TELL ME - SHOW ME

When an alcoholic arrives in AA they usually carry a lot of excess mental baggage in the form of “*ideas, emotions and attitudes*” by which they run their lives. (see pg 27). Because those guiding forces are used to deal with life, on life’s terms, there is understandable resistance to letting them go. Most alcoholics need to be convinced that something better is available. The demonstrations of results by other alcoholics is a powerful argument. It frequently overwhelms any speculative *belief system* which suggests that they:

“Work and pray and live on hay!
There’s pie in the sky bye and bye
when you die!”

Recovered alcoholics usually find it is necessary to make significant changes to the *belief system* which has been a guiding force in their life. (see pgs 27, 42, 45 58, 129 & 164). *New knowledge* is required if they want to change their personal relationship to alcoholism. To do this it is necessary to change their *belief system*. This is a frightening experience when it is all they have to work with.

NEW KNOWLEDGE REDUCES OLD FEARS

As long as “*an old belief system*” is a guiding force, it is not possible for *new knowledge* to operate effectively. Insistence that reality conform to an established *belief system*, (i.e.: “*self-will run riot*”), blocks *spiritual progress*. Any improvement of a conscious understanding of life, on life’s terms requires the power of *new knowledge*. (Steps 10 & 11).

"Remember that we deal with alcohol - cunning,
baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us.
But there is One who has all power - that One is God.
May you find Him now!" (pg 59)

It should be self-evident that "*alcohol*", per se, is not anything which is a "*cunning, baffling and powerful*" force. A bottle of whiskey will just sit there gathering dust until someone does something with it. It has no conscious capacity to baffle, be cunning, or exert any power over anyone or anything. Not even a hopeless, helpless alcoholic. **It is thinking about drinking which is "the problem"**. (see pg 23).

The alcoholic reader will recognize that their thinking is based upon the *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which are guiding forces in their life.(pg 27). They constitute a *belief structure* involving a personal relationship to life on life’s terms. (i.e.: “God”). Some of those *beliefs* may not be consistent with what is or is not that “*Great Reality*”.

Thinking itself is not the problem for the alcoholic. It is their “*erroneous thinking*” which is in conflict with reality. Those differences are what produce undesirable results. (see pgs 85, 86, 87 & 133).

It should be obvious that before any alcoholic can get drunk they must first make a decision to pick up the bottle; remove the cap; and then put the “*bottle of booze*” to their lips, before the contents can do anything to, or for them. It is that action which produces certain consequences. Any results are determined by the choice of action. Their attitude about the consequences is either one of approval or disapproval.

This author suggests that assigning intelligence to a substance in a bottle is insane thinking. It is mental rationalization intended to escape responsibility for the consequences of a choice. (see pg 23)

It is "the idea" of taking a drink that is cunning, baffling and powerful. It is an "*old idea*" fighting for survival. One based upon a *belief* in a false premise that there is something of value to be gained from taking a drink.

Denying validity to an “*old idea*” is to challenge the *belief system* which provides the foundation for an entire lifetime. Such a drastic action can be a very frightening consideration.

When an alcoholic demands to be “right at all costs”, then when something goes wrong they must insist the fault is outside of themselves. (see pg 62). Any personal responsibility for picking up the drink, is unacceptable, and especially so when there are undesired consequences. Regardless of the excuses, it does not invalidate the truth. The choice to pick up the drink was their own.

So here is the dilemma of the alcoholic. Their inherent intelligence recognizes they have freedom of choice. Their *belief system* prompts actions based upon *old ideas* they *think* will produce results to their personal best interests. Self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity blocks intelligent self-examination which might establish they are mistaken. With an obvious need for a solution, they seek a source of power outside of themselves.

It may never have occurred to the mind of that alcoholic they already have direct access to the infinite power of *new knowledge*, from deep down within themselves. As a result of that oversight, they ignore “*the Great Reality*” and their potential for *spiritual progress* which is already part of their make-up. Any alcoholic has, within themselves, the capacity to enlarge their *spiritual life* by seeking the power of *new knowledge*. (review pgs 12, 14-15, 23, 27, 35, 42, 45, 53, 55, 68, 77, 85-86, 93-95, 98, 129, 133, & 161).

It is self-evident some intelligence produces order in the universe. Something demonstrates an ability to keep life in working order in accordance with certain principles which govern all life. Understanding those principles requires seeking *new knowledge* before that power can be utilized. Whatever other qualities one might assign to it, that power becomes a reasonable explanation for the word “God”. (see pgs 10 & 12).

An ability to tap into that intelligence, and thereby improve cooperation with the principles of life, is the “hope” shared by early members who suggest “*if we can do it - you can do it too*”.

This author suggests that, any alcoholic with a sufficiently strong desire (i.e.: “prayer”) to recover can do what they did.

SOME ARE MOTIVATED BY INSPIRATION, OTHERS BY DESPERATION.

The early AA members, acquired the power of *new knowledge* by seeking to learn “*the secrets of successful recovery*”. (Steps 1-12).

"Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at
the turning point. We asked His protection and care with
complete abandon" (pg 59)

The principles of recovery are not new, even though they may have never been successfully applied to alcoholism before in quite the same way. The principles which govern all of life have been discovered and re-discovered since the first cavemen sought ways to improve his lot in life. The infinite variety of uses which can be made of those principles are determined by the objectives and goals of the user. Out of their desperation, the first AA members applied them to their personal survival from alcoholism.

Continued drinking for them was insane. It led to an early death or confinement. Available "*ideas, emotions and attitudes*" about life on life's terms had proved to be inadequate for survival. But, by trial and error they discovered that "*other ideas*" worked.

The word "God", conveyed an idea of *new knowledge* and the power they needed to survive. *New knowledge* is always available for any alcoholic and seeking it allows alcoholics to be free, - on life's terms. This became part of their conscious understanding of reality. (Step 11). The need for that mental improvement was a self-evident requirement for continued survival.

"Faith without works is dead, he said. And how appallingly true for the alcoholic! For if an alcoholic failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, he could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead. If he did not work, he would surely die. Then faith would be dead indeed. With us it is just like that." (pgs 14 & 15)

As alcoholics, it was necessary that they decide which direction to go. Those who were ready to abandon their old ideas completely, became free to set their lives in a totally new direction. Improving a personal understanding of reality is one direction which is always available to anyone. For many alcoholics, that is synonymous with improving their fundamental idea of the word "God".(pgs 12, 55, & Step 11).

For some alcoholics, the admonition to:

"LET GO AND LET GOD"

becomes:

"LET GO OF YOUR OLD IDEAS AND LET WHAT IS GOOD FOR YOU HAPPEN".

As the first members discovered a solution to their seemingly hopeless state of mind and body they recognized it was the result of doing certain things. What they did was to break their actions down into small steps which ultimately became a *program of recovery*.

"Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery:" (pg 59)

Evaluate what is your primary purpose. (see Steps 4 & 10).

?? **Are you trying to be good rather than get well?**

?? **Are you trying to please someone or something?**

?? **Is it producing results that work for you?**

Nothing is wrong with being good for moralistic reasons. It is an admirable human quality worth development. However, when it conflicts with survival and personal freedom, the important practical question is:

?? When will there be results?

The answer to that question becomes critical for most alcoholics. Especially when the promises involve some speculative life after this life. This may hold priority importance for some alcoholics. However, many others seek results which can be demonstrated in this life.

Of course, there are those religious arguments which suggest:

?? Be good now and collect your reward later.

That admonition is based upon a *belief* in some next life. This may or may not be accurate. The “*pay now and collect in the next life*” is difficult to explain as being an intelligent *belief system* due to lack of any creditable evidence to support it. Without any factual support, what is *believed* is more likely to be a strong emotional desire to have reality conform to a matter of **personal preference**. (syn: “self-will” see pg 85).

Eventually, every alcoholic will be an expert authority on whatever happens “*after this life*”. Until that personal experience is acquired, this author suggests that:

**“MY IDEAS ABOUT THE NEXT LIFE
ARE JUST AS VALID AS ANY OTHER”**

A practical morality for an alcoholic seeking recovery is to live “*One Life at a Time*” and utilize the wisdom found in an old nursery rhyme:

“Pie man, pie man - let me taste your wares!”

by asking those who offer some other solution:

“May I see some samples of your results, please?”

Some alcoholics prefer a chance to observe others, who drank similarly, and then recovered by those methods. This provides an intelligent basis for deciding if that is what they would want for themselves.

What the moral authorities of some traditional religions have to offer may or may not be wishful thinking. For some alcoholics, it can have greater appeal than AA’s practical experience of living this life, on life’s terms.

This author has learned that:

**THE APPROACH OF AA TO SOBRIETY IS PRACTICAL
BECAUSE IT PROVIDES BENEFITS IN THIS LIFE.**

Rather than offering the alcoholic an official list of *rewards and punishments*, to be experienced in some next life, AA provides a *cause and effect* approach to a *spiritual awakening*. **One which can be experienced in this life.** A “*spiritual awakening*” with a continuing effort to “*enlarge their spiritual life*” is essential for the alcoholic who really wants to recover. (see pgs 14, 15, & Appendix II).

There are significant differences between the two differing approaches to sobriety. The individual alcoholic must decide which one they prefer.

It should be noted that AA’s 12 steps of recovery, are based upon **principles** which work for any alcoholic. They are not limited in their application to some select group of **personalities** which has been specially chosen to the exclusion of other alcoholics.

* * * * *

SECTION B05b:

Chapter 5

HOW IT WORKS

STEP TWO: - Concluded

“Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves
could restore us to sanity.” (pg 59)

READ:

From the beginning of *Chapter 5 - HOW IT WORKS*,
commencing with “*Rarely have we seen a person fail...*” to page
60 (c) ending with “*That God could and would if He were sought*”..

COMMENTS:

For the alcoholic seeking a practical approach to recovery, there is value in reviewing AA’s -12 steps in a business-like manner. (see pg 64).

An intelligent businessman will have the capacity to recognize when he is going bankrupt. He will recognize the inability to continue conducting his affairs in the same manner they have been managed in the past. This will become apparent after first exploiting all of his best known skills. Then, in a final act of desperation, he may seek out other sources of *new knowledge* for help to survive.

Essentially, this is what the first members of AA did with their bankrupt alcoholic lives. Once recovered, they were consciously aware that they had tapped a different source of power which enabled them to survive. This included a “price tag” in the form of an obligation to help others in similar circumstances. As result, they offered that knowledge to those who were interested.

Try reviewing the 12-steps in this very practical context:

- 1. We admitted we were not running our lives intelligently, and we had become bankrupt as individuals.**
- 2. We came to believe our lives could be salvage with the use of greater intelligence.**
- 3. Decided any improved intelligence, could do a better job, *once we understood what was possible*.**
- 4. Took stock of what we knew of successful living.**
- 5. Admitted the possibility of being mistaken.**
- 6. Let go of worthless old ideas.**

7. Asked for help to unload *belief systems* which were no longer useful.
8. Listed people owed, and became willing to set things straight with them.
9. Made things straight and equal when we could, unless it would hurt them or force us out of business.
10. Inventoried new ideas, and quickly unloaded mistakes.
11. Studied other *belief systems* to improve our own.
12. Paid for the help we received by trying to help others.

The alcoholic reader may find value in viewing AA's 12 Steps of Recovery from this practical business-like manner, rather than from a religiously moralistic viewpoint. It can be useful to view recovery from a different perspective that removes myth and superstition and puts it into a more practical context. The author recognizes the foregoing analogy may appear overly simplistic when applied to a life-threatening condition. (see pgs 25, 46., 52 & 57).

Obviously there is more to AA than a business-like approach to *spiritual bankruptcy*. However, it can be a useful starting point for alcoholics who have difficulty with "*second-hand belief systems*" about morality. It may open doors to new thinking and the discovery of how much more *new knowledge* is available. It can be if you do not close your mind to all spiritual concepts. (see Appendix II).

Alcoholics who are accustomed to "*traditional spiritual concepts*", may be emotionally overwhelmed by the suggestion to "*open your mind to more than what you already believe*". If so, they will find themselves in good company with early AA members.

"Many of us exclaimed, "*What an order! I can't go through with it.*" Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints."

(pg 60)

Either you are or you are not willing to salvage your own life by accepting help from intelligence greater than you now recognize is available. (see pg 164) Willingness is what is required. That is a personal choice no one else can make for you.

Nothing is required which you do not already possess!

However, only you can provide the desire for *spiritual progress*. (pg 60).

NO ONE ELSE CAN DO YOUR WANTING FOR YOU!

Whatever is your dominant desire is a reasonable definition of “**your prayer**”. By definition, it is something you want, **above all else**. If any intelligent power responds to something called “*a prayer*”, then that is what it responds to. This author suggests there is a requirement for *new knowledge*. Otherwise, you would do it yourself - if you knew how.

It makes sense to carefully consider what you want. Your **desire** is what establishes the direction any power will take to provide your fulfillment. Or, if you prefer more traditional terms, - “**to answer your prayer**”.

Unfortunately many alcoholics cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program because they are unwilling to accept the answers they ask for.

WHY BOTHER PRAYING FOR SOMETHING, IF YOU WON'T ACCEPT IT WHEN YOU GET IT?

In the real world, any answers you get will be on life's terms, not yours. If you are dissatisfied, it suggests you *believe* a mistake has been made. Should, reality be unacceptable it implies whatever created an orderly universe (i.e.: “God”) needs improvement.

That idea also suggests you already understand how reality should be. Further, that it would have been a good idea to consult with you first. Could that be spiritual pride? Could it possibly be that your own *belief system* might be erroneous and the real problem is your attitude? Which choice would be the most intelligent to your mind? Remember, the focus here is on “*being restored to sanity*”.

Most alcoholics have a desire for the best answer to a problem. (see pg 133). Until someone understands all the realities of life, on life's terms, it is inevitable that mistakes will be made. Some mistakes may be due to intentional resistance to reality. However, they usually occur from a lack of understanding of how things really are. That is ignorance, because it ignores whatever *new knowledge* is required to produce better results. (see Step 11).

IF I KNEW BETTER I'D DO BETTER.

Only “*a saint*” would never make a mistake.

“We are not saints. The point is that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.” (pg 60)

The operative word is “**grow**” for spiritual progress. That means “*enlarging a spiritual life*” by “*improving conscious understanding*” of some infinite intelligence which is called “**GOD**”. (see pgs 12, 23, 27, 35, 42, 53, 55, 60(c), 129, 161, 164, Step 11 & Appendix II). This is an endless process.

It is on this point the traditional morality of religions and the practical morality of the AA program frequently part company. They take different directions with their primary purpose. Religion offers the last word on the destination. AA leaves everything open to change.

In AA, anything which is now *believed* to be true is subject to change and revision as more is revealed. (see pg 164, Steps 3 & 11). There is no dogma from “authorities” or “self-appointed spokesmen” who issue precise instructions on *spiritual guidance* they have received but you did not.

This author recognizes that emotional arguments exist in support of claims made by traditional religious spokesmen. Sadly for them, they are unable to provide an approach to “*the Great Reality*” (syn: “God” - pg 55) which can intelligently support any claim to having *the last word* on what is best for all. The reader of the basic text of AA will discover that it does not have any *sacred cows* or *unintelligent emotional beliefs* to be defended.

As a matter of personal preference, most alcoholics willingly “*trade up*” to something better. Which approach to life is “*better*” will vary, by individual. It will be determined by what they want and what they *believe* is “*the best available*” to them.

The alcoholic reader may have already achieved their own version of “*the best*” and not desire anything more. However, other alcoholics seek *new knowledge* to improve their lives. (see pg 133). You, may ask yourself which it is that you most want for yourself.

Any alcoholic is able to “*trade up*” in the way they manage their lives by using a practical business-like approach. (see Steps 10 & 11). By using principles which improve results, there is always room for *spiritual progress*. (pg 60) This process develops a better relationship to “*the Great Reality*” of life, on life’s terms. (syn: “God”).

It is possible to experience *spiritual progress* without having all the answers. There is *spiritual growth* in gaining power from *new knowledge* and enlarging conscious awareness of reality (syn: “God” - pgs 14-15, 35, 55, 161, & Step 11). With a *fundamental idea of God* as the power of infinite *new knowledge*, there is always room for more improvement. (see pgs 12, 53, 55, & 68). Each alcoholic either chooses to seek more, or else rely upon what they already have. (pg 60(a-c)).

“We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves.”
(pg 68)

An alcoholic who is completely satisfied will have little motivation to seek improvement. If life is acceptable, within the range of what is currently known, they will not be interested in seeking anything more. There is no intelligent purpose in having a desire (syn: “prayer”) to “*trade up*” if there is nothing to be gained. Alcoholics who *believe* they have “*arrived*” at that point are not likely to be reading the material found in this Study Guide.

Recovery from alcoholism is available to any alcoholic who is willing to grow along spiritual lines. (see pg 58). Uncontrolled drinking produces life-threatening conditions. A refusal to accept recovery is a decision of questionable sanity. (see pg 30). Particularly when offered a solution which has demonstrated successful results,

IT IS HARD TO ARGUE WITH SUCCESS

Those who acquire the “*know-how*” have the power to use it in their lives. They also have the choice not to use the power of that *new knowledge*. Once again, no one could do their wanting for them. (i.e.: “*their praying*”).

This new and enlarged freedom of choice was discovered by early members of AA seeking a way to recover. They acquired *new knowledge* of what worked, when other available approaches failed. To the alcoholic who wanted to recover they provided the following message:

Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter to the agnostic, and our personal adventures before and after make clear three pertinent ideas:

- (a) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives.
- (b) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.
- (c) That God could and would if He were sought.

Those three pertinent ideas may have been used elsewhere. They represented *new knowledge* for alcoholics desperately seeking recovery because they focused on problems with alcohol. This author suggests that they replaced the primary purpose found in old ideas, emotions and attitudes guiding the choices of the alcoholic. (pg 27). Where the previous *belief structure* did not work, a new set of conceptions and motives did.

To paraphrase what the first members had to say, consider it from the following perspective:

- (a) *Where our drinking was concerned, the knowledge we possessed was not enough to produce recovery.*
- (b) *No person, nor group of persons had all the answers for our unique individual problems*
- (c) *Relief was found by seeking new knowledge from a source of power greater than we had been using.*

Regardless of the approach, the fact remains that the condition of alcoholism is no longer a hopeless one. Action can be taken to produce recovery, if the alcoholic wants it enough. That is the message in the basic text of *Alcoholics Anonymous*. The choice to accept or reject recovery is yours, and yours alone.

Recovery has the requirement to become willing to discard old *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which have been guiding forces in life. To the surprise and disappointment of many alcoholics, their “*religious convictions*” do not spell the necessary vital spiritual experience required for recovery (pg 27). To experience recovery, the alcoholic must replace them with a new set which produce successful results.

A path toward successful recovery and improved sanity is to be found within the basic text “*Alcoholics Anonymous*”. They are mentioned specifically in Chapter Five entitled “*How It Works*” which reflects the experience of early members who had acquired *new knowledge*, and it worked. They had tapped an infinite source of *new knowledge and power* and they knew it.

“Joy at our release from a lifetime of frustration knew no bounds. Father feels he has struck something better than gold. For a time he may try to hug the new treasure to himself. He may not see at once that he has barely scratched a limitless lode which will pay dividends only if he mines it for the rest of his life and insists on giving away the entire product.” (pg 129)

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SECTION B05c:

Chapter 5

HOW IT WORKS

STEP THREE:

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

READ:

Chapter 5 - HOW IT WORKS, starting at pg 60 with “Being convinced, *we were at Step Three....*” through to pg 64, ending with “Our liquor was but a symptom. So we had to get down to causes and conditions.”

COMMENTS:

By now the reader has had ample opportunity to consider the author’s viewpoint concerning the first two steps in the AA recovery program. Be reminded there are other views. Use those ideas which produce results you desire for yourself. After all, it is your own life with which you are dealing.

There is no rigid conformity required in AA. In fact, quite the contrary. There are no official authorities or spokesman on *correctness*. There is only personal experience concerning the recovery process. (see Tradition #3 “The Long Form”). Perhaps this is one of the more revolutionary aspects of the AA program. It certainly is when compared to other approaches to sobriety. That also applies to any AA member who may attempt to interpret the AA program for you. (see Foreword to First Edition). This author is specifically included.

This personal freedom of choice will extend itself to any fundamental idea of superior intelligence or power capable of providing relief from alcoholism. For many adherents of traditional religions, AA has done the unthinkable by starting with that idea of personal independence:

“Why don’t you choose your own conception of God?”
(pg 12)

The alcoholic who conceded to Step One

“We admitted we were powerless over alcohol and that our lives had become unmanageable”

had the choice to hold on to their old idea of God or seek survival by considering a different approach to Step Two as others had when they conceded powerlessness and:

“Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

If you, the alcoholic reader, are unable to accept that approach to Steps One and Two, try reversing them and try honestly to acknowledge that

“you are not powerless over alcohol, and that your life is not unmanageable”

furthermore that

“there is no Power greater than yourself, and that your life is the direct result of deliberate sane actions you have chosen as your version of personal happiness”.

Such a view would include that you only drank by choice, and the results were something you consciously planned to have happen the way they did. (review Steps 10 & 11). This view may provide the reader with some fresh thinking about any problems concerning their drinking. (review pgs 23, & 42).

The alcoholic reader is invited to consider their personal behavior while drinking. Can you honestly claim it qualifies as any definition of “*sane behavior*”? For those who may debate the issue, your attention is directed to a suggestion by the earliest members of AA.

“We do not like to pronounce any individual as alcoholic, but you can quickly diagnose yourself. Step over to the nearest barroom and try some controlled drinking.” (pg 31)

Be aware that such an experiment is perilous and potentially life-threatening for someone who **really is** alcoholic but *believes* differently. For them, reality is a fantasy in their own mind. (pg 23). This author suggests reality will ultimately prevail, despite any personal *beliefs* to the contrary.

The Ultimate Reality of life on life’s terms (syn: “God”) will eventually conflict with an “*erroneous belief system*”. The alcoholic will experience the emotional turmoil of a conflict unless they know how to effectively deal with it. That knowledge is the power to enjoy a quiet mind.

It is suggested that “**the power of the truth**” is a viable concept of a power greater than the alcoholic possesses. Only the truth, which is recognized and understood at a conscious level, is available for use. (see Step #11).

Any continued conflict with reality is not a sane choice if there is the “*know-how*” available to resolve the mental confusion and emotional turmoil. For the alcoholic, that *new knowledge* capable of producing effective results, is “*a power greater than themselves*”. Once again, “new knowledge is new power”.

YOU DON’T KNOW UNLESS YOU KNOW

This author suggests there is always more to know. The three-letter word “*God*” is most often used to describe “*all and everything* (see pg 53). Regardless of

disagreements about the nature of reality, rejecting it is tantamount to rejecting the word most used to describe it. Reality is what it is.

“When we became alcoholics, crushed by a self imposed crisis we could not postpone or evade, we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else He is nothing. God either is, or He isn't. What was our choice to be? (pg 53)

The serious reader will have reviewed their relationship to alcohol in the light of Steps One and Two. This author can only point to areas which may not have been considered. Actions, taken, in your best interests, will be your own. The choice of action is yours alone. It will be to “*accept reality*” or else reject it because of a “*different belief system*”.

Others may pressure or coerce an alcoholic into doing what *they believe is best for them*. The alcoholic reader may even agree to let others run their life and do their thinking until they are able to make choices for themselves. This may be convenient, until gaining a position to *outsmart them*. Until then, the price they pay is with their own personal freedom. Eventually, an alcoholic will do what they really want to do.

A word of caution to those who make that choice. Be aware if you turn your will and your life over to another human power, (see pg 60 (b)), and that person is also an alcoholic, they may fall short of perfection. They may provide some answers, but none have all the answers you may require. Eventually you are likely to need more *new knowledge*. This may be information which is power greater than they possess. At some point, a need will arise to seek the source of all *new knowledge*. (syn: “God” see pg 60 (c)).

The individual alcoholic is the only person who can effectively decide where they stand concerning the first two steps of the AA program. It is worth recognizing that there shall always be other opinions. Some may or may not be valid. However:

**THE REALITY OF THE TRUTH, AND
THE TRUTH OF REALITY
DOES NOT CHANGE.**

If you are alcoholic, but do not believe you are, then continued drinking may be required. If your relationship to alcohol is unacceptable now, then more drinking will probably convince you of the true nature of your condition. (see pgs 31 & 32). This author cautions that the risks involved are potentially life-threatening. Any decision to take them is your own, and based upon what you *believe* is reality and how it applies to you. Are you so confident about “*what you believe*” that you are willing to bet your life on it?

Some alcoholics have already acquired a full knowledge of their condition. They already know they are unable to both control and enjoy drinking. (see pg 32). If the reader does not know, then the solution to their problem may require *new knowledge* which is power greater than they now possess. With this admission, and by their own choice, they are mentally ready to continue in the recovery process -. (see pg 23).

“Being convinced, we were at Step Three, which is that we decided to turn our will and our life over to God as we understood Him. Just what do we mean by that, and just what do we do?” (pg 60)

STEP THREE :

Breaking this next step into smaller parts can be helpful.

“Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him”.

“Made a decision ----”. This is an inescapable personal responsibility. Where freedom of choice is a reality, no one else decides what you **want**. Your dominant desire. (syn: “prayer”) is your own. No one does your wanting for you.

There may be coercion, intimidation or even force for your compliance with the desires of some other human power. However, your **true and equal desire** (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”) is always your own. Left to your own devices, within your own mind, you want what you want. This freedom is your own, regardless of approval or agreement from others.

Freedom to decide what is most desired (i.e.: “*prayed for*”) is a mental quality **equally inherent** within all human beings. Any decision to exercise that **personal freedom of choice**, when the opportunity presents itself, inescapably rests with the individual. This has particular significance when choosing **what to believe** about the word “God”.

For an alcoholic, the successful approach to recovery in the AA program, contains an essential ingredient. It is a decision to *believe*, or even be *willing to believe* there is some power, greater than themselves. (see pg 47). Those alcoholics convinced that Steps One and Two have application to them, will recognize continued drinking is a **destructive power** greater than themselves. It should be obvious they require access to a **constructive power** capable of producing recovery.

THERE IS POWER FOR GOOD AND YOU CAN USE IT

Merely acknowledging the possible existence of such a power is enough to create hope some such power might be available for personal use. That hope exists in the mind. (see pg 23). It is “a thought” which the alcoholic has created. It is available if that thought is what the alcoholic truly desires. (syn: “prayer”). It need not conform to reality, but would be “*a sane thought*” if it did.

Awareness of another alcoholic who knows how to recover from alcoholism is adequate proof such power exists. Alcoholics who acquire that “*know-how*” have both the power and the freedom to recover. Their *new knowledge* is obviously a “*greater power*”. Where drinking is concerned, recovered alcoholics possess a conscious understanding of reality the still drinking alcoholic does not yet have. (see Step 11). Those who already have the power of that *new knowledge* can use it to make improved

choices. Any other alcoholic could learn what they understand, if they wanted to. That capacity has already been provided, and continues to be provided on a daily basis. (pg 85-86).

“----to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God,----” is a mental attitude reflecting a *belief* about a personal relationship to the source of all life (syn: “God”). For purposes of recovery from alcoholism, that *belief system* may be incomplete or inadequate. Its validity will depend upon how well it produces satisfactory results. Alcoholics who *believe* they have no choices will not likely attempt something they do not *believe* to be possible. Those seeking survival and an improved awareness of reality (syn: “God” - pg 60(c) & Step 11) are more apt to allow their minds to grow spiritually. They do this by correcting mistaken *beliefs* about reality and eliminating erroneous limitations in order to enlarge their spiritual life. (see pgs 14-15, 35, 164, & Step 10).

It may be useful to consider some synonyms commonly used to define the word “God”. These are some of the same definitions used by many traditional religions. They reflect fundamental ideas about the nature of the “*power greater than ourselves*” required for recovery from alcoholism:

?? God is Truth

?? God is Good

?? God is the Ultimate Reality

The reader has an available option to view Step Three in a manner which goes beyond the limits of myth or superstition. (pg 23). Step Three can become an attitude of substituting practical mental equivalents of:

?? I would rather be told the truth than something I would like to hear.

?? I would rather have what is good for me than to get my own way.

?? I would rather live in reality than live in fantasy.

Those ideas, emotions and attitudes, are available as a guiding force capable of producing a vital spiritual experience. While religious convictions of an alcoholic may be very good, they are nonetheless restricted by the finite limits of that “*exclusive belief system*”. Whatever else they may be, most traditional religious *belief systems* include some elements of reality while simultaneously rejecting others. (see pg 27).

This becomes increasingly apparent with the conscious understanding that:

? **there is more truth**

? **there is more good, and**

? **there is more reality.**

There is **more** to be understood of “*the Great Reality*” (i.e.: “God” - pg 55) than that which any human power currently understands. (see Step 11). With an “*infinite concept of God*”, there is always more available than any finite mind could possibly acquire in a single lifetime. (see pgs 12 & 68). All that is required for any alcoholic to have more is to seek more. (see pg 60(c)).

Seeking more is a choice based upon the inescapable personal responsibility to want more power.

“Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a *Power greater than ourselves*. Obviously. But where and how were we to find this Power?” (pg 45)

“But there is One who has all power---that One is God. May you find Him now!” (pg 59)

“----as we understood Him”--- can be troublesome until the word “**as**” becomes the operative word in this step. Improved understanding can be found by breaking this portion to smaller parts.

Any emphasis upon the word “**we**” would imply some approved “AA concept of God”. Such an idea would suggest that “we of AA know God and all those others don’t”. Such an idea would be equivalent to creating a *new religion*, in competition with traditional religions, for the *beliefs* of mankind.

That is an erroneous idea which conflicts with the very essence of what AA says it is. (see the AA Preamble, Foreword to Second Edition, pgs 12, 17, 19, & 95). For further correction of that mistaken idea, this author recommends a careful review of the basic text “*Alcoholics Anonymous*”. (see “The Doctor’s Opinion”, pgs. 27,28,42,44 - 50, 52-56, & Appendices I, II & V).

Emphasis upon the word “**understood**” produces some equally disturbing questions which remain unresolved.

?? **How can any *finite* human mind understand something which, by definition is *infinite*?**

In Western cultures, it has been traditional to use the word “**Him**” when referring to the source of all creation. The AA program works equally well in Eastern cultures with a different tradition. This raises unintelligent, but frequently emotional sexist overtones.

One need only consider the obviously ridiculous question of:

**?? Does your own mind cloth the deity in
a “jock-strap” or a “bra”?**

It should be self-evident using the word “**Him**” is allegorical rather than realistic. And, of course, “*who would really know?*”

However, the meaning of the expression “as we understood Him” is changed when emphasis gets placed upon the word “as”. By making the word “as” operative, the pieces fall into place and begin to make intelligent sense.

The word “as” implies a process and some sort of **change**. In recovery from alcoholism, the change is clear. It is a change from “*a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body*” to one of “hope.” (see “The Doctor’s Opinion & Chapter 11). That hope is fortified by the practical experience of successfully recovered alcoholics who stated

“Rarely have we seen a person fail who has
thoroughly followed our path” (pg 58)

The experience of this author has been that “as I understand the truth”, there is “relief from ignorance of reality”. There is “*relief*” from the consequences of repeating mistakes based upon “*erroneous beliefs*” about reality. (syn: “God”). The relief is a new freedom to correct the *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which had been guiding forces. (see pgs 27 83, & Steps 10-11).

What was erroneous was a *belief system* which left out unknown portions of “*the Great Reality*” defined as “God”. (pg 55) The mistakes of *old ideas* were errors of omission. The previous *belief system* left out some part of reality that was good for me. As conscious understanding of that portion of reality, is enlarged, *spiritual progress* occurs. (see pgs 14-15, 35, 164 & Step 11).

When a personal concept of reality (i.e.: “*fundamental idea of God*” pg 55) is no longer limited by *old ideas*, then conflicts with reality change. Choices are possible which are more in harmony with life, on life’s terms. (syn: “God’s Will”). The inevitable consequence is an improvement in personal happiness, joy and freedom . (see pg 133 & Step 11).

For this author, there was further relief “**as**” I understood it was **good** for me to accept the premise that “*God’s Will for me*” is to be happy, joyous and free. (see pg 133). The result of that decision was more personal freedom to “*trade up*” to that condition. That enlarged freedom of choice eventually held greater value than holding on to old ideas. (see Steps 10 & 11).

Furthermore, “**as**” an improved awareness of reality was acquired, new freedom was gained to cooperate with it. (see pg 83). Having accepted that the word “God”, meant “*God is everything*” (pg 53), it was necessary to make another decision about trust. Either to “*come to believe*” that the ultimate reality of life, could and would provide something superior or else to hold on to old ideas. (i.e.: “*God’s Will*” vs. “self-will run riot”- see pg 58).

Those who had already recovered from alcoholism claimed “*we trust infinite God rather than our finite selves*”. (pg 68). Human minds have limitations as to how much

understanding can be acquired in a single life-time. With “*the Great Reality*” being “*everything*” (i.e.: “God” - pgs 53 & 55) this must include everything that can be known about reality.

No individual or group of individuals can sanely or intelligently claim a complete conscious awareness of infinite knowledge. With *incomplete understanding* it follows that some old ideas, emotions and attitudes might be mistaken. This enlarged *spiritual awareness* produced more questions:

- ?? Was I *willing* to be *honest* with myself about what I ***believed***, and *open minded* to the suggestion there could be more to understand?
- ?? Could I acknowledge “my old idea of God” might not include everything to be known?
- ?? When I was wrong, could I admit it? (Step 10).

To this author, certain conclusions seemed self-evident. Complete knowledge and understanding of “*everything*” is more than any religious group can acquire. The sum total of all human knowledge may be vast, but nonetheless finite and limited in scope. The potential for human improvement and progress by consciously understanding reality (syn: “God”) is both unlimited and endless.

Seeking to understand more truth, good and reality in life, is an acceptable equivalent to seeking God. It is a continuing process. The limiting restrictions found in many traditional religions are noble attempts to define the infinite created by other finite individuals. They merely attempt to define what they believe about some infinite power and what it does or does not include. Those numerous *belief systems* may contain exceptions, accuracy and mistakes.

With the AA approach to recovery, there is freedom from any and all of those limitations created by a *belief in old ideas*. In particular, any “*old idea about God*”. Ideas, emotions and attitudes which guided decisions in life can be improved with change. The change occurs by being *willing* to give *honest* and *open minded* consideration to the *experience, strength and hope* of recovered alcoholics. (see Frontispiece & pg 27). That allows freedom to question old values, (pg 83), and asking for an honest answer to the question:

“*Why don’t you choose your own conception of God?*”
(pg 12)

That revolutionary attitude about *spiritual progress* can open the door to an unlimited opportunity for more happiness, joy and freedom. (see pg 133). Any *new knowledge* of reality allows for an enlarged spiritual life which previously had been blocked by a closed-minded attitude. (see pgs 14-15, 25 & 35). It changes a “*fundamental belief system*” that some “*self-appointed spokesmen for God*” hold a

monopoly of the subject. (review pg 95). This includes recognition that any other personal and equally limited views are being excluded from consideration.

IF KNOWLEDGE IS INFINITE, SO IS IGNORANCE

How much change and improvement is desired? Once again, how much knowledge and understanding of reality does anyone desire? That desire is inescapably personal. It begins with a basic and fundamental desire (i.e.: "prayer") for spiritual growth.

?? Do you want more? - or

?? Are you willing to settle for what you know now?

The point any alcoholic stops seeking more *new knowledge* is the point where they stop seeking "God". That decision to stop seeking any improved understanding of life may be made consciously or by default and neglect. The results are the same. (see pgs 14-15 & Steps 10-11).

An endless supply of more power resulting from *new knowledge* is always available. (syn: "*infinite God*" vs. "*our finite selves*" - pg 68) The point an individual stops seeking more *new knowledge* is the same point they start shutting out God. This thought will be emotionally disturbing to alcoholics who *believed* they had "this God business nailed down with their religion". (pg 27).

Religions can be spiritually satisfying to many alcoholics until some overwhelming problems arise. Many living problems require more *new knowledge* and a greater understanding of reality than the old religious *belief system* is able to provide. Then satisfactory answers are required which are based upon reality. When *old ideas* do not provide a solution, many complain and wonder "*why me?*". As equals, in the eyes of their creator, there is the question:

"WHY NOT YOU?"

Some alcoholics *believe* they are the victim of some malevolent intelligence which has singled them out for specialized treatment. That *belief* makes them a very special and important individual. This is often easier to *believe* than to accept personal responsibility for errors in those ideas, emotions and attitudes which dominate their actions. (see pgs 27, 62 & 133).

For an alcoholic, such an attitude may qualify as "*self-will run riot*" by relying upon a self-limiting *belief structure* to guide their choices. Then they become like the man who stood on his left foot with his right foot and cried because he could not run.

With change as a constant element of life, rejection of personal change is equivalent to rejection of personal growth. *Spiritual growth* comes from improving a conscious understanding of the Ultimate Reality of life. (syn: "God" see Step 11).

From that perspective, any resistance would be a decision to resist "*the Will of God*" to be "*happy, joyous and free*." (see pg 133 & Step 2). For the alcoholic, this is using their "*god given power of choice*" to produce destructive resistance to reality and to

their *fundamental idea of God*. Something which is the foundation of the *belief structure* of every man, woman and child. (see pgs 12, 55 & 62).

The power of choice exists within alcoholics to take actions compatible with the reality of life on life's terms. (syn: "God's Will"). They also have the ability to improve their conscious understanding of what life is (syn: "God" see Steps 10 & 11). Intentionally resisting improvements in personal happiness, joy and freedom could be considered insane behavior. Particularly when the power to accept that *spiritual progress* has been made available. (pgs 60 & 133).

So where is the real problem? Is it not a closed-minded attitude about letting go of old ideas? (see Appendix II). As a consequence, alcoholics can become victims of their own ignorance. By placing blind faith in *old ideas of God*, they ignore "God's Will for them". (pg 133). They choose **not** to believe that "God wants them to be happy, joyous and free".

IF THEY KNEW BETTER THEY WOULD DO BETTER

The intelligent choice for most alcoholics would be a personal preference to conduct their lives in optimum harmony, balance and compatibility with reality. Such a condition would reduce conflicts, and increase personal happiness. Most alcoholics freely and willingly select such a relationship to life (syn "God's Will") when they have the "knowledge" of what is required.

The power to choose personal improvement is available to everyone on an equal basis. Any personal power of an alcoholic reflects their personal level of understanding of life, on life's terms. This is a term synonymous with, and a valid concept of the word "God". Within the limits of their *fundamental idea of God*. (see pg 55), an alcoholic is free to accept or reject reality. Their choices reflect their *beliefs* about reality. Though reality is what it is, the *belief system* is always subject to change, *as more new knowledge is revealed*. (see pg 164 & Step 11).

The author recommends the alcoholic reader review Step 11 in light of that *fundamental idea of God* which is found deep down in every man, woman and child. (pg 55). Ask yourself if your dominant desire (syn: "prayer") is for improved harmony, balance and compatibility with what is good for you. Unless you have already reached a pinnacle of being happy, joyous and free, the ability to make improved choices requires *new knowledge* and greater understanding of life on life's terms. (syn: "God")

YOU DON'T KNOW UNLESS YOU KNOW!

The need for *new knowledge* and greater understanding is essential for anyone seeking improved cooperation with reality.

There is a quote of Herbert Spencer provided in Appendix II on "*Spiritual Experience*". It has important implications when applied to a *fundamental idea of God* that may already exist within your own mind. (see pgs 23 & 55).

"There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments and

which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance-
-that principle is contempt prior to investigation.”

(Appendix II)

From that perspective, this author has reached some conclusions. Namely, that the *indispensable essentials for recovery* are to be found in a *willingness* to replace inadequate old ideas which are guiding forces in life. *Honesty* is required in acknowledging that “*old ideas about God*” might be inadequate due to incomplete knowledge and understanding. (see pg 45). That *open-mindedness* is essential when considering other conceptions of God in the light of one’s own intelligence. (see pg 12). The reader may prefer a different interpretation.

With that focus, the alcoholic reader is asked to answer to their innermost self if their mind is open or closed to **all** spiritual concepts. If you agree that “*God is everything*” (pg 53), then this author suggests **there is nothing to accept or reject except God.** (i.e.: “*the Great Reality*” see pg. 55).

The power of acceptance is a choice which remains with the individual. Are you, the reader, completely happy, joyous and free with your life, as it now? If so, your most intelligent choice is to continue viewing life as you do now. There would be no valid reason to change. There would be no intelligent purpose in seeking improvement in any present condition. If, however, you *believe* more improvement is possible, then an “*enlarged spiritual life*” is available if you seek it. (pgs 14-15, 35, 60(c) & Step 11).

**EVERY ATTITUDE YOU HAVE IS
ONE OF ACCEPTANCE OR REJECTION!**

* * * * *

SECTION B05d:

Chapter 5

HOW IT WORKS

STEP THREE:

“Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, *as we understood Him.*” (pg 59)

READ:

Chapter 5 - HOW IT WORKS, starting at pg 60 with “Being convinced, *we were at Step Three.....*” through to pg 64, ending with “Our liquor was but a symptom. So we had to get down to causes and conditions.”

COMMENTS:

Because the word “*God*” has produced such volatile reactions from so many different sources, there is no desire here to create more controversy on that subject. Very frequently, groups will argue about the superiority of *their version* of that word, and what it means to them. That is their ***belief***. It may have elements of both accuracy or error. With an infinite concept of “God”, (pg 68), regardless of what part of the *belief system* may be valid, it follows there can always be more. Hence, any individual interpretation is, of necessity an *incomplete belief system*.

By contrast to an infinite concept of a Power, greater than ourselves, most religious definitions are finite. They tell you what is and is not within that specific *belief system*. Individuals then choose to agree or to disagree. They either do or do not embrace that particular belief structure. Other concepts do exist.

What the alcoholic chooses to *believe* becomes their *fundamental idea of God*. It is a thought that exists within the mind of every man, woman and child. (see pgs 23 & 55). Alcoholics *believe* in a particular concept of God **because** they *believe* it. Those who are honest with themselves recognize anyone has the capacity to change **what** they *believe* about that power.

For many, it is inconceivable that differences might exist between “*God*” and their “*personal idea of God*”. Some then become troubled by efforts to reconcile their *belief structure* with the inherent intelligence existing within their own mind. (see pgs 23, 27 & 86).

WHATEVER A PERSON BELIEVES THEY ALSO BELIEVE TO BE TRUE

For many alcoholics it is a shock and surprise to discover that **what** they *believe* is not necessarily so. It may be valid, in part, but is seldom, if ever, a complete understanding of that “*infinite power*”. (pgs 53, 68, 164 & Step 11).

This lack of knowledge produces conflict with any attempt to reconcile what is *believed* with the Ultimate Reality of Life. (syn: "God"). Resolution of the conflict requires the power of more new knowledge. (pg 45).

Without a complete conscious awareness of the Ultimate Reality (syn: "God"), gaps will always exist in what is understood. However, it is always possible to make improvements.

"We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual
perfection." (pg 60)

To experience personal improvement requires being *willing* to cooperate with the realities of life. This *open-mindedness* must be an *honest* desire to seek *spiritual progress* rather than rigidly adhering to the old ideas of a personal *belief system*. (see pg 61, Step 11 & Appendix II)

Only an innocent child will *believe everything* anyone tells them. It is likely the reader does *believe some things* some people tell them. How do you decide what it is you will believe? (see pg 23).

This author suggests, every man, woman and child has some inherent intelligence they use to decide what they *believe* and what they *do not believe*. As a child, the alcoholic has made their personal choice from an endless supply of *new knowledge*. Some alcoholics stop seeking to enlarge and improve their conscious understanding of that infinite source of *new knowledge*, (i.e.: "God" - see pg 68 & Step 11). It is that *new knowledge* which is power anyone can tap into as "*a power greater than themselves*".

"We finally saw that faith in some kind of God was a part of our make-up, just as much as the feeling we have for a friend. Sometimes we had to search fearlessly, but He was there. He was as much a fact as we were. We found the Great Reality deep down within us. In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found. It was so with us." (pg 55)

Early members of AA suggested that alcoholics have direct access to a source of power greater than themselves. (pgs 12, 14-15, 23, 27, 35, 39, 42, 45-49, 52-55, 62, 68, 85-87, 93-95, 98, 163-164 & Appendix II). Many different "*god clubs*" previously discovered various elements of that same intelligence (syn: truth, good, reality = "God"). Many also *believed* they had found "*the last and final word*" on what others should believe. With an open mind, any of them can be improved by seeking more conscious awareness of reality. (i.e.: "God" - see pgs 42, 60(c), 129, 164 & Appendix II).

This observation will have little value or usefulness to alcoholics who are completely satisfied with their lives and no longer seek *spiritual progress*. Alcoholics with a "*mind set*" locked into protecting "*old ideas*" will often disagree. Others are only indirectly concerned with those differing *belief systems*.

Almost all alcoholics have some degree of inherent intelligence. In the interests of personal survival, they will intuitively avoid self destruction. Those with sufficient

intelligence will recognize a threat to their survival. Alcoholics who continue drinking will eventually include mental distortion from drinking as being life-threatening. (Steps 1-3 & 10-12). As they understand this personal relationship to life they will also recognize it is not restricted nor limited to any particular religious *belief system*.

Many alcoholics consider themselves victims of some whimsical force and deny their own capacity to recognize reality. However, for those alcoholics, desperate enough to try anything to survive, some interesting suggestions and observations were made by the earliest AA members:

“Why don’t you choose your own conception of God?”
(pg 12)

“We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves”
(pg 68)

“But he had found God--and in finding God had found himself.”
(pg 158)

“We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us.”
(pg 164)

Old ideas about God either work, or they do not. Either they produce happiness, joy and freedom for the individual alcoholic, or they produce something else. (see pg 133). The individual alcoholic decides what answers the dominant desires in their own life (syn: “their prayers”).

Few alcoholics will require someone else to tell them when they are happy, joyous and free. (see pg 60(b)). It is a capacity, they find deep down within themselves (see pg 55). They are also able to recognize when they are not in that “*heavenly state*” but in conflict with reality. That inherent intelligence is evidence of access to a power to recognize more truth, more good and more reality (syn: “more God”- see Step 11)

LIFE IS THE GREAT REALITY

This author contends that, because life is constantly undergoing changes, there never can be a final or last word on what is “*the Great Reality*” (i.e.: “God” - see pg 55). Readers with a “*fixed conception of God*” may disagree. (see pg 12).

Old ideas in conflict with reality are not morally bad. Morals are *belief systems* created by individuals. Some self-proclaimed authorities on morality have established rules for others to live by.

Spiritual belief systems can be enlarged or discarded. Any alcoholic is free to *believe* anyone or anything they choose to believe. On a practical basis, old ideas may be recognized as inadequate simply because they are incomplete when dealing with reality. (syn: “God”). This author has observed that those claiming expertise or moral superiority usually rely upon emotional rather than intelligent arguments to support their claims.

In an infinite universe, there is always more of anything. This specifically includes more knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry it out. (pg 133 & Step 11).

Any enlarged personal awareness of reality is equivalent to an improved spiritual life of the educational variety. (see Appendix II). It is always available, if sought.

**THERE ARE NO LIMITS ON HOW MUCH
ANYONE MAY LEARN ABOUT THE
ULTIMATE REALITY OF LIFE**

STEP THREE:

An essential spiritual concept found in the AA "*Big Book*" is:

"Why don't you choose your own conception of God?"
(pg 12).

Comments provided in Chapter Five concerning Step Three indicate that earlier members made a decision to turn their will and lives over to the source of all power. It became their personal concept of God, ***as they understood what that was.*** A "*concept of God*" was neither defined for them, nor for any of the alcoholics who came to AA after them.

There is no "*official AA version of God*". Neither is there any definition of how "***we***" (of AA) understand God. By contrast, the AA Big Book repeatedly makes statements indicating AA is dealing only with general principles common to a variety of *belief systems*. (see pgs 93-95). Any emphasis upon the word "***understand***" implies an ability to fully define or comprehend that "*infinite power*", which is God (see pg 46, 53 & 68). Any view of Step Three emphasizing the word "***Him***", carries sexist connotations which lead to ridiculous conclusions.

However, the word "***as***" does imply ***a process of understanding that occurs within the alcoholic.*** This appears to be a more intelligent and unrestricted interpretation. Many alcoholics choose traditional religious concepts of "God" because they prefer limitations to their personal understanding.

For alcoholics who have found fulfillment within the limitations of traditional religious *belief systems*, there is no purpose in seeking anything more. Being open-minded to "*other ideas*" would not increase personal happiness, joy, or freedom (see pg 133). This author suggests such a choice establishes a limit on how much "God" you want in your life. (pgs 23 & 42).

At the risk of over-simplification, (see pgs 57 & 62), this author *believes*:

**"THERE IS MORE TO UNDERSTAND
THAN CAN BE UNDERSTOOD"**

Few alcoholics choosing an infinite concept of God will dispute that idea. It is repeated in Step 11, and endless opportunities exist to enlarge a spiritual life.(see pgs 14,15, 35, 47, 53 & 68). Many alcoholics will enlarge their spiritual life through traditional religions much more than they might have done without them.

“We have learned that whatever the human frailties of various faiths may be, those faiths have given purpose and direction to millions.” (pg 49)

The significant issue is **acceptance or rejection of anything more**. Within the precepts of their chosen faith, some alcoholics automatically exclude any different ideas of God? The alcoholic reader may *believe* their chosen religion possesses the last and final word on “*a Power, greater than ourselves*”? If so, have you adequately resolved the question:

IS THERE MORE?

Each individual must decide either to look, or not to look beyond the boundaries of their particular faith. However, certain mental attitudes are indispensable to recovery from alcoholism. (see Appendix II). There is *spiritual growth* to be found by looking beyond traditional religious terminology. When describing their “*fundamental idea of God*”, it is recommended the alcoholic reader determine if there might be more. (pgs 23 & 55).

Before that can be done, the alcoholic must first quit pretending to already possess infinite knowledge and the ability to apply its power in their life. (see pg 23) Anyone is free to claim they possess that power. The results speak for themselves. It should be self-evident that no human, nor group of humans embraces all knowledge. (syn “God” - see pg 60(b)). In plain language:

?? Do you have all the answers to life? - or

?? Could there be more to learn?

Where a desire exists for more *new knowledge* (syn: “more God”), there is a need to enlarge a spiritual life for those who want results. (see pgs 14,15, 35)

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE HOW MUCH YOU KNOW -- IF WHAT YOU KNOW IS NOT SO?

Any improved conscious awareness of “*the Great Reality*” (i.e.: “God”) which goes beyond the present limits of understanding by individuals or traditional religious groups, allows for an enlarged spiritual life. (see pgs 14-15, 35, & Step 11). This can produce an improved personal relationship to “*life on life’s terms*”.

“First of all, we had to quit playing God. It didn’t work. Next, we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our Director.” (pg 62)

Anyone making a decision to seek an infinite concept of God, becomes faced with human limitations. There are finite limits to human understanding of that which is infinite. This specifically includes any and all accumulated human knowledge to date because there is always more to be understood.

“Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a *Power greater than ourselves*. Obviously. (pg 45)

There is a limit to how much of reality any human mind is able to **understand** in a single lifetime. There is no limit to how much more *new knowledge* any individual may **seek** at any given time.

The limited range of human understanding identifies a fundamental difference between AA and most traditional religions. One is an open-minded desire to constantly seek and understand more of the infinite reality of “All Life”. (syn: “God” - pg 53). The other defines boundaries. AA readily acknowledges “*we know only a little*”. (pg 164). Many religions function from an erroneous premise of having discovered what “God” is, and then deciding not to look beyond that idea. The choice to accept that fundamental idea is individual and personal. (pg 55).

This author suggests any alcoholic can be free from such limitations to their spiritual life by clearly establishing a simple mental attitude. (see pgs 23 & 27). It is an attitude about Step Three which includes an honest desire to:

?? **Be told the truth instead of what you would like to hear.**

?? **Get what is good for you, instead of having your own way.**

?? **Deal with reality, instead of fantasy.**

These are all synonyms used to identify the meaning of that “three-letter word ‘God’”. If that is something better than what you now enjoy, it will be necessary to accept it before you can enjoy it.

The reader, making the decision to seek more truth, good and reality, (pg 60(c)), becomes faced with a choice. Either:

? **You have all you want from life.** (syn: “God”),

- or else

? **You want more.**

If another human being is able to claim from life something you desire, then they know something you do not know. With that knowledge, they have the power of choice to accept something life offers, *on life's terms*. As an equal, you may also enlarge your own spiritual life and go beyond your own present level of understanding. The important question is where the alcoholic places faith in what produces spiritual progress. (see pg 60).

“We trust infinite God instead of our finite selves.”
(pg 68)

Any choice to enlarge a spiritual life will impact the ideas, emotions and attitudes which are guiding forces (see pgs 14, 15, 35, 27 & 47). When making such a choice, consider the following:

?? Why accept a concept of how to manage your life based upon inadequate knowledge?

?? Why accept that some human power already understands all new knowledge? Specifically, any “religious spokesmen for God”

?? Why limit where or how to improve conscious understanding of new knowledge received from the source of all knowledge?
(syn: “God”)

Each alcoholic has the inescapable responsibility to utilize their “*god-given*” freedom of choice. With it, they establish the direction which will be the guiding force in their life. Deny that and you deny your own humanity. What each individual wants the most is what they will choose as their direction. **That dominant desire is equivalent to any concept of a prayer.**

Wherever there is order, there is evidence some intelligence produced the orderliness. The ability of an alcoholic to produce orderliness in their own life is restricted to what intelligence they recognize, understand and control.

This author considers it self-evident some “*infinite intelligence*” produced the orderliness of a seemingly *endless universe*. Other opinions exist which include specific locations where specific activities have occurred. Some religious individuals claim to have special knowledge of precisely what those places are like. It is the *belief* of this author that no one really knows those details. Some alcoholics will seek more *new knowledge*. In contrast, some will choose a *belief structure* on blind faith with an assumption there is nothing beyond what they have been told by others.

Because each alcoholic is part of an endless universe, they have freedom of choice to either cooperate with or else resist whatever that fundamental orderliness of life might be. Any cooperation requires some degree of conscious understanding of what is going on in life. (see Step 11). Personal happiness, joy and freedom appear to be a by-product based upon the degree of personal understanding. With enlarged understanding, derived

from *new knowledge*, there comes new power to cooperate with “*the Great Reality*” of life (syn: “God”). With that enlarged spiritual awareness also comes the freedom to choose new directions which reduce conflicts caused by ignorance.

“God, I offer myself to Thee - to build with me and
do with me as Thou wilt” (pg 63)

For some, that idea of a fundamental relationship to God, is expressed by the open-minded attitude of:

**I WANT TO BE SHOWN THE WAY
THAT IS BEST AND RIGHT FOR ME.**

Such a mental attitude presumes lacking present ability to make that elegant choice within the range of self-knowledge already acquired. (see pgs 23, 45 & 133). It also opens the mind to accept *new knowledge and spiritual progress*.

Alcoholics who *believe* they completely understand right from wrong will also *believe* their mistakes are willful intent to take “*self-inflicted wounds*”. (Review Step 2). What they claim to understand will be a “*second-hand belief system*”. One provided by their chosen set of authorities on that subject. Closed minded alcoholics will neither need nor desire help beyond what they already *believe*. Other alcoholics may allow room for personal improvement and seek enlarged awareness of “*the Great Reality*” (syn: “God” - pg 55, 164 & Appendix II).

However, a desperate alcoholic will want to “*trade up*” and make the elegant choice. They will seek “*the best possible conception*” of spiritual progress which is available to them. (see pg 12). Whatever enables that progress is the essence of some personal power. (pg 55).

Any alcoholic seeking improvement is free to utilize any of the thoughts freely shared by this author. Some ideas may stimulate new thinking about the meaning of the word “God”. (pg 23). You, the reader, are free to use any idea from any source - **if you choose**.

With an open mind, there is freedom to constantly enlarge a spiritual life. This new direction includes recognition and acceptance that there can be more to “*infinite God*” than is included in any “*second hand belief system*” provided by self-proclaimed authorities.

Any alcoholic has a capacity to acquire a better understanding of life. (see Step 11). An open minded approach provides new thought and access to more of the intelligence that is inherent within everyone. (see pg 55). Improved understanding is required to cooperate with the Ultimate Reality of Life (syn: “God”- see pgs 14-15, 35, 42, 95, 129, 164 & Appendix II).

Accordingly, this author *believes* an open minded choice about a personal conception of “God” is a practical choice. (pg 12) It will be **the best choice of all**

available choices when contrasted with unthinking conformity to “*second hand moral codes*”.

Progress occurs when the dominant desire (i.e.: “*prayer*”) of the alcoholic is to enlarge their spiritual life (pgs 14, 15 & 35). Complete understanding of the **elegant choice** is not an option within any individual lifetime. However, “*spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection*” is always possible (pg 60).

With this chosen objective comes the desire (syn: “*prayer*”) to acquire more understanding, and to improve cooperation with reality. (syn: “*God*”). More happiness, joy and freedom occur as a by-product. (see Step 11 & pg 133). At the worst, there will be an improvement over holding on to *old ideas* which are in conflict with reality.

“Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may
better do Thy will” (pg 63)

No two individuals think in precisely the same manner. Thought patterns are both unique and personal. Accordingly, some degree of personal responsibility exists for those habitual thought patterns which are guiding forces in the life of an alcoholic. (pgs 23 & 27). This can become “the bondage of self” when those habits of thinking are a block or barrier to something better. This author *believes* that whenever spiritual progress is sought, it is essential to be willing to let go of old ideas in order to let what is good happen. (i.e.: “*Let Go and Let God*” - see pg 42)

“Take away my difficulties, that victory over them
may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy
Love and Thy Way of life.” (pg 63)

Improving a conscious awareness and understanding of truth, good and reality helps eliminate ignorance of “*the Great Reality*” (i.e.: “*God*”- pg 55 & Steps 10-11). By seeking an infinite concept of God, more is constantly revealed. (see pgs 60, 68 164). **As** this occurs the limited and finite spiritual understanding of the alcoholic is enlarged. (see pgs 14-15, 35 42, 85, 87, 129, 163-164).

Concurrently, the personal ignorance of the alcoholic will be gradually reduced, dissolved and eliminated. (review Appendix II). This “*educational variety of a spiritual experience*” produces a new attitude about reality. Included will be a desire to have “*erroneous beliefs*” displaced and rearranged by improving a conscious awareness of **truth, reality, and what is good**. (pg 27).

This new attitude is available to any alcoholic if “*God*” is sought, without placing religious limitations on the definition. (see Step 11). For many, this requires breaking out of traditional habits and thought patterns. (pg 42). Doing so allows the alcoholic to accept more freedom to cooperate with life on life’s terms. (Review Step 11). Reduction of personal conflict with reality improves personal success in living. When observing this occur in another alcoholic, the reader will notice a personality change. (Review Appendix II).

Such a personality change often provokes interest from other alcoholics. If the results are an improvement, others may decide they want to “*trade up*”. (see pg 58).

What they desire is something they did not previously possess. **Is it not the power of new knowledge?**

A natural by-product of alcoholics who learn how to cease fighting anyone and anything is “*a love of life*”. (pg 84). It becomes “*a love for a chosen way of life*” which seeks cooperation with reality. As that occurs, there is ever increasing harmony, balance and compatible with life, on life’s terms. (see pgs 85, 133, Steps 3 & 11).

“May I do Thy will always!” (pg 63)

This simple attitude is a personal preference for a new way of living. When that attitude becomes the dominant desire of the alcoholic, it becomes their “*prayer*”. It is a desire to let go of old habit patterns of thinking as guiding forces in their life. (pg 27) Acquiring such a new attitude is of critical importance to the alcoholic seeking recovery. It is always available to those willing to work for it. (see pgs 58, 83 & 84)

“PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics.” (pg 89)

For the alcoholic seeking recovery, that immunity from drinking is not denied to anyone.

“THERE ARE STILL ENOUGH DRUNKS TO GO AROUND”

However, any decision to significantly change a way of life is not to be taken lightly. The capacity to be honest is a critical element to success. Being coerced, or merely “*going through the motions*” is not necessarily effective. The alcoholic reader already knows if they really desire to change their life.

“We found it very desirable to take this spiritual step with an understanding person, such as our wife, best friend, or spiritual adviser. But it is better to meet God alone than with one who might misunderstand” (pg 63)

Misunderstanding is possible for anyone. The alcoholic reader is cautioned to beware of those overly zealous AA members who state “*God told them what He wanted for you*”. The foundation of your own recovery will be on questionable grounds unless you can reconcile their claims with the principles found in the book “*Alcoholics Anonymous*”. Therefore, ask yourself the question:

“HOW SAFE DO I WANT TO BE?”

Unless you are able to confirm something with AA’s basic text for recovery, it is suggested the alcoholic reader consider it as “*suspect of error*”. It may not be a “*principle of recovery*”, but merely reflect “*the personality of your chosen authority*”.

This admonition specifically includes any comments offered by the author of this Study Guide.

PRINCIPLES BEFORE PERSONALITIES

(Tradition 12)

New ideas impact decisions made in other areas of life beside drinking. To some degree, they will rearrange a basic approach to life.(see pg 27). Such growth and change is required to improve understanding of all and everything that **is** life. (syn: "God", see pg 53 & Step 11).

Once again, it is suggested that the alcoholic reader consider Step Three as a process of enlarging a spiritual life by developing a new mental attitude of:

1. **I would rather be told the truth than something I would like to hear.**
2. **I would rather have what is good for me than get my own way.**
3. **I would rather live in reality, than in some fantasy.**

Taking this vital and crucial step has little permanent effect unless accompanied by willingness to let go of old ideas, emotions and attitudes which have dominated behavior in the past. That means accepting freedom from "*the bondage of self*" which has prevented an enlarged spiritual life. What was previously *believed* was not necessarily morally bad, but instead was practically ineffective. (pg 27).

Any attempt to be "*good*" presumes someone has an "*official standard for goodness*" and is competent to instruct others on what that is. Getting "*well*" presumes reducing conflicts with the Ultimate Reality of Life (syn: "God"). What is your choice of direction to be? Do you *believe* you are:

- ?? "**Bad**" with a need to be "**good**"
or
?? "**Sick**" with a need to "**get well**".

This may be difficult for an alcoholic who habitually views themselves as a "*victim*". Especially if they *believe* they are being "*punished for being morally bad*". Such a *belief system* will include being punished by some whimsically unpredictable and malevolent personality. The alcoholic, seeking recovery must either **accept or reject** the observation of successfully sober AA members:

"So our troubles, we think, are basically of our own making. They arise out of ourselves, and the alcoholic is an extreme example of self-will run riot, though he usually doesn't think so."
(pg 62)

This is bad news to the alcoholic who *believes* their emotional stability is dependent upon the favorable opinion of others whom they cannot control. The *erroneous belief* is that other equal individuals are in control their own personal happiness. The good news is that many, who once considered themselves *victims*, have now tapped a source of new power, they find within themselves. (pgs 55 & 163). As they discover this truth about themselves, they are set free from the limitations of their old ideas. They now possess the power to change the universe -- but only by the count of "ONE". For the alcoholic reader, this means:

**YOU HAVE THE POWER TO ELIMINATE ONLY
ONE DRINKING ALCOHOLIC FROM THE UNIVERSE
AND REPLACE IT WITH ONE SOBER ALCOHOLIC.**

Before embarking upon any *vigorous action* to produce changes, first consider what it is that needs to be changed. (pg 63). Which *erroneous beliefs* are still guiding forces in your life? Which parts of your *belief system* are practical and which parts are ineffective? It is advisable to make this determination before changing your present way of life.

Habitual patterns of thinking determine what you will do, and when you will do it. (review pg 27). This suggests a need for an inventory of the *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which are guiding forces and reflect your personal moral values. That thought brings us to Step Four where we:

"Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of
ourselves."(pg 59)

* * * * *

SECTION B05e:

Chapter 5

HOW IT WORKS

STEP FOUR:

“Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.” (pg 59)

READ:

Chapter 5 - HOW IT WORKS, starting at pg 64 with “Therefore we started upon a personal inventory.” ---through to page 67 ending with “We admitted our wrongs honestly and were willing to set these matters straight.”

COMMENTS:

It is reasonable to assume that any alcoholic who has read this much of the basic text of AA is now considering the personal value of examining old *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which are guiding forces in their life. (see pg 27). Some consideration is now being given to “trading up” from a *belief system* which may not have worked well in the past to something which will produce improved results. Those who seek an *infinite concept of God* can be assured that more improvement is available. (pg 68).

Alcoholics who are not yet convinced that drinking is a problem for them may find it necessary to try some controlled drinking in order to gain a full knowledge of their condition. (see pgs 31 & 32). That potentially lethal action may help them decide if their present *belief system* could benefit from changes in the *moral values* which determine what they will or will not do, and when they will do it. As such, they are guiding forces. Continued survival may require some of them be displaced and rearranged. (see pg 27).

Those alcoholics, already convinced that drinking is life-threatening, are already aware of being unable to start drinking and then control when and under what conditions they will stop drinking. With that awareness, they recognize that some portion of their life has become unmanageable. (see Step 1).

Some recognize their life may not be completely unmanageable every time they drink. For those who still want to drink, this author recommends they drink only on those occasions when they can control it. The value of benefits derived from drinking compared to risks to life and freedom reflect “*moral priorities*” guiding their life. Only the individual alcoholic will know if and when those conditions exist. (review pgs 30-32). Any mistakes in judgment can be tragic.

The alcoholic reader will recognize it is their own life which is being considered here. In any effort to create “*a way of life*” which is in harmony, balance and compatibility with reality, it makes intelligent good sense to take stock of what values you are working with. How well do your own “*moral priorities*” produce desired results?

That requires mental action and the examination of the *ideas, emotions and attitudes* guiding your life. (see pgs 23 & 27). Other opinions on morality exist. Many are worth considering. This author suggests such an examination is the essence of Step Four.

Within that context it behooves the alcoholic to intelligently examine their own moral values, and open-mindedly consider value in other *belief systems*. There is always room for improvement for anyone in their conscious understanding of *the Great Reality* which is “God”. (see pg 55 & Step 11). If the objective is to “*trade up*”, this may be obvious. (see pg 60(c)).

That concept recognizes human equality in relationship to a Power greater than ourselves. Accepting that equality is a point of mental confusion and emotional turmoil for many alcoholics.

Religious *belief systems* were developed by others “**at some other time, in some other place, for some other purpose**”. Once an alcoholic is aware that the seemingly impossible morality of many traditional religions belong to someone else, they are obliged to deal with their own belief about human equality. Specifically where it concerns “*their own conception of God*”. (see pg 12).

New knowledge can and frequently does provide *improved understanding* of “*the Great Reality*” which is defined as “God”. (see pg 55 & Step 11). Values from antiquity may not be in harmony, balance or compatible with life on life’s terms as it is being experienced now. The moral values of others who were not alcoholic may not be the valid standard for every alcoholic in every specific situation. It is not necessary for any alcoholic to adopt moral values developed in antiquity in order to be *happy, joyous and free* now. (syn: “God’s Will”- see pg 133). It is only necessary to adopt those morals which do produce the results desired. Many spokesmen for various religions will disagree.

The reader should be alert that Step Two of the AA program does not suggest some “*Power greater than themselves*” will make alcoholics like people who are not alcoholic. This may be “*a blessing*” because we may not be living in a sane society. Similarly, Step Four does not say the values of any of the traditional religions are necessarily valid. While their self-appointed spokesmen may often make those claims, it is the alcoholic (i.e.: “*equal in the eyes of God*”) who ultimately makes that determination for themselves. (review pg 95). Many religious *belief systems* contain beneficial elements because they are the same universal principles which have continually been rediscovered since the days of primitive man. Which “*moral values*” are chosen will depend upon what the individual alcoholic “*believes are best*”.

Benefits from some *belief systems* get deferred until some speculatively future lifetime. It is recommended an alcoholic follow those *spiritual leaders* who are able to demonstrate the kind success they desire. (i.e.: “*pray for*”). If, their primary purpose is to **stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety** in this lifetime (refer to “The Preamble” of AA), they may prefer to ask to see results. This would imply a priority preference for results in this lifetime over some speculative other experience. Once again, this choice of values is a personal one.

“If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it--then you are ready to take certain steps.” (pg 58)

The intelligent alcoholic will inventory their own moral values instead of blindly accepting a set of values established by others. That choice may involve **when** they want results. There is practical value in paraphrasing a familiar AA Slogan:

“ONE LIFE AT A TIME”

If the reader accepts personal equality, as a human being, they already know they possess all the human capacities required to be one. And, so does everyone else equally as well. As individuals, each alcoholic is free to develop or not develop any personal traits which are human qualities. A single lifetime will not allow sufficient time to perfect every personality trait. However, you the reader, have already improved upon some portions of your personal life.

Time was when anything you now do well, was *new knowledge*. Others have also made individual choices to develop their human qualities. Different groups place different values and priorities upon different qualities. Depending upon the objectives of the group, some may also develop an ethnocentric attitude that their group is superior to other groups. This does not mean they really are, it just means they have their own choice of values. When followed, those *belief systems* will have different priorities which produce different results.

A self-evident conclusion is that there is always room for improvement in any area of life. (see pg 60 & Steps 10-11). Some *spiritual progress* may be easier due to unique characteristics which allow every individual to be separately identifiable. As an individual human being, each alcoholic is both unique and equal. (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”).

HUMAN EQUALITY AND SAMENESS INCLUDES PERSONAL UNIQUENESS

This author suggests personal uniqueness is part of your sameness with every other human being because everyone has it.

Personal improvement is a choice either made by you, or by some other human being. Allowing the moral values of others to guide your life reflects your own priorities. (see pg 27) Who else could have appointed another person as *an authority* for your life?

No alcoholic can be more than human. Any alcoholic has some capacity to do whatever is humanly possible. Moral values reflect when and how an individual alcoholic will make their best choice.

“Many of us exclaimed “What an order! I can’t go through with it.” Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The

point is, that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines.
The principles we have set down are guides to progress
We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual
perfection.” (pg 60)

On the premise that what you do impacts what happens, this approach determines your relationship to life (syn: “God”). How much intelligence and how much emotion go into the choice will reflect your *belief system* and personal priorities.

The good news is that you are no longer a *victim*. You have the option to enjoy a new kind of freedom and happiness. (see pg 83) The bad news is that you are obliged to accept personal responsibility for your own mistakes in judgment. (see pg 133). Improving that mental action (pg 23 & Step 11)) requires self examination. Many alcoholics consider this preferable to conformity with a “*second hand set of rules*” developed by other and equal human beings.

STEP FOUR :

“Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves”

Before beginning any journey toward a new goal, it is desirable to know where you are starting from. This permits intelligently charting a course to move in the desired direction. Evaluating *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which are guiding forces (pg 27) helps determine if those choices produce the desired new direction in life. If not, then thoughtful replacement with a new set of values that does work is probably indicated.

There is a natural resistance to abandoning habitual ways of dealing with reality (syn: “God”). Familiar patterns of behavior may be the only known way of dealing with problems even when there is something better available. (pg 60(c)). For many alcoholics, “*trading up*” to an improvement (syn: “conscious contact with God” - see Step 11) is their preferred choice. While a “*better way*” may be available, if it is not understood it cannot be used. Therefore, *ignorance of the truth* can be a flaw which blocks personal progress.

Placing the principles of life before any limited personal value system is a change in moral values. An attitude of intolerance or belligerent denial toward *personal ignorance* can be a formidable obstacle to personal progress. (see Appendix II). Change that way of thinking and you change your fundamental relationship to life. (syn: “God” see pg 55). When alcoholics do this, their whole attitude and outlook upon life will be new. (see pgs 27, 84, & Appendix I -Tradition 12)

Some alcoholics have discovered that placing priority on principles of life over their *personal belief system*, has produced desirable results which others can learn and enjoy. It occurs as the result of adopting a new attitude about personal ignorance of *new knowledge* (syn: “God”- see pg 27). An infinite supply of *new knowledge* is available to anyone who seeks it.

YOU DON'T KNOW UNLESS YOU KNOW!

Awareness of a lack of the power to be *happy, joyous and free*, (see pgs 45 & 133) eventually brings each alcoholic face-to-face with their old idea of “God”.(see pgs 53, 55, 58 & 68). Familiar ideas and habitual patterns of thinking exist deep inside everyone. When a *fundamental idea of God* is erroneous, there is value in promptly admitting it is wrong. (see Step 10).

The alcoholic reader may have already established that their old ideas were not working sufficiently well to produce desired results. (i.e.: “*the answer to their prayers*”). When presented with the proposition that the source of all *new knowledge*, can provide relief. (syn: “God” see pgs 60(c) & 68) this will require a decision. One of choosing personal priority value between two seemingly conflicting concepts of a power that will produce results.

“Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.” (pg 58)

Where a life-threatening condition is recognized, many will make changes out of **desperation** rather than from **inspiration**. Some will seek help outside themselves, from a desire to be **good**. (see pg 55). They may even rely upon a “*second hand belief system*” where some other human power is qualified to tell them what is good for them. (syn: “God”) This is frequently based upon some emotional promise of rewards and punishments rather than any intelligent recognition of cause and effect.

The desire to stay alive and carry their own keys is likely to be the real motivating factor. This will readily occur with those alcoholics who have pursued their drinking careers to where their primary objective is survival..

“We are like the passengers of a great liner the moment after rescue from shipwreck.....”
(pg 17)

When traditional religious values are in conflict, it becomes a matter of personal preference between “**goodness and survival**”. Under those conditions, it is easier to **accept a solution that works**. (“*First Things First*”).

Most alcoholics recognize it is the most intelligent choice to survive first and then be good later. The reverse may not be an option. No one really knows for sure. Eventually, everyone will become an equal expert.

Alcoholics, who seek answers beyond their present *belief system*, can be reassured that help is available from the results others have produced. Others have learned to understand *new knowledge* after not knowing how to recover from alcoholism. The *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which had guided their lives got displaced and rearranged, out of their own desperation to survive. (pg 27).

IT IS HARD TO ARGUE WITH SUCCESS

The Ultimate Reality of life (syn: “God”) did not change. What did change was the conscious understanding of reality by the alcoholic who learned how to improve

cooperation with it. (Step 11). It was necessary for them to discover what was lacking in their conscious awareness of reality. (i.e.: “God” - see pgs 53, 60(c), 68 & 164).

“Lack of power, that was our dilemma.” (pg 45)

Drinking alcoholics lack the power to utilize the same *new knowledge* which sober alcoholics possess. (see Step 11). However, the power of that *new knowledge* is available, if it is sought. (pg 60(c)). If one alcoholic can understand how to stay sober, any drinking alcoholic can learn more of what they know. This brings the drinking alcoholic to a point of decision. Either they want *new knowledge*, or they prefer to hold onto their old ideas. (see pg 58). Either they will be obliged to seek more power from an infinite source of *new knowledge* (syn: “God”- see pg 45) or else settle for what they have. So, what is your choice to be? (pgs 53 & 68)

INDECISION IS HELL!

To make matters worse, those who *believe* there is no “*power, greater than themselves*”, may be asked:

“Who are you to say there is no God?” (pg 56)

On those occasions where understanding reality is inadequate, the alcoholic is vulnerable to their own ignorance of what is good for them. (syn: “God for them”). The mind of the alcoholic is resisting some greater good and increased happiness. (see pgs 23, 68, 133 & 164). Under those conditions they encounter fear of the unknown. This author suggests it is fear of *new knowledge* coming from a self-centered struggle for survival of old *ideas, emotions and attitudes*. (pgs 27 & 62).

Some alcoholics find an opening in the walls of their mental defenses (see pg 23) where their minds will allow in *new knowledge*. The power of valid *new knowledge* breaks down defenses of erroneous *beliefs*, and reality is eventually forced upon them. Then, *huge emotional displacements and rearrangements* will occur as a natural result. (see pg 27).

This author suggests that, when we know the truth, we become freed from the limits of our former *belief system*. (see pg 83). For those who question this process, you are asked to consider that:

EVERYTHING YOU NOW KNOW WAS ONCE UNKNOWN TO YOU!

Few alcoholics *believe* everything everyone tells them. Most do *believe* some things some people tell them.

Within the mind of an alcoholic, there are some people who are considered to be authorities. At the same time, there are others who are not viewed in that same light. The choice of who is and who is not *believable* becomes a determining element in how an

alcoholic will approached their problems. It is often a decision they made at some time in the past which is now placing them in a position to be hurt. (pg 62). Unless they are getting results they desire now, (i.e.: "pray for"), some of their old ideas about "*who and what to believe*" is now a road-block to recovery. (pg 58).

The problem, is they made "**gods**" of other people accepted as authorities on "*what to believe is the truth*". (syn: "God"). This was followed by a calculated defense against anything that might establish they were wrong. (see Steps 10 & 11). Was there room for error? (see pg 23).

INHERENT IN ANY BELIEF IS THAT THE BELIEF ITSELF IS TRUE!

By acting upon false beliefs, the alcoholic becomes a creator of confusion. (see pgs 61-62, & 133). Cooperation with reality is obviously more sane than fighting it. (syn: "God"- see pg 84). When, out of personal ignorance, an alcoholic rejects what is good for them (syn: "God's Will vs. self-will run riot") their troubles are of their own making. (pgs 62 & 133).

"WHY BOTHER TO SEEK ANSWERS IF YOU WON'T ACCEPT THEM?"

At those times, the alcoholic lacks the power to choose to cooperate with life on life's terms. Before it is possible to reduce any conflict with reality, (i.e.: "God"), the first requirement is to recognize it exists. This was essentially done in Step One. Making *spiritual progress* toward cooperation with the Ultimate Reality of Life (syn: "God &/or God's Will for us") is obviously more sane than to deny it. Whenever conscious understanding of reality is lacking, (see pg 45 & Step 11), improvement is always possible.

Anything short of "*omniscience and omnipotence*" requires some sort of "*power greater than ourselves*" to improve sanity. An alcoholic needs more new knowledge of reality in order to have more sanity about drinking alcohol because drinking it distorts their perception of reality. (i.e.: "God" -see pg 55). Seeking that power begins by letting go of old ideas and changing fundamental *beliefs* about the power. (see pgs 23, 27, 55, & 58). Many old ideas about the nature of the power may need to be cast aside. ("*Let Go and Let God*" - see pg 42).

This often occurs after an alcoholic has observed others obtain different results from what their "*chosen authorities on 'God'*" had told them. If they had been telling the truth, they would be producing successful results. If different concepts provide what is most desired, many alcoholics will seek the power of that "*know-how*". This appears to be a more sane choice than belligerently "*holding on to old ideas*". (pg 58 & Appendix II). Giving open minded consideration to *new knowledge* becomes the essence of Step Two.

When alcoholics have an honest desire (i.e.: "*prayer*") to cooperate with life, on life's terms, it creates a demand for *new knowledge* of how to do it. That demand is for the "*power of intelligence greater than their own*". No matter how else it is defined, the "*three letter word 'God'*" incorporates that idea. (pg 63).

That same demand is also for help to produce “*a personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism*”. This author *believes* the acceptance of *new knowledge* to replace *old ideas* becomes the essence of a *spiritual experience*. (see pgs 27, 68 & Appendix II).

Each alcoholic is faced with making a decision to hold onto old ideas, or else seek conscious contact with *new knowledge* greater than they possess. That *new knowledge* includes power to produce desired results. Without that *new knowledge*, any conscious cooperation with the Ultimate Reality of Life (syn: “God”) is not possible. Fortunately, for any alcoholic who seeks recovery, that personal improvement is always available to those who are willing to accept it.

Making a decision to seek improvement (pg 60 & Steps 10 & 11) allows “*a completely new set of conceptions and motives*” to become dominate.(see pg 27). Hence, the alcoholic is required to decide what is their dominant desire (syn: “prayer”). Their new attitude establishes a new and different personal relationship to the One Power which is *the Great Reality* of life, on life’s terms. (pgs 53, 55 & 59). It also gives direction to that available power.

POWER IS POWER AND IT WORKS THE WAY IT WORKS

Any power operates according to certain principles - be they known or unknown. Giving any power intelligent direction requires understanding of the principles by which it operates. (see Step 11). This is “*life on life’s terms*”. Unfortunately, there are those *who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program*. (pg 58).

Because they have nothing better with which to relate to life, except their old ideas, many alcoholics are afraid to let go of their old ideas and let what is good for them happen. (“*Let go and Let God*”- see pg 67). According to their old conception, this would be abandoning God. (see pgs 12 & 55). However, with an open mind they may eventually recognize there may be value in ideas other than their own. (see pgs 164 & Appendix II). This author *believes* there is always more *new knowledge* available about anything and everything which is God. (pgs 53, 68 & 164).

“Most emphatically we wish to say that any alcoholic capable of honestly facing his problems in the light of our experience can recover, provided he does not close his mind to all spiritual concepts. He can only be defeated by an attitude of intolerance or belligerent denial.”
(Appendix II)

At some point, alcoholics will recognize an unpalatable truth. Not only have their minds been distorted by alcohol, but they have also been distorted by misinformation. As a consequence, they were mistaken and have *believed* things that were not in harmony, balance or compatible with the Ultimate Reality of Life (syn: “God”). As a consequence of *believing* things that were not true, their perception of reality was often an erroneous one. The “*light comes on*” once they become consciously aware of the true nature of their mental condition. (see pg 23 & Step 11).

**CLEAR AND ACCURATE THINKING CANNOT BE
PRODUCED FROM A DISTORTED MIND.**

“Therefore, the main problem of the alcoholic
centers in his mind....” (pg 23)

With this improved consciousness (see Step 11), many alcoholics who have embraced traditional religious ideas about “God” become fearful they must abandon their faith in God. **This is not so!**

The only suggestion made in AA is to let go of old ideas and erroneous *beliefs* which do not produce results. There is a significant difference insofar as reality (syn: “God”) is concerned,. A fundamental idea of “God” as an infinite source of *new knowledge* does not have limitations. (pgs 53 & 68). This author has observed that most traditional *belief systems* do. There is no need to “*throw the baby out with the bath water*”. What is required is “*the wisdom to know the difference*”. The real problem is one of **not knowing** which old ideas are valid and which ones are not.

With a need for more wisdom, (see pg 68) a decision is required to replace or improve old *ideas, emotions and attitudes*. (see pg 27, Step 11 & Appendix II). This effectively becomes an “*educational variety*” of a “*vital spiritual experience*”. It is a decision to “*trade up*” to the acceptance of greater power. (pg 68). That very personal choice is an essential part of Step Three.

Having made that decision, there now comes the need to improve conscious understanding of what does and does not work. (Step 11). Understanding what produces desired results **is** the process of recovery from alcoholism. (syn: “*God as you understand Him*”).

**Many alcoholics are surprised to discover their recovery is not
on the terms of their *belief system* but on life’s terms** (syn: “God’s Will”).

To understand what terms are guiding forces requires an alcoholic to take stock of their personal value system. (see pg 27).

“So we had to get down to causes and conditions.
Therefore, we started upon a personal inventory.”

(Pg 64)

Most alcoholics acquire some erroneous perceptions about their relationship to life. Some from distorting their minds with alcohol. Other, more subtle errors, come from blindly accepting inaccurate information assumed to be true. This is not so much a moral problem of being good or bad, but instead is ineffective because it is incomplete. With *willingness, honesty and open-mindedness* to accept improved information about life (syn: “God”- see Steps 10, 11 & Appendix II), many discover everything they *believed* was neither accurate nor complete.

**I NEVER EVER MADE A MISTAKE BEFORE,
BUT THIS LOOKS LIKE IT MIGHT BE ONE!!**

Mistaken *beliefs* about what is and is not reality fairly well define alcoholic insanity. (Step 2). Recovery requires a *vital spiritual experience*. (see Appendix II). To the dismay of many, **religious convictions do not spell the necessary vital spiritual experience**. (see pg 27). When what is already *believed* does not produce “*the personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism*” (see pgs 39, 42, 45, 68 & Appendix II), the alcoholic is obliged to seek the power of *new knowledge*. (see pg 68). This requires a fact-finding process of examining the *ideas, emotions and attitudes* that guide choices of behavior. (pg 27) and discovering what does and does not produce results.

YOU DON'T KNOW UNLESS YOU KNOW!

This author *believes*, alcoholics will repeat mistakes until they discover the error in their thinking. They are not being punished by some whimsical tyrant for being “*bad*”, but are making their own misery out of ignorance of reality (i.e.: “*God*”- see pg 133). Other *belief systems* will produce different conclusions.

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SECTION B05f:

Chapter 5

HOW IT WORKS

STEP FOUR:

“Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.” (pg 59)

READ:

Chapter 5 - HOW IT WORKS, starting at pg 64 with “Resentment is the “number one offender”.....” to page 67 through “We admitted our wrongs honestly and were willing to set these matters straight.”

COMMENTS:

Hopefully, by this point the reader is aware there are practical reasons for taking a personal inventory. Particularly an inventory of ideas, emotions and attitudes which are guiding forces in their life as an individual. One objective of an inventory is to understand which patterns of behavior do or do not produce personal fulfillment. Any long range objectives then become important. They will likely fall into one of two categories. The reader may wish to evaluate which receives greatest importance. This author suggests it will be based upon either:

- ? **your own thinking**, - or
- ? **values established by others.**

Any personal fulfillment objectives will be part of your own thinking. Hopefully they will be based upon desires (syn: “prayers”) which are both realistic and intelligent. If someone else is telling you what *should* want, you have appointed them as an authority for your life. **As that authority they have become your version of God.** Have you ever checked their credentials to be one?

At issue is what you think about human equality. Everyone has a capacity to be mistaken. It is important to understand why you believe someone else is an authority for your life. With so many different viewpoints available, why do you choose one individual as an authority and not someone else? Was the choice based upon **intelligence** or upon an **emotional desire** to be told what you want to hear?

That same question applies to other goals you have for your life. (see pg 23). **Are your objectives intelligent or emotional?** Is what you want for your life (i.e.: “*your real prayer*”) the result of intelligent thought, or is it what someone said you *should* want? Perhaps it is just a childish demand of “*I want what I want when I want it!!*”. (i.e.: “*self-will run riot*”).

Both intelligent and emotional choices give direction to whatever power is applied toward achieving a goal. This author *believes* intelligent choices are more stable than emotional ones. Some *belief systems* recommend you abdicate freedom of choice by allowing their spokesmen to tell you what you *should* desire for yourself. The reader is free to do this if they so choose.

Your ideas, emotions and attitudes are forces, which guide your life (see pg 27) and determine what actions you will or will not take. (pg 54). This author *believes* that what you do impacts what happens to you. Those actions reflect the **moral values** which govern your life. They are inescapably personal, therefore ask yourself:

? **ARE THEY INTELLIGENT?**

? **ARE THEY REALISTIC?**

? **ARE THEY REALLY YOUR VALUES?**

? **IS THAT ALL THERE IS?**

Your response may highlight some significant differences between a **religious** and a **spiritual** approach to living life. You may discover which relies more upon emotion than upon intelligence.

Traditional religious approaches to life are usually based upon some appointed authority telling you what to think. Often it is another equal human being who has been accepted as an authority to define moral values. This requires “*placing faith in some human power*”. (see pg 60(b)) because “*you want to believe them*”. Intelligence suggests that unless they know everything about everything, the Ultimate Reality of Life (syn “God”) may be different.

Most individuals have some knowledge which would be *new knowledge* for others. Some facts of life they may understand better than others. Nonetheless, everyone lacks having all knowledge. (syn: “God” see pg 45). Your own inherent intelligence will recognize that no one has “*all the answers to everything*” in life. (syn: “the Great Reality” - see pg 55). In that regard, each individual is equal, but unique and different in what they know.

When choosing another human being to define what you *should* want, you become dependent upon them. By your own choice, you limit your happiness, joy and freedom to what they know, or believe they know. (see pgs 62 & 133). Those limits are restricted to what they think produces happiness, joy and freedom for you. They may be mistaken. When the results are unsatisfactory a resentment can follow. (see pg 64).

This author suggests that learning how to think, is equivalent to learning to live your own life. To do so may require that you *throw several lifelong conceptions out the window*. (see pg 42).

When seeking the source of all knowledge (syn: “God” - see pg 60(c)) an alcoholic becomes free to accept *valid principles for living* from anyone, any place and at any time. (see Step 12 & pg 83). With this mental attitude, they are then free to enlarged their spiritual life, and are no longer dependent upon some specific human power. (see pgs 14,

15, 23 , 35 & 83). Reliance upon this enlarged source of *new knowledge* effectively produces a *vital spiritual experience*. (see pg 27).

Each alcoholic has a *belief system* which is a fundamental idea about their relationship to life, on life's terms. (syn: "God" see pg 55). Any conflict with the *Great Reality* shows up in how well that *belief system* works. Any conflict will occur within the mind of the alcoholic because "*the Great Reality*" does not change to accommodate disagreements or conflicts created by individuals. (see pg 23)

What is *believed* may be intelligent and agree with reality, (syn: "God"), or it may be emotional and a fantasy. This requires alcoholics to investigate their personal *belief system* and determine if it is intelligent or emotional. (Steps 3, 10 & 11). Usually there is some mixture of both. Those who want to recover have a need to reduce their personal conflict with reality. (syn: "God").

This author suggests that intelligent *beliefs* are more realistic than emotional wishful thinking. Acceptance or rejection of an entitlement to your own view of reality is part of the force guiding your life. (see pgs, 27 & 55). Other opinions exist. Your attitude about human equality determines how intelligently you accept or reject a human power as the authority for some portion of your life.

Do you tell others what is acceptable to you, or do they tell you? Are your moral values your own intelligent thinking? If not, who does your thinking for you?

"Next we launched out on a course of vigorous action, the first step of which is a personal housecleaning, which many of us had never attempted. Though our decision was a vital and crucial step, it could have little permanent effect unless at once followed by a strenuous effort to face, and to be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us. Our liquor was but a symptom. So we had to get down to causes and conditions.

Therefore, we started upon a personal inventory."

(pgs 63 - 64)

* * * * *

STEP FOUR:

A personal inventory of moral values establishes the starting point for progress toward a new goal. (see pg 60). *New knowledge* will be required. That implies seeking some source of *new knowledge* greater than now possessed. (pg 60(c)). To do so requires taking stock and evaluating what is being used now.

Relief from alcoholism requires keeping an **open-mind** about enlarging a spiritual life. (see pgs 14, 15, 35 & Appendix II). A similar attitude is required when seeking some infinite power of *new knowledge* which exceeds human understanding. (see pg 60(a),(b),(c), pg 68 & Step 11). To obtain improved understanding requires examination of old ideas, emotions and attitudes, and a moral inventory by the individual alcoholic. (pg

27 & Step 11). That mental action is the beginning of a life-long process where more will constantly be revealed. (see pgs 129, 164 & Step 10).

There is always more to know and understand about *the Great Reality*. (i.e.: “God”, see pgs 53, 55, 68 & Steps 10 & 11). There is always room for improvement. Any moral inventory will reflect the current values of the individual alcoholic.

It is presumed the reader is willing to accept some responsibility for choices made in their life. Those who *believe* they have none are advised to stop wasting time reading this material. According to that *belief*, it would be pointless to seek improvement. With that *belief system* you are able to sit back and let whatever runs your life do it to you because you have already attained *spiritual perfection*. If that is correct, then congratulations are in order.

By contrast, this author *believes* that no one is exempt from the consequences of their choices. Only temporary comfort is obtained by allowing “*second-hand ideas*” to determine current actions. (pg 58). Eventually, such a *belief system* will include you being “**a victim**” of whatever authority is running your life because nothing will ever be your own fault.

If that is a chosen *belief system*, a healthy dose of self-honesty may be required for survival. Escape from all personal responsibility in this lifetime is an illusion. *Belief systems* which promise benefits in some subsequent experience are difficult to confirm with any intelligent examination of reality. (syn: “God”). Alcoholics are usually held accountable for the actions they take rather than what they *believe*. From that purely practical perspective, this author recommends the alcoholic reader consider living

“*One Life at a Time*”.

Seeking more *new knowledge* about the reality of this lifetime (syn: “God” - see pgs 53 & 60(c)) is an intelligent objective. Intelligent awareness ultimately displaces erroneous *beliefs* regardless of any emotional attempts to hold on to those old ideas. (see pgs 58 & 84). As more *new knowledge* is revealed, improved conscious understanding of reality can and will be recognized as “*a power greater than yourself*”. (see pg 164 & Step 11). The reader, has every right to believe anything they choose to believe. So does everyone else, with equal authority.

The value of any *belief system* is how well it works, and the results it produces. Particularly for any approach to recovery from alcoholism.

For alcoholics in AA who “*completely give themselves to this simple program*”, (see pg 58) taking stock of personal moral values is an obvious next step. It is a start on the path of recovery. There is intelligence in the slogan:

“*First Things First!*”

It is now assumed that some spiritual progress is desired by any reader of this Study Guide. Taking an inventory of ideas, emotions and attitudes guiding your life, is recommended. It includes recognition that:

“Resentment is the “number one” offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else.” (pg 64)

This provides a clue about where to begin. By improving ideas, emotions and attitudes which produce resentments, some progress is inevitable. It will occur unless the reader *believes* they are a victim incapable of making choices which allow for personal improvement.

The alcoholic with all necessary knowledge for successful living at a conscious level, would use that “*know-how*” to be happy, joyous and free. (see pg 133 & Step 11). They would already possess sufficient self-knowledge to produce their own personal fulfillment. (syn: “the answer to their prayer” see pg 39). The alcoholic reader either claims that perfection or they seek something more. (see pg 60). To get more you must be willing to seek and accept more.

“If you have decided you want what we have, and are willing to go to any length to get it, then you are ready to take certain steps” (pg 58)

Self-knowledge is both finite and limited. (pg 68). Presumably the alcoholic reader is seeking an *effective mental defense against the first drink*. (pgs 23, 43, 45, 60(c) & Appendix II). Improved understanding of reality is available from the source of all *new knowledge*. (i.e.: “God” see pg 60). Hopefully they recognize they do not have all the answers to life they may require.

“But the actual or potential alcoholic, with hardly an exception, will be *absolutely unable to stop drinking on the basis of self-knowledge*.” (pg 39)

Whatever *new knowledge* may be required for continued recovery must come from some source of intelligence which is “*a power greater than ourselves*”. (review pgs 14-15, & 42-43). Religious alcoholics often claim precise knowledge regarding that power. Those claims of knowledge are frequently based upon *hearsay* evidence and a “*second hand belief system*” which cannot be intelligently confirmed as being accurate.

In AA, recovered alcoholics tap a source of infinite power and seek to enlarge and improve their conscious understanding of it. (see pgs 60, 68 163, & Step 11). Regardless of any *belief*, the constant improvement and enlargement of a *spiritual life* is always possible. That spiritual progress is an essential ingredient to continued recovery from alcoholism. (see pgs 14, 15, 35, 60, 129, & 163).

Differences exist between religious convictions and enlarging a spiritual life. (see pg 27 & Appendix II). The reader may choose to limit their own conscious understanding of the Ultimate Reality of Life (syn: “God”) to the finite boundaries of their religious faith. However “*an infinite concept of God*” (pg 68) will offer more relief simply because there is more to be revealed. (pgs 53, 60(c) & 164).

There is valuable *new knowledge* to be found outside the limits of any religious *belief system*. This is especially so when religious authorities define “*what to believe*”. As a consequence, “*in seeking more anyone can find more*” and then be free to use that improved understanding in all their affairs. (see pg 83 & Steps 10, 11 & 12). The use an alcoholic makes of any *new knowledge* may be either intelligent or emotional. (i.e.: “*God’s will vs. self will run riot*”). Only the results really matter.

Regardless of approach, alcoholics can and do recover. (see Frontispiece). Those who have recovered are able to demonstrate *some* knowledge of how to stay sober. There are alcoholics who want to stay sober, but are unable to do so because they do not know how. If they did know, they would be using that *new knowledge* to produce successful results.

“Lack of power, that was our dilemma.” (pg 45)

Changes in thinking are required to learn what others know about recovery from alcoholism. (see pg 23). That change amounts to a *vital spiritual experience* for the alcoholic who is still ignorant of what is possible. When the power of valid *new knowledge* is acquired, it will manifest as a *personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism*. It may occur rapidly, or be of the educational variety. It will always materialize for those who are willing to work for it. (see pg 84 & Appendix II).

It is important to recognize that this mental action will be *in the nature of huge emotional displacements and rearrangements*. While the *religious convictions* of the reader *may be very good*, they may not *spell the necessary vital spiritual experience*. (see pg 27).

No alcoholic has sufficient knowledge to understand that which is infinite, or how well their religious convictions are compatible with the Ultimate Reality of Life. (syn: “God”). Their conscious awareness of reality is always finite and limited. However, you, the reader, always have the option to seek more. You can do this by constantly improving and enlarging your own spiritual life. (pgs 14-15, 35, 60 & Step 3).

This decision requires mental action. (see pg 23 & Steps 10 & 11). It is necessary to be **willing** to learn something new. To do so, requires being **honest** with yourself (see pg 58) about what you *believe*. Then be **open-minded** that something better could be available. To obtain improved results, it is necessary to “*trade up*” by accepting reality. In the process of *spiritual growth*, personal mistakes in judgment are possible. (see Step 10).

Maintaining this attitude is indispensable and embodies a willingness to “*trade up*” to principles that produce success. (review Appendix I, Tradition 12 & Appendix II). The alternative choice is to hold onto a limited *belief system* which rejects some portion of life on life’s terms. (syn: “God” - see pg 53).

Individual AA members have their own limited view of recovery from alcoholism. No AA member has all the answers. This author is specifically included in that observation. Some personal responsibility is involved when choosing which approach to follow. (see pg 62). Successful recovery for any alcoholic involves placing principles before personalities. (see Tradition 12).

Groups have more knowledge of those principles than any individual member. They demonstrate a greater variety of ideas, emotions and attitudes that work. Therefore,

a group approach usually works better than blindly accepting any individual approach to recovery. This can be a starting point. A *vital spiritual experience* is a mental journey toward an endless supply of *new knowledge* and all the power that goes with it. (pg 59).

Group knowledge is a power greater than individual self-knowledge when it is capable of demonstrating successful results. Many alcoholics recognized the collective experience of all of AA is a resource of great strength. Most recovered alcoholics eventually discover an even larger and improved source of power. It is available by constantly improving conscious contact with the source of all *new knowledge* and the increase in power that goes with it. (syn "God" - see pgs 23, 45, 59 & 60).

"Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We
realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose
more to you and to us." (pg 164)

New knowledge, is acquired from the source of all power (syn: "God" - see pg 59), and is always available for anyone to claim if they seek it. Ultimately, many alcoholics recognize that an endless supply of *new knowledge* is always available to provide relief from alcoholism for anyone who suffers. (see pg 60(c)).

An alcoholic can only use whatever power they consciously possess. With *new knowledge* comes more power and new freedom. The person who improves their conscious contact with the source of all *new knowledge* is then free to use more power. (see pgs 45 & 83) They may use that power with intelligence or apply it emotionally as "*self-will run riot*".

For some alcoholics "*an infinite source of new knowledge*" becomes their fundamental concept of "*God*". (see pgs 12 & 55). Others will prefer to hold onto limited old ideas and "*second hand religious concepts*". (see pg 58). What is your choice to be? (pg 53).

Any approach to all knowledge (syn: "God") is personal and is a choice made by each alcoholic. (see pg 55). Some gain *new knowledge* through the teachings of various religions. Those fundamental ideas of God are usually interpreted by someone designated as an authority on that *belief system*. Other alcoholics prefer to go directly to the same source of all new knowledge which allows authorities to claim their expertise.

Using another human being as "*a middleman to God*" is a personal choice. It allows someone else to do your thinking for you, with your own permission. Where recovery from alcoholism is concerned, it is results which really count. The alcoholic reader is advised to evaluate results and then consider:

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE HOW MUCH THEY KNOW, - IF WHAT THEY KNOW IS NOT SO?

Making a *searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves* (Step 4) implies a review of the *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which are *the guiding forces* in our lives. (see pg 27). With resentments being *the "number one" offender*, they become an intelligent starting point for a personal inventory.

“In dealing with resentments, we set them down on
paper.” (pg 64)

There seems to be good reason for writing down resentments on paper. As “*free-floating thoughts*”, they are a guiding force without benefit of intelligent definition or examination. Writing them down puts them into tangible form for exposure to the light of reality. (syn: “God” - see pg 53 & Step 11). It is the experience of this author that writing down resentments allows an alcoholic to use of a **critical capacity** which is more commonly used to **find fault in others**. That same quality can be redirected for personal benefit. Fault-finding becomes a valuable tool in recovery once a simple principle is recognized that:

FIXING OTHERS DOES NOT FIX ME!

Where the character trait of “*fault-finding*” may carry some negative connotations, it is a positive asset when applied to personal improvement. This occurs by a mental change of direction. (pg 23). Instead of pointing out the shortcomings of others, (syn: “their departures from ‘God’s will’” - see pgs 55 & 133) that same capacity identifies opportunities for personal improvement. Improved ideas, emotions and attitudes can become new guiding forces for the alcoholic in their relationship to life. (pg 27 & Step 11)

With improved awareness of reality, self-improvement is possible. (Steps 10 & 11). A capacity to recognize *the Great Reality* is something which exists within each individual. (syn: “God” see pg 55). The reader may discover that option is part of their personal freedom. Use it or lose it!

Some alcoholics operate their lives with a *belief* that “*if my life is a mess, someone else is responsible*” This is a childish emotional response which claims “*I didn’t do anything,- it was their fault*”. (see pg 62). Realistically, it is an indication that

“THEY FLUNKED SANDBOX”

and are not prepared to accept responsibility for the consequences of their own actions. Obviously, that attitude is not an intelligent one.

Freedom includes assuming the responsibilities that go with it. On life’s terms asking for freedom without responsibility is like demanding “*fat free chicken fat*”. It is an obvious contradiction in terms.

FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY ARE TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

The consequences of an unrealistic demand upon life (syn: “*an unrealistic prayer*”) are self-evident. The result is disappointment and frustration. This author *believes* that ultimately

ALL FRUSTRATION LEADS TO AGGRESSION.

The natural result of any frustration is a resentment and a desire to “*get even*”. That desire (syn: “*prayer*”) usually gets directed toward others on the erroneous assumption that “*if something goes wrong, and things do not go my way it can’t be my fault because I was sincere*”. (review pgs 60-62). Any expectations for fulfillment, (syn: “*answer to a prayer*”), were created in the mind of the disappointed individual. (see pgs 23, 62, & 133). When expectations are unrealistic, then frustration, anger and resentments follow.

EXPECTATIONS ARE A DOWNPAYMENT ON A RESENTMENT

When a resentment gets directed to others it incorporates a fundamental idea there is some sort of a power which can correct them.(see pgs 55, 62 & 133). Some alcoholics never become sufficiently open-minded to examine that old idea or admit they might be wrong. (see Step 10).

Eventually, the realities of life will force an alcoholic with a resentment to “*grow up*” and accept life, on life’s terms. Truth, Good & Reality (syn: “*God*” - see Step 3) will require them to change their *ideas, emotions and attitudes* for continued survival (pg 27). Any alcoholic is ready for the AA program when:

THEIR DESIRE TO STAY ALIVE AND CARRY THEIR OWN KEYS EQUALS THEIR DESIRE FOR ANOTHER DRINK

Hopefully, when that choice is made there will be *some spiritual progress*. If the personal mess in the life of an alcoholic is ever going to get cleaned up, they need to know that no one else is going to do it for them. (pg 60(b)). Certainly no one else will do it in any manner consistent with their own personal freedom.

For most alcoholics, their “*spiritual progress*” is “*the educational variety*” and produces “*a personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism*. (see Appendix II). If it is to continue in this lifetime, there is room for further improvement. (see Steps 10 & 11 & pg 164). Other concepts will produce other changes toward different primary objectives. Most religious concepts of improvement are primarily concerned with benefits to be gained in some subsequent experience and the idea of “***Pay now and collect later***”.

Any improved awareness of the truth (syn: “*God*” - see Step 11) includes the need to discard and replace erroneous ideas, emotions and attitudes. (see pg 27 & Step 10). Especially those which are guiding forces. (see Step 12) and also conflict with reality (syn: “*God*”). Some of those old ideas may need to be replaced with an improved set which work, such as “***Cash and carry***”. (pg 58).

The mental action of “***trading up***” can qualify as a *vital spiritual experience*. (pg 27). Although many traditional religions may use a different approach, the only thing that really counts are the results which are produced. If the reader has already found the success they desire, (i.e.: “*the answer to their prayers*”) they will want to continue using it because it works as **their own version of the best**.

Resentments get defined when they are put on paper. Until then they only exist in the mind of the alcoholic who has them. When writing them down, there is no point in being self-deceptive. The defining action is for personal benefit because it has a direct impact upon the life of the alcoholic. Therefore:

YOU HAVE A NEED TO KNOW!!

Any choice of action which does not produce personal happiness, joy and freedom **is** a defect of character. (see Step 6). A departure from an intelligent way of life which conflicts with reality (syn: "God's will" - pg 133) is a personal flaw. It is a consciously chosen cause of personal failure. (pg 64).

Strong emotion is involved in any self-examination which challenges the integrity of an established *belief system*. (see pg 62). This seems to be natural. In simplest terms, it is the emotional defense for self-preservation of old ideas.

That emotional response attempts to defend values used in the past. With improved understanding more *new knowledge* of reality is revealed. (syn: "God" - see pg 164 & Step 11). Then a more intelligent response is available. Nothing is lost, and those old ideas continue to be available after any decision to "*trade up*" to something better.

Any emotional self defense is resistance to change. It is not easy to let go of emotional *beliefs* or retain portions which conflict with reality. Although some old ideas may have continuing value, there is no intelligent reason to hold onto a *belief system* which blocks *spiritual progress*.

Mental action to let go of old ideas and accept something good instead, ("*Let Go and Let God*") involves how much emotion or intelligence is involved. Every action is 100% complete at the time taken. There is usually some mixture of both intelligence and emotion. That balance impacts how well the action is in agreement with reality. (syn:"God").

This author has observed there is more stability in intelligent responses than in emotional reactions. Because everyone has *some knowledge of reality* (syn: "some awareness of God" - see pgs 53 & 55), most individuals apply *some intelligence* to their affairs. Few are free of any emotional reactions. It is the balance between intelligence and emotion that is significant.

Consider the premise that cooperation with reality (syn: "God's Will") is the most intelligent choice any alcoholic can make. Decisions using 80% intelligence and 20% emotion are more stable than those which are 80% emotional and only 20% intelligent. (see pg 62). Opposing views exist that *feelings* take precedence over reality.

Some religions attempt to define reality within the framework of their *belief system* by doing so emotionally. Some attempt this without acknowledging validity to facts of life or to any other *beliefs*. This creates a very limited perspective of reality. (syn: "God" pg 55). They then find it awkward when other *belief systems* produce superior results in recovery from alcoholism. When it comes to being open minded, what is your choice? (pg 53).

IT IS HARD TO ARGUE WITH SUCCESS

Many alcoholics find seeking *new knowledge* as the most intelligent way to improve their life. (pg 60(c)). It has direct value when taking a personal moral inventory. After setting resentments down on paper, any *new knowledge* becomes available for later use. Without use or review that new power can easily be buried under thoughts of other things. Conscious awareness of those guiding forces is improved as reality is understood. (i.e.: "God" see Step 11) That mental action creates *vital spiritual growth*. (see pgs 12, 14-15, 23, 27 & 35).

A moral inventory allows improved understanding of any guiding forces to determine if they are intelligently in agreement with reality. (syn: "God"). Perhaps some guiding forces are really sensitive, childish or grandiose emotional reactions. (syn: "self-will run riot"). There is no purpose in denying whatever emotions accompany a resentment. Justified, or not, they are the fuel for anger and retaliation that *leads only to futility and unhappiness*. (see pgs 27 & 66).

By giving definition to emotional reactions, they are no longer nebulous free-floating monsters in the mind. (see pg 23). Instead, they get changed into something tangible when set down on paper. Then they can be observed and dealt with intelligently. In tangible written form, they are no longer illusive sources of frustrations, futility and unhappiness, and *spiritual progress* becomes possible. Use of the familiar AA "*Serenity Prayer*" is frequently helpful in the process.

It is the experience of this author that strong emotions are unstable and cannot be sustained for any extended period of time. Eventually, they subside and are confronted by reality. Improved understanding of the *Great Reality* (syn: "God") allows for improved stability. The capacity to produce emotional stability is inherent within every alcoholic. (see pg 55, 153 & Step 11). Those with the "*know how*" will want to use that power to be happy, joyous and free. (see pg 133).

Unintelligent emotions are difficult to maintain in the face of reality. All human beings have some capacity to recognize reality, and it will eventually force itself upon anyone. If confirmation is required, just ask a drinking alcoholic to explain their behavior intelligently on "*the morning after the night before!!*".

The same principle applies to justifications for resentments held by alcoholics. Emotional reasons are difficult to maintain, in the light of intelligence. (i.e.: "*the 'Light of God'*"). Those alcoholics who are *willing, honest and open-minded* enough to seek the source of all knowledge will find relief by improving their conscious contact with reality. They are then able to make improved choices and gain freedom from the destructive force of old and erroneous ideas. (review Step 11 from this perspective).

"We found the *Great Reality* deep down within ourselves. In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found. It was so with us." (pg 55)

The reader may wish to consider fault-finding as "*a gift from God*" which allows them to enlarge their spiritual life. (pgs 14, 15, & 35). Such mental action might be considered as part of "*a vital spiritual experience*". (pg 27). Once resentments are put on paper, they can be set aside. When the mental confusion and emotional turmoil has

subsided, that chaos can be viewed with intelligence. Later, the inherent capacity every alcoholic has to find fault with others can be applied toward self improvement.

In the past, “*the gift of fault finding*” may have been used in efforts to fix others. (see pg 61). **By now the reader should be aware that attempts to change other people only creates mental confusion and emotional turmoil.** (see pg 61).

When other alcoholics are enjoying improved success, the intelligent choice is to learn to do what they know how to do. Especially when those other alcoholics are demonstrating happiness, joy and freedom in their personal lives. That means seeking to understand that *new knowledge*.

This requires acknowledging that:

**IF YOU WANT WHAT THEY HAVE,
YOU NEED TO DO WHAT THEY DID
TO GET WHAT THEY GOT.**

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SECTION B05g:

Chapter 5

HOW IT WORKS

STEP FOUR:

“Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.” (pg 59)

READ AGAIN:

Chapter 5 - HOW IT WORKS, starting at pg 64 with “Resentment is the “number one offender”.....” to page 67 through “We admitted our wrongs honestly and were willing to set these matters straight.”

COMMENTS:

Because of the importance resentments play in recovery from alcoholism, additional comments are being provided on the subject. They are part of the thinking processes of the alcoholic.

“Therefore, the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than in his body.” (pg 23).

Correction of destructive thinking by an alcoholic requires a *vital spiritual experience* where *ideas, emotions and attitudes.....are suddenly cast to one side, and a completely new set of conceptions and motives begin to dominate them.* For a seemingly hopeless alcoholic, religious convictions may be very good, but do not spell the necessary vital spiritual experience. (see pg 27). For some it is necessary *to throw several lifelong conceptions out of the window.* (see pg 42).

“Our human resources, as marshaled by the will, were not sufficient; they failed utterly.

Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a *Power greater than ourselves.* Obviously. But where and how were we to find this Power?”

“.....And it means, of course, that we are going to talk about God.” (pg 45)

For many alcoholics, the subject of “God” presents problems. Therefore, consider what that specific three-letter word means to your mind. It may be that *your conception of God* is a problem. (see pg 12)

To the shock and surprise of many, recovery occurs with many different conceptions of God. Those differences reflect personal concepts of *the Great Reality.*

(syn: "God" - see pgs 12, 53 & 55). Many alcoholics find relief by adopting a concept of God, different from their old idea, which they had assumed to be "the only right idea of God".

"We found that as soon as we were able to lay aside prejudice and express even a willingness to believe in a Power greater than ourselves, we commenced to get results, even though it was impossible for any of us to fully define or comprehend that Power which is God."

"Much to our relief, we discovered we did not need to consider another's conception of God. Our own conception, however inadequate, was sufficient to make the approach and to effect a contact with Him. As soon as we admitted the possible existence of a Creative Intelligence, a Spirit of the Universe underlying the totality of things, we began to be possessed of a new sense of power and direction, provided we took other simple steps." (pg 46)

Some traditional religious conceptions of God rigidly define that Power, including what is or is not acceptable, as "*God's Will for all mankind*". While this may appear presumptuous, the reader has complete freedom to *believe* anything that anyone might tell them. However the use of inherent intelligence may produce improved results. (review pgs 55 & 86)

Numerous religions omit some facts of life and reality or add something unrealistic in their various *belief systems*. Their followers are limited to those definitions of the power which seldom produce the volume of recoveries enjoyed by those alcoholics who said:

".....we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else He is nothing. God either is, or He isn't. What was our choice to be?" (pg 53)

The greater success of AA suggests seeking Power, somewhere beyond the limits of those traditional religious ideas. According to most religious *belief systems*, there is "*their idea of God*" and then "*all those others which are not God*". Unquestionably, any religion has discovered some of God, but, by their own limited definitions, it does not include all of God. (pg 53).

"Sometimes we had to search fearlessly, but He was there. He was as much a fact as we were. We found the Great Reality deep down within us. In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found. It was so with us." (pg 55)

Those who thoroughly followed the path outlined by early members of AA, rarely failed to recover. (review pgs 10 & 58). They claimed only *spiritual progress* rather than *spiritual perfection*. (pg 60). They had discovered a answer, but made no claim to having the answer.

This author *believes* there is a significant difference between those two approaches to recovery from alcoholism. The Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous only claims to offer *a answer to a specific problem*. By contrast, many traditional religious approaches claim their version of that word “God” is *the answer to all problems for all mankind*. It is recommended the reader evaluate, with their own intelligence, the results being produced. (review pg 55).

Many recovered alcoholics had tried religious approaches to recovery without success. Many recognized *that no human power could have relieved our alcoholism*. (pg 60). Religious conceptions of God are developed in the minds of human beings. (see pg 23). Alcoholics are equals in their personal relationship to the Power of God. Those with religious expertise are neither superior nor inferior, but merely *different*. The significant difference is their *claim to understand* details about a power required for recovery.

The still suffering alcoholic recognizes the need for power, greater than any power they possess. In AA they discover they have access to power which does not require a “middleman”, (pgs 28, 42 & 46), and improved understanding of *the Great Reality*, is available, if sought. (see pg 60(c) & Step 11). The “god-given” capacity to learn *new knowledge* is within themselves. (pgs 55 & 86). They are able to learn what others have learned.

It appears self-evident that an old *fundamental idea of God* was not perfectly aligned with *the Great Reality* which is God. (review pgs 55, 60(c) & 133). However, improvement and *spiritual progress* is available for those willing to enlarge their spiritual life. (see pgs 14, 15, 35 & Step 11).

To enlarge awareness of *a Power greater than ourselves* requires a careful examination of the old *belief system*. This specifically includes *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which are *guiding forces*. (see pg 27). Some have tried to hold on to their old ideas, without results. (see pg 58).

Continued self-examination produces the enlarged spiritual awareness required for continued recovery. (see pgs 14, 15 & 35). Intensive work with other alcoholics helps maintain that *spiritual progress*. (see pg 89).

“Selfishness--self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity, we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate. Sometimes they hurt us, seemingly without provocation, but we invariably find that at some time in the past we have made decisions based on self which later placed us in a position to be hurt.” (pg 62)

Many alcoholics discover that, at some time in the past, they had chosen a limited, and erroneous concept of *a Creative Intelligence, a Spirit of the Universe underlying the totality of things*. (see pg 46). The delusion their old concept of “God” was complete, combined with the fear of being mistaken turned out to be a mental flaw in their make-up.

“Being convinced that self, manifested in various ways, was what had defeated us, we considered its common manifestations.” (pg 64)

In reviewing *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which were once the *guiding forces*, (see pg 27), it became apparent to most that:

“Resentment is the “number one” offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else. From it stem all forms of spiritual disease, for we have been not only mentally and physically ill, we have been spiritually sick. When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically.” (pg 64).

* * * * *

STEP FOUR - Cont’d:

A fearless moral inventory will include *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which are *guiding forces* for the alcoholic who desires recovery. Such an inventory is essential for the alcoholic who is *absolutely unable to stop drinking on the basis of self-knowledge*. (pg 39). Tragically, many alcoholics have relied solely upon traditional religious approaches to a *Power, greater than themselves* for their recovery. While their *religious convictions were very good,.....they did not spell the necessary vital spiritual experience*. (see pg 27).

This is a natural consequence of inadequate understanding of infinite power. Religious *belief systems* were developed by other, and equal human beings, who had their own mental limitations. (see pg 46). Though limited examples of recoveries have occurred with various traditional religious approaches, a far greater number are produced by AA. Some universal concept of power, greater than any religious version, is able to provide additional *spiritual progress*. However, this requires *willingness, honesty and open-mindedness to seek and accept* an enlarged spiritual life and more spiritual growth. (see pgs 14-15, 35, 60(c) & Appendix II).

Improved awareness of *the Great Reality* (syn: “God”) calls for an enlarged concept of the Power. (see pg 60 & Step 11). An infinite concept of God (see pgs 12 & 68) will be greater than a traditional religion developed within finite limits of human intelligence. The broader concept will include all and everything which is part of that *Great Reality* which is God. (see pgs 53, 55 & 68). Unlike religious *belief systems*, nothing that is “God” will be excluded or rejected.

Regardless of any religious convictions (pg 27), there arises the matter of trust. What is the basis of trust? (see pg 68). To recover, the alcoholic needs to trust “*the Power of God*”. Traditional religions have unquestioned value in other areas. However, they simply do not produce comparable results for recovery from alcoholism in this lifetime. Not when compared to those found within the AA program of recovery.

By the definition of their *belief system*, religious approaches usually place limits upon the *beliefs* of the individual. The AA approach to God does not. (see pgs 17, 46, 49, 52 & Appendix II).

Recognition of this fundamental difference has prompted many religious alcoholics to enlarge their spiritual life. (pgs 14, 15 & 35). By seeking *new knowledge* beyond their religious definitions of reality, many acquire an enlarged concept of the power required for recovery. They develop a concept of “God” which enables them to include all of *the Great Reality*. (see pgs 12, 53 & 55). They place trust on a basis which is broader than their proclaimed faith.

“We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves.”
(pg 68).

With admission of powerlessness over alcohol, (Step 1), there is recognition some greater Power is required for recovery. (Step 2). That Power is greater than any human power.(Step 3). By definition, it is infinite and beyond human capacity *to fully define or comprehend*. (see pg 46). However, as it is understood, relief from alcoholism occurs, if it is sought. (pg 60(c) & Step 11).

Those experiencing recovery claimed continued *spiritual progress* by constantly enlarging their spiritual lives. (see pgs 14, 15, & 35). Their relief came as they understood and improved conscious contact with *that Great Reality*. (Steps 3 & 11). This author suggests that the operative word “as”, when used in Steps 3 and 11, denotes a process. It involves a process of enlarging finite human understanding of that which is infinite.

Improving conscious understanding of infinite power, requires recognition of personal limitations. This includes the *ideas, emotions and attitudes* by which the alcoholic guides their life. (see pg 27). One obvious step is to make a searching and fearless moral inventory of that value system. (Step 4).

When making such an inventory, the most intelligent approach will include correcting the most troublesome areas. Those who were successful suggest that **resentment is the “number one” offender**. Then they set them on paper.

The reader, willing to thoroughly followed that path, will notice three columns, (pg 65), and place for a fourth column to list “*our own faults*”. (see pg 67). Without a willingness to examine that specific element, there is little possibility for **self-improvement**. In the process, many have discovered that:

FIXING OTHERS DOES NOT FIX ME!

The people, places and things listed may not even be aware of any inner turmoil experienced by an alcoholic seeking recovery. Often they are both indifferent and unaffected. With inability to change others comes *new knowledge* of personal limitations. Some obvious questions which follow are:

- ? ”*Just what **can** I do?*”
- ? “*Can I change anything?*” - or
- ? “*Am I just a victim?*”

The good or bad news is that no one has the power to really change another person without their permission. We may coerce and intimidate others into compliance. Anyone may attempt to “*arrange the lights, the ballet, the scenery and the rest of the players*”, (pg 60), but the results are only temporary. As soon as the opportunity presents itself, each individual will do whatever they want the most. Their choice of action will reflect their dominant desire. (syn: “the answer to their prayer”)

As equal human beings, everyone has desires and demands upon life. (syn: “God”). “*Our lives had become unmanageable*” insofar as forcing other people to want, what we want them to want. Essentially, this confirms Step One. That is the bad news.

The good news is that we are not victims. We can change our own lives, and how we relate to others. However, that requires the courage to change old ideas. Specifically included are any erroneous concepts of how we relate to *the Great Reality*. (i.e.: “God” pg 55).

Alcoholics are unable to change the principles which govern life, on life’s terms. Fixing others does not produce any change to those principles. There are finite limits to human understanding of those principles and there is always more to be understood. (see pgs 46, 53, & Step 11). Accordingly, any traditional religious or scientific understanding of *the Great Reality* (syn: “God” see pg 55) has limits. An infinite source of all knowledge (syn: “God” by definition) has the advantage of greater power. The advantage is found in the power of *new knowledge* which is still beyond the present limits of human understanding.

In that context, individual alcoholics, are indeed powerless. **They have less power than is required for continued sobriety.** New conditions appear constantly. To maintain sobriety an alcoholic must constantly seek *new knowledge* to improve and enlarge their *spiritual life*. (see pgs 14-15, 35, 85, 89, 93, 95, & 129).

New knowledge of how to improve must come from some **power greater than ourselves**, and it has already been provided as part of life, on life’s terms. (syn: “God’s Universe”). This author submits anyone would already have what they wanted the most. (syn: “the answer to their prayers”) if they could decide what they were looking for and understand how to claim it. Conscious awareness of *new knowledge* is required for that improvement and understanding. (Step 11).

**“God, grant me the serenity to accept
the things I cannot change, the courage
to change the things I can, and the wisdom
to know the difference.”**

Enlarging understanding and accepting continual improvement is the place many alcoholics find conflict with traditional religious versions of the word “God”. The traditional religious approach is usually defined, specific and final. Often it is a “*second hand belief system*” acquired from someone who lacked “*all the answers*”. An alternative concept is to be completely *open minded* to room for improvements. That mental attitude allows an alcoholic to accommodate, *new knowledge* of reality. (see pgs 46, 164 & Appendix II).

Any alcoholic is free to *believe* their own concept about the power. (pg 12). The alcoholic, seeking recovery will note that most traditional religions have not produced

significant results. Not when compared with alternative ideas of AA which are without limitations or exclusions.

Some alcoholics become *happy, joyous and free* (syn: "God's Will - see pg 133) when they discover something in AA that works better than any results traditional religion can duplicate. They have tapped a source of power which produces peace of mind as equals. (see pg 63). As they seek that *new knowledge* of success, those alcoholics who are already experiencing it usually suggest:

"THE ANSWERS ARE IN THE BOOK"

("Alcoholics Anonymous")

So what really is the problem?

"Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a *Power greater than ourselves*. Obviously. But where and how were we to find this Power?

Well that's exactly what this book is about. Its main object is to enable you to find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem. (pg 45)

"Hence we are at pains to tell why we think our present faith is reasonable, why we think it more sane and logical to believe than not to believe, why we say our former thinking was soft and mushy when we threw up our hands in doubt and said, "We don't know." (pg 53)

"Actually we were fooling ourselves, for deep down in every man, woman and child, is the fundamental idea of God. It may be obscured by calamity, by pomp, by worship of other things, but in some form or other it is there. For faith in a Power greater than ourselves, and miraculous demonstrations of that power in human lives, are facts as old as man himself.

We finally saw that faith in some kind of God was a part of our make-up, just as much as the feeling we have for a friend. Sometimes we had to search fearlessly, but He was there. He was as much a fact as we were. We found the Great Reality deep down within us. In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found. It was so with us" (pg 55)

From this perspective, and utilizing the Big Book "*Alcoholics Anonymous*" as a basic text for recovery, the reader may conclude that:

**THERE IS A POWER FOR GOOD,
AND YOU CAN USE IT IN YOUR LIFE**

The really good news is:

“You can use that power any way you want to use it.”

The bad news is:

“The results you get are on life’s terms, not yours.”

That is a pretty heady observation about personal freedom and personal responsibilities. Built in are some simple truths about your relationship to life, on life’s terms. (syn: “God”).

1. **You are not the power.**
2. **You do give the power direction.**
3. **So does everyone else, on an equal basis.**
4. **The choices you make determine the direction the power takes in your life.**
5. **Your choices are limited by your knowledge.**
6. **You possess the power to change the universe.**
7. **You change the universe but only by the count of one.**

The alcoholic reader has the capacity to change the entire universe (syn: “God’s Universe”) by eliminating **one drinking alcoholic** and replacing it with **one sober alcoholic**. Others have done this, and so can the alcoholic reader, if they are willing to thoroughly follow their path to recovery. (pg 58).

Many religious alcoholics disagree by claiming they are mere automatons in life. They *believe* they are puppets manipulated by outside intelligence dictating their every action without any personal responsibility or choice in what they do.

This author suggests anyone with that *belief system* still has the choice to set this Study Guide aside now. That way they can close their mind to prevent intelligent consideration of any opposing ideas. (review Appendix II). However, for the alcoholic who is willing to go to any length to recover:

“Willingness, honesty and open mindedness are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable.”
(Appendix II).

The *belief* an alcoholic can wrest satisfaction and happiness out of this world if only they manage well is an illusion. (pg 61). Alcoholics fail because they do not understand enough about the principles of how the power works. (Appendix I - Tradition

12). Although the alcoholic is not the power, they do give the power direction. Their choice of direction is confined to what they know. That *self-knowledge* is imperfect, and mistakes get made. (pg 39).

THOSE WHO REALLY KNOW BETTER DO BETTER

This author suggests that each of us intuitively recognizes a right to be happy, joyous and free. (syn: "God's Will for us" - pg 133). What we may not have recognized is that we had been going in the wrong direction to acquire that improvement. (see Step 11).

Old ideas, emotions and attitudes which gave direction to the power in our lives needed to be displaced and rearranged. (pg 27). Because our **old ideas** were limited and finite they were inadequate and did not work as well as we desired.

"Perhaps there is a better way--we think so. For we are now on a different basis; the basis of trusting and relying upon God. We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves." (pg 68)

By placing reliance upon the power of new knowledge, we immediately tap a source of power greater than ourselves. It is power that comes from the source of all knowledge. (syn: "God"). By discarding the limitations of old ideas, we are free to seek and accept as much *new knowledge* as we choose.

No one is in possession of all knowledge (syn: "God"- see pg 46). No one can transmit something they do not have. (pg 164). This author suggests personal improvement requires seeking *spiritual progress* rather than blindly accepting any *second hand concept of spiritual perfection* established by equals.

Those successful, in recovery from alcoholism, claim *spiritual progress*. (pg 60). They have not found the answer, only a better answer which continually provides improved conscious contact with God. (syn: "the Great Reality - see pg 55 & Step 11).

Some resentments are the result of efforts to change the universe to conform with a traditional religious *belief system*. They are usually the result of someone claiming to have "the answer" (review pgs 60-62) instead of "a limited part of a answer".

A personal moral inventory addresses "*where were we to blame?*". The moralistic admonitions made by self-appointed spokesmen for good and evil are not a requirement for recovery. Experience indicates this is not so. If they were valid interpretations of "the will of God", no alcoholic could recover without following that guidance. However, the direction of change to which power is applied is a critical factor, and *new knowledge* is required about the exact nature of our wrongs. (see Step 5). Those who *believe* they are victims will also *believe* they are the exceptions entitled to *special considerations and benefits*.

Beliefs about rewards and punishments are found in many traditional religious ideas about God and may have value elsewhere. What is required, for recovery from alcoholism, is a practical recognition that *if something is wrong it is wrong because it does not work*.

For most alcoholics, their need to get well during this lifetime, takes precedence over their desire to be good for some later experience. The program outlined in the Big

Book “*Alcoholics Anonymous*” works better to fulfill that desire (syn: “*answer that prayer*”) and does so without denying the value found in other approaches. It is suggested the alcoholic reader look for and decide what they most want for themselves.

Religious *belief systems* have not worked well with alcoholism historically, because they produce a limited relationship to life. Necessary changes were seldom accomplished within the **closed loop** of those old ideas. The alcoholic needed additional help because the *belief structure* which dominated and guiding their thinking was usually inadequate for the task of recovery. Something **more** was required. With improved awareness, a search for *new knowledge* can become a new dominate desire. (syn: “prayer” - see Step 11).

What is needed is more new knowledge of the Great Reality (syn: “God” - see pg 55) which is adequate to deal with life on life’s terms. Personal efforts to continue life, within the **closed loop of an old belief system** become *self-will run riot*. Individuals pit their personal demands to have what they *believe* to be right (syn: “self will”) against the Ultimate Reality of life on life’s terms (syn: “God’s Will”). Small wonder their best efforts are not successful.

OUR BEST THINKING FORCED RECOGNITION OF A NEED FOR BETTER THINKING

The problem is usually that results do not match the personal terms desired. Without question, the fantasy world of drinking produces relief from boredom, it quiets fears, and provides a pause from the demands of reality. Alcohol definitely provides those benefits. However, most discover “*the real pay-off*” for drinking comes on life’s terms. To let go completely of an old idea and seek something new and different requires *new knowledge*. Many prefer to see results before making their choice.

Use of alcohol temporarily erases concerns about reality. It works well. It works like the man who took tranquilizers for diarrhea. When asked if they solved his problem, he said “*Yes! - my underwear is still a mess, but now I don’t care!*”. A person making such a choice is not likely to gain sympathy nor compassion from others when they complain about the mess in their life. Especially if they have been shown a way to “*clean-up their act*”. Anyone declining to make the obvious changes and improvements might well be considered insane. (see pg. 38)

Where efforts to control and enjoy drinking have failed, (pg 30), the failure exposes a limited awareness of reality. There is a need for more truth, more good and more reality (all syn: “God”). The need is for more *new knowledge* about reality.(syn: “*improved conscious contact with God*” - see Step 11). For many that included a simple revelation that:

A DISTORTED MIND DOES NOT PRODUCE SANE BEHAVIOR

The effects of drinking eventually wear off, leaving the old frustrations still there. Meanwhile, the decision to drink has created new frustrations. They do not belong to anyone else. Conscious recognition and awareness of the way alcohol works, for

alcoholics, produces awareness of life on life's terms. Eventually most alcoholics face a bitter but inescapable truth. (syn: "God")

".....it is clear that we made our own misery. God didn't do it." (pg 133)

The alcoholic must get off that "*merry-go-round*" of self-will, frustration, anger and resentments. Those who do not will usually destroy themselves completely. (see pg 26).

"If we were to live, we had to be free of anger." (pg 66)

With, or without alcohol, everyone experiences fear, anger and guilt. These emotions arise from **not knowing** how to deal with reality. When it is recognized others, with similar problems, had found a solution, there is less isolation and more harmony with reality (syn: "God").

The real problem is **ignorance**. Ignorance of the truth, good, and reality. (syn: "ignorance of God" - review Step 3). When an individual has acquired their own new knowledge, they have tapped the source of all knowledge (syn: "infinite God") which allows them to intelligently choose a personal concept of God. (see pgs 12 & 55).

"There is a solution. Almost none of us liked the self-searching, the leveling of our pride, the confession of shortcomings which the process requires for its successful consummation." (pg 25)

Resentments about reality (syn: "life on life's terms" &/or "God") may be the dubious luxury of others but are deadly poison to the alcoholic. (see pg 66). Those, only temporarily inconvenienced by drinking may also welcome *new knowledge* as a means of experiencing new freedom and new happiness. (see pg 83).

Either the reader is seeking temporary relief, **on their own terms**, or a solution that will produce demonstrated success **on life's terms**. Distorting mental activity does not create a successful life that is happy, joyous and free. (see pg 133).

By contrast, accepting life on life's terms produces harmony with reality. (syn: "God's Will"). With the desire to be helpful to others (see pgs 18, 67, 77 & 89), a personal life gets turned toward a new direction that produces *spiritual progress*. (see pgs 14-15, 35, 58 & 60)

When established moral values do not work, the alcoholic is "de-moralized" by futile attempts to have life, on their own terms, (see pg 61). **Then they learn, the meaning of *pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization*.** (see pg 30).

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SECTION B05h

Chapter 5

HOW IT WORKS

STEP FOUR:

“Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.” (pg 59)

READ:

Chapter 5 - HOW IT WORKS, starting at pg 67 with “*Notice that the word “fear” is bracketed.....*” to page 68 ending with “*At once, we commenced to outgrow fear.*”

* * * * *

COMMENTS:

Early members of AA indicated that continual enlargement of a spiritual life is an essential ingredient for continued sobriety. (see pgs 14, 15, & 35). It is valuable to know where you are at before embarking on a journey into new mental territory. Making a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves provides a means to establish a starting point for spiritual growth.

Life continually presents new conditions to be dealt with which are not yet understood. This has equal application for all alcoholics who experience fear of new conditions. (pg 85). Improved understanding of *the Great Reality* (syn: “God” - pg 55) is required in order to deal with any of those new or unknown conditions as they appear. For example:

I’VE NEVER BEEN THIS OLD BEFORE AND THAT IS NEW.

A searching and fearless moral inventory becomes the starting point for a new direction. It begins a new direction of turning our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him. There is always something new to be encountered in dealing with the *Ultimate Reality* of life, on life’s terms. (syn: “God” see pgs 14-15, 35, 53, 129 & 164).

The word “AS” has significance as an operative point for focus in Steps 3 & 11. Seeking improved awareness of life, on life’s terms (i.e.: “God’s will”) is a never ending process which requires continual spiritual growth. (see Steps 10 & 11). That which requires greater understanding is life. (syn: “God”). By definition that is infinite. (see pgs 53 & 68).

When seeking *spiritual progress*, the reader may recognize the intelligence in seeking personal improvements in this lifetime as having priority over attempting to correct the shortcomings of others.

“Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us. Ask Him in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the man who is still sick. The answers will come, if your own house is in order. But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven’t got. See to it that your relationship with Him is right, and great events will come to pass for you and countless others. This is the Great Fact for us.”

(pg 164)

Those who *believe* it possible to “*wrest satisfaction and happiness out of this world if only he manages well*” are victims of a delusion. They *believe* that personal happiness, joy and freedom (syn: “God’s Will for us” see pgs 61 & 133) can be obtained by fixing others. That erroneous *belief system* reflects a *fundamental idea* about the nature of the power which produces success. (i.e.: “God” - pg 55). Any ability to share experiences of success will include those mistaken *beliefs* about the power which produced it.

“Therefore, the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than in his body.” (pg 23)

Any individual shortfall from *spiritual perfection* reflects the workings of the mind of a single *personality*. Emphasis here is upon seeking flaws in our own personalities, rather than inventorying the faults of others. This does not modify the *principle* involved in the recovery process. (review Tradition 12). Any ability to share experience of success will include the *beliefs* about the power which enabled it to happen. Personal improvement is not obtained by changing the moral values of others. However, spiritual growth in others can occur, if they have decided they want what you have to offer, and seek the knowledge you have acquired. (refer to pgs 58, 67, 77, 84 86, 89, 95, 97 98, 102, 120, 129, 130, 132, 159, 163 164).

“To be helpful is our only aim” (pg 89)

At this point, the author wishes to point out that there is a very significant point about the process of “*sharing experience, strength and hope*” with a still suffering alcoholic. The reader will note the difference between:

1. “**BEING HELPFUL**”

and

2. “**DOING GOOD ALL OVER SOMEONE**”.

Especially, if they are expected to thank you when you are through with them.

* * * * *

STEP FOUR - Cont'd:

For the alcoholic, resentments have been identified as the “number one” offender, because they destroy more alcoholics than anything else. To make a 180 degree turn in mental direction is one of the basic problems in recovery. At the risk of oversimplification, it requires a decision about the priority of values in the recovery process. This author suggests the alcoholic reader consider if they are:

?? Trying to force-fit the AA program fit into an established *second hand* set of religious ideas, emotions and attitudes which are guiding forces. (pg 58)

OR

?? Seeking a huge emotional displacement and rearrangement of guiding forces by allowing a completely new set of conceptions and motives to begin dominating their life. (pg 27)

An individual alcoholic is either willing to completely let go of old ideas or else they are not. This is the turning point. (see pgs 58-59).

This author suggests that *spiritual growth* arises from a willingness to continually replace personal ignorance of reality (syn: “God”) with improved understanding and cooperation with life, on life’s terms. (Step 11). The capacity to make such a realistic choice is within every man, woman and child, and it is **only** there that it may be found. (see pg 55).

Every alcoholic, this author included, has resentments where some personal improvement and *spiritual progress* is possible. In AA, the only valid measure of success is found in how well a particular approach produces results that work in this lifetime. For the individual, their own version of success is based upon what they most desire for themselves. (syn: “their prayer”). That desire may place priority importance upon what might happen in some other lifetime.

It is a universal principle that any experience of successful living will occur during this lifetime. This principle applies equally to any alcoholic, at any place, and at any time.

Conscious awareness of life, on life’s terms is restricted to what can be understood during this lifetime. Eventually, everyone will become an expert authority on anything which may follow. Meanwhile, this author suggests living “*One Life at a Time*”, until they really know the truth. Until then, they are free to *believe* anything they choose about what comes next. (see pgs 46 & 55).

Self-honesty is useful if you desire to make an intelligent choice about what to believe. (see pg 58 & Appendix II). Having acknowledged resentments as one of “*the flaws in our make-up which caused our failure*”, it is worthwhile to examine any ideas, emotions and attitudes which allow resentments to be a destructive guiding force in life.

(pg 27). It should be obvious they are a force or power which creates conflict rather than cooperation with reality (syn: "God").

Conscious awareness of "*the Great Reality*" (syn: "God" - see pg 55) is a power found deep within ourselves. Those *principles of reality* which govern life, on life's terms do not change.

The *Ultimate Reality of Life* (syn; "God") does not change no matter how strongly anyone may desire it to be different than it is. However, each individual has an inescapable personal responsibility for the direction they seek to improve their conscious awareness of reality. (see pgs 62, 66, 133 & Step 11). Most sane individuals would fully cooperate with reality, if they had sufficient understanding to do so. Lack of power of that *new knowledge* is their dilemma. (see pg 45).

This author *believes* there is nothing wrong with reality. (syn: "God"). Life just is what it is and works the way it works. That reality is always what it is, regardless of how much personal understanding exists about *spiritual principles*. All power works according to certain principles without regard for personal preferences of any individual using the power. ("Principles before personalities" - see Tradition 12).

Differences show up according to the direction in which individuals apply power in their personal life. The differences are the result of personal choices made in the application of power. (review Step 11). Specifically, in how they have applied available power in their relationships with people, places and things. Those differences reflect personal understanding at a conscious level. (Step 11)

THERE IS ALWAYS ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT.

The way any power works is understood or it is not. That understanding either is or is not in harmony with reality. The *Ultimate Reality* is life, on life's terms. (syn: "God's Will").

It should be apparent what is not in harmony with reality is a fair definition for "*self-will run riot*" and creates a conflict. It is suggested that any conflict with *the principles of life* is a manifestation of the *personality* of the alcoholic.

It makes intelligent sense for an alcoholic to review the mental tools they use. The way they are being used is important when making changes from failure to a condition of happiness, joy and freedom. (syn: "God's Will for us" - pg 133). The reader is asked to consider:

? **Who decides if you are happy, joyous and free.?**

? **Does some other equal human being, decide for you?**

All human beings have distinct physiological differences which identify them as a unique individual. They also have differences in their conscious understanding of "*the Great Reality*" which identify them as unique personalities.

If conscious recognition and awareness of those differences had been sufficient to produce recovery from alcoholism, (see pg 60(a)), the alcoholic would have used the power of that knowledge to produce recovery when recovery was desired. (syn: "the answer to a prayer").

“No person likes to think he is bodily and mentally different from his fellows. Therefore, it is not surprising that our drinking careers have been characterized by countless vain attempts to prove we could drink like other people.” (pg 30).

Many alcoholics recognize some differences which set them apart from others, as unique individuals. Because each person is one of a kind, each is unique, and unlike any other person in the universe. Separate identity is one thing we all have in common.

UNIQUE INDIVIDUALITY IS A PRINCIPLE SHARED IN COMMON WITH ALL OTHERS

As individuals, each of us knows something. We all possess some knowledge of reality (syn: “God”) which is uniquely our own. Something not known to any other person. It may only be something discovered while being alone. That separate knowledge identifies the unique *personality* of each individual.

Conscious awareness of unique individuality does not deny it’s existence as a principle shared with all other human beings.

Obviously, other alcoholics have demonstrated success in their recovery from alcoholism. However, they too are equal human beings with equal limits to their personal awareness of an infinite reality. (syn: “God” see pg 60(b)). Each alcoholic has a “god-given capacity” to learn more of what other alcoholics already understand. (pgs 12, 14-15, 23, 27, 35, 55, 86, 95, 129, 164 & Appendix II).

As individuals, we all have a finite and a restricted capacity to understand everything. (syn: “God” - see pg 53). That is an inescapable *principle*. Each alcoholic shares that *principle* in common with every other alcoholic. Each individual has restrictions determined by what they choose to learn during their limited lifetime. From that perspective, this author suggests what separates each of us from “God” and our fellow man is based upon:

WHAT WE KNOW AND WHAT WE DON’T KNOW

When a chosen concept of the word “God” means “the source of all *new knowledge*”, (see pg 12), it follows on any specific point of personal awareness we are either in conflict or in harmony with that Ultimate Reality. It also follows that, without all the knowledge of how to cooperate with an infinite reality, there shall always be some conflict. (pgs 53 & 68).

Every individual experiences conflicts in life, to some degree. The only exception would be the individual who possessed all knowledge. That person would always be in complete harmony with “God”. A few individuals try to make such claims for themselves.

Unfortunately they lack sufficient facts to be able to intelligently or convincingly support their claims.

Personal ignorance blocks individual alcoholics from experiencing complete unity, harmony and cooperation with that infinite power called “God”. Their inability to understand everything (syn: “infinite God” see pg 68) places finite limits in how much they can learn in a single lifetime. Where reality is concerned, this precludes complete understanding of how to cooperate with it.

“No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.” (pg 60)

If the reader accepts their equality, (in the eyes of “God”), then as an equal they are free to cooperate with their own definition of “God”. No one has complete understanding of an Infinite Creative Intelligence. (see pg 46). Because there is always more to be understood, it is presumptuous to assume any one version is superior to any other unless it can demonstrate superior results in this lifetime.

Ultimately, any *second hand* claim to superiority will be determined by how well it agrees with *the Great Reality*. (syn: “God”- see Step 11). Obviously lack of understanding of anything beyond this lifetime is a common factor, shared equally by all but the all knowing. Inherent intelligence makes those claiming *special knowledge* to be suspect of error.

IF KNOWLEDGE IS INFINITE, THEN IGNORANCE IS ALSO INFINITE

There will be no conflict when limited knowledge of reality is in harmony with reality. The alcoholic who restricts their life to what they understand will not be obliged to deal with any conflicts produced by newness or change. Sadly for some, this is not realistically possible when dealing with life, on life’s terms.

It should be self-evident to anyone that changes are constantly occurring. Life continues to function on life’s terms and constant changes are inescapable. Recognizably, any fear of change will disrupt the comfort of the familiar. The Ultimate Reality (syn: “God”) always prevails and life has no obligation to comply with preferences of the individual. Any effort to resist change is “*self-will run riot*”, and the problems created are of our own making. (see pgs 62, & 133).

Undesired results occur as the result of a lack of understanding. Due to that personal ignorance, alcoholics become the creative source of their own confusion. (see pg 61).

Some alcoholics will consider themselves to be an exception. As *victims*, they may wish to evaluate how much intelligence or emotion is involved in their *belief system* that something is running their life without their own participation in the decision-making process. Only *self-honesty* and the results will determine the accuracy of that conclusion.

This author *believes* that:

**As intelligent agents, spearheads of a Creative Power (syn:
“God”) we give *the power* direction.** (see pg 49).

* * * * *

SECTION B05i:

Chapter 5

HOW IT WORKS

STEP FOUR:

“Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.” (pg 59)

RE-READ:

Chapter 5 - HOW IT WORKS, starting at pg 67 with “Notice that the word “fear” is bracketed.....” to page 68 ending with “At once, we commenced to outgrow fear.”

* * * * *

COMMENTS:

This author suggests the word “**AS**”, found in Steps 3 & 11 holds the key to reconciling the limited exclusive approach of many traditional religions with the all-inclusive approach of the AA program. The word “**as**” implies a process of understanding the infinite. During this endless process, some of traditional religion will be in agreement with reality, but not all of it is.

Many spokesmen for traditional religious *belief systems* are competent and you can learn much from them. (pg 89). However, the alcoholic reader is cautioned that, from within the limits of their view, some religious authorities may wish to interpret all of reality for you, if you let them. There is always more *new knowledge* to be understood. (pg 164 & Step 11).

An ancient *belief* was that the heavens revolved around the earth. Some aspects of that old idea continue to have practical value. It remains a practical method for celestial navigation at sea. However, travel to the moon today would be impossible without *new knowledge* and an enlarged understanding of reality. (syn: “God”). Similarly, in order to recover from alcoholism, many alcoholics are obliged to improve and enlarge their conception of God. (see pg 12).

Spiritual progress on a continuing basis is essential for continued recovery from alcoholism. (see pgs 14, 15, 35 & 129). All progress has a starting point. This author suggests a personal inventory of ideas, emotions and attitudes guiding the alcoholic’s life is that starting point. This is what requires rearrangement and displacement. (see pg 27 & Step 4).

What is being sought is an improved conscious recognition and awareness of a personal relationship to *the Great Reality* which is life, on life’s terms. This occurs within the individual. (see pg 55 & Step 11). It is a process without end. (see pgs 68 & 129).

Because reliance upon *a Power greater than ourselves* is part of the recovery process, the *fundamental idea of God* which guides the individual becomes an inseparable part of any moral inventory. Individual *beliefs* sometimes conflict with reality, and *false*

beliefs require rearrangement and displacement as an indispensable part of that recovery process. (pg 27).

When willingness, honesty and open mindedness are applied to examining a *fundamental idea of God*, no one need have difficulty with the spirituality of the program. (see pgs 46, 55, Step 10 & Appendix II). Many find it necessary to throw several lifelong conceptions out the window. (pg 42). A completely new set of conceptions and motives can then begin to dominate the mind of the alcoholic seeking recovery. (pg 23). While religious convictions may be very good, they do not spell the necessary vital spiritual experience required for recovery. (see pg 27).

Despite their chosen *beliefs*, at certain times the alcoholic has no effective mental defense against the first drink. Defense must come from a Higher Power which is only found within the individual seeking recovery. (see pgs 43 & 55). The source of all knowledge and all power is something to which every individual has personal access. (pg 68). Because it is infinite, there is always more available for anyone.

Most sane individuals would choose to cooperate with the Ultimate Reality of Life (syn: "God") if they knew how. It would obviously be to their best interests to do so. The problem of the alcoholic appears to be a mistaken understanding of what is real. (syn: "God"). So, what **is** the block, barrier or obstacle to experiencing happiness, joy and freedom? (syn: "God's will" pg 133). Is it not a *belief* that there is something desirable to be obtained by distorting their mind?

Individuals make mistakes when they *believe* something which is not in line with reality. Followers of different *belief systems* argue, fight, and even kill each other disputing what is the **truth, good and reality** (all syn: "God"). Many will place unwarranted emotional importance upon *personal rightness* when their *belief system* conflicts with others.

In some cases there is an emotional demand for agreement without any regard for the facts or the use of intelligence. This mental attitude will reject the equality of others to have their own conception of God. To this author, such a closed minded *belief system* qualifies as "*self-will run riot*". It includes insistence that others abandon their individuality and be "*just like me*".

Those who hold onto that contempt, prior to investigation, (see Appendix II), voluntarily set themselves apart from others as models of individual rightness. Small wonder that alcoholism is characterized as "*a lonely disease!!*". The mental cause stems from *believing* that "*what we believe is true, and if others do not agree with us, then they ought to*". (see pg 23).

By insisting that a personal view of reality (syn: "God") is the only valid one, the alcoholic produces confusion rather than harmony. (review pg 61). This author has a personal *belief system*. Any alcoholic who disagrees with it is encouraged to use their own intelligence to "*trade up*" to any other *belief system* capable of producing superior results. You will note that adherents of *second hand religious belief systems* will rarely make that suggestion.

"Selfishness--self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, and self-pity, we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate."
(pg 62)

It is the structure of a personal *belief system* which identifies each of us as different and unique personalities. What separates us is **what we know and what we don't know**. On the premise that the only thing to know anything about is the Ultimate Reality of Life, (syn: "God" - see pg 53), then everyone knows something. None knows everything.

Being right about something may conflict with what others believe is correct right information.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE HOW MUCH YOU KNOW, IF WHAT YOU KNOW IS NOT SO?

This brings the subject of **fear** to the foreground. Personal conflict with *the Great Reality* (syn "God" - see pg 55) includes some degree of **fear of the unknown**. This author submits that:

FEAR IS BASED ON IGNORANCE.

Fear reflects a lack of understanding of how to cooperate with *the Great Reality*. (see pg 55 & Step 11). The alcoholic is incompetent to successfully deal with some aspect of life on life's terms. (syn: "God"). Fortunately, with *new knowledge*, improved cooperation is possible.

Each individual has fears which are uniquely their own. *New knowledge* may be sought which will reduce, dissolve and eliminate those fears. It can occur in a mind which is open and ready to consider *new knowledge* which may not agree with well established old ideas and *beliefs*.

When there are differences, *new knowledge* may threaten the validity of a *second hand belief system*. Of importance are old ideas about the source of all knowledge. (syn: "God"). Consider if "*the idea of God*" represents "*the source of all knowledge*" to your mind. You will only find this mental action deep within yourself as part of that inherent intelligence which is your capacity to recognize reality. Deny that and you deny your own humanity. When fear is sufficiently strong, it can displace the "god-given" intelligence inherent within every alcoholic. (see pgs 12, 23, 27, 55, 67 86 & Appendix II).

Now consider how well an improved understanding of *the Great Reality* can eliminate "*fear of the unknown*" (review Step 11). Is your trust in a capacity to learn more *new knowledge* about an infinite concept of God? Or, do you place reliance upon a finite *second hand* concept which someone else has established for you to accept on blind faith? (see pg 68). Does your own ignorance of reality establish boundaries for your mental exploration of an *infinite unknown*? (see pgs 12, 27 & 68).

At this point it is worth re-stating, that the alcoholic reader is being provided a perspective by the author which emphasizes personal freedom to accept or reject any portion of reality. This freedom includes the natural consequences of that choice. It is assumed that any acceptance or rejection will be what the alcoholic reader *believes* to be in their own best interests.

The author relates a personal experience with fear for consideration:

When I was a child there was a swimming pool and I did not know how to swim. It was obvious I would be in water over my head, and did not know how to take care of myself in that condition. Fear, based on self-preservation, kept me away from the deep end of the pool.

Others were enjoying swimming. I had a desire to be part of something that was new for me. With help from others, I learned to hold my breath under water, to “dog paddle” and keep afloat. When I knew that I knew how to swim, you could not keep me out of the water, nor the deep end of the pool. This opened up a new kind of freedom and happiness because I was no longer afraid of the water. (see pg 83). **WHAT HAPPENED TO THE FEAR?**

It is suggested that the fear was dissolved and removed by acquiring *new knowledge* . With “God” as the source of all new knowledge, there is intelligence in the observation that “*God removes fear*”. Not by some “*fairy-god-mother*” who rewards some while whimsically punishing others. Rather, it occurs more simply and equally for all. Fears get reduced, dissolved and eliminated by acquiring valid new knowledge of reality. (syn: “God” - see pg 60, “c”).

An infinite reality is what it is and it works the way it works. That knowledge has always been available to be discovered by anyone seeking to improve their conscious awareness of it. (see Step 11). *Spiritual progress* can be blocked by old ideas and *false beliefs* which get in the way. (pg 58). Endless improvement is always available. (pgs 53, 68, 83 & Step 11). As individuals, we get relief from our fears by seeking improved understanding of *the Great Reality*. This becomes an enlarged awareness of God. (review pgs 55, 60 “(c)”, & Appendix II).

When reading the basic text of AA, or any comments on the subject of fear, this author suggests the alcoholic reader give this view of fear some thought and consideration in the light of their own inherent intelligence.

“We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us.” (pg 164)

Note that *fear* somehow touches every aspect of our lives. (see pg 67). Any emotional attitude which impacts being happy, joyous and free (syn: “God’s Will for us” pg 133) is worthy of examination. Serious attention to those fears which are uniquely your own merit special attention.

“It was an evil and corroding thread; the fabric of our existence was shot through with it. It set in motion trains of circumstances which brought us misfortune we felt we didn’t deserve. But did not we, ourselves, set the ball rolling?”
(pg 67)

This author suggests an internal conflict exists when an alcoholic experiences fear. It is a conflict between what the alcoholic *believes* reality to be, and some *inherent intelligence* within the individual which intuitively knows there is more to be understood.

“We found the Great Reality deep down within us.
In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found.”
(pg 55)

This internal conflict is usually the result of what the alcoholic has been taught about the Great Reality. It is the result of mentally accepting as valid knowledge something which was *believed* by others who only had a limited awareness. Improvement is possible by placing trust in an endless supply of *new knowledge* which is available to anyone on an equal basis. (see pgs 53, 55, & 68).

This Study Guide has been prepared for those alcoholics who have been experiencing difficulty with the limitations they find in traditional religion. Any improved understanding of how to deal with fear can enlarge their spiritual life with *new knowledge* about a personal relationship to “*a power greater than ourselves*”. (see pgs 14-15, 35 & Step 11). Any such enlarged understanding of reality would qualify as being *spiritual progress*. (see pg 60).

One potential for an enlarged understanding is recognition that:

**FEAR AND FAITH ARE BOTH *BELIEFS*
IN A POWER - GREATER THAN OURSELVES.**

Whenever their personal *belief system* gets challenged, some sober alcoholics become emotionally defensive and try to hold on to their old ideas. (pg 58). Often any inherent intelligence they have will fly out the window. In this respect, they are still very much like the drinking alcoholic. Their attitude about their relationship to life, as equals (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”) is threatened by an erroneous *belief* in their own moral superiority. Those who remain sober eventually discover that:

“.....we invariably find that at some time in the
past we have made decisions based on self which later
placed us in a position to be hurt.” (pg 62)

Their concept of “God”, as “*the source of all power and all knowledge*”, is limited to definitions provided by a *second hand belief system* developed by other equal human beings. Their problem is that “*what they believe*” conflicts with reality. They are free to *believe* anything they choose. Out of fear of the unknown, they have chosen to limit the guiding forces in their life to that which others claim to understand, and overlook that there is always more to be understood by anyone.

Any self-centered demand to be right in the face of reality will inescapably conflict with life on life’s terms. (syn: “God”). When a *belief structure* excludes or rejects some portion of reality. (syn: “God”) that attitude is a personal choice. A choice equivalent to refusing to enlarge a spiritual life. (pgs 12, 14, 15, 35, 45, 49).

Such a personal *belief structure* creates conflict for the individual. In essence, a finite mind has attempted to put a fence around that which, by definition is infinite. This, however does not negate the value of what they may know that is in agreement with the reality of life. (syn: "God").

KNOWING SOME TRUTH IS NOT KNOWING ALL TRUTH

The reader, like the author, has probably encountered individuals who confidently claim to "*know God*" and what lies ahead. Not only in this life, but in some "next life". While their *belief system* may have some useful value, it does reflect a closed mind. With the basic proposition that "*either God is everything or else He is nothing*" (pg 53), those alcoholics have already decided that what they now know is either everything or else it is enough.

For example, it was once *believed as the last word on reality*, that the earth stood still, and the stars moved around it. That *belief system* prevailed until it was displaced by *new knowledge*. Nonetheless, that old idea still retains useful value today. Although it is a limited and erroneous *belief system* it remains an excellent basis for celestial navigation at sea. It worked then, and still works now . However, it restricts travel to earth. Today we know there is more.

The point is, more *new knowledge* is still available. The sum total of all knowledge acquired by the human race to date, remains limited to what is now known. There shall always be more to know.
(pg 68)

There is a relationship between a limited *belief structure* and personal fear.

LIMITED BELIEFS PRODUCE FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN

Let us assume an individual believes what he was taught, in 1491, that "the world is flat". Then he gets on one of the ships which Columbus commands. As visual contact with the safety of land disappears, the ship heads into the unknown area he *believes* the edge of the earth to be. There is fear.

With inability to control others, fear increases. He *believes* his life is in danger. Within the framework of his *belief* it would be reasonable, even justifiable homicide, to mutiny, toss Columbus over the side, and return to the familiar which is the safety of the shore. However, he will be held accountable for his actions.

By contrast, his fear, based on a false belief, gets eliminated when he sets foot on new land he did not *believe* was there. Valid *new knowledge* has displaced and rearranged the old ideas which were guiding forces in his life. (review pg 27 & Step 11).

A personal attitude about *new knowledge* will determine how an alcoholic will make choices when discovering new aspects of reality. (syn: "God" pg 53) The author suggests that where ignorance exists there is also fear of that unknown.. A genius would not have time in 150 years to understand everything mankind already knows about reality.

But, this does not prevent anyone from discovering *new knowledge* nor knowing something more about anything.

Every alcoholic has some capacity to know and understand some limited aspect of reality. Each possesses, deep down within himself, access to some portion of the source of infinite knowledge which by definition is called “infinite God”. (see pgs 53, 55 & 68). Improving and enlarging that *spiritual life*, as equal human beings, appears to be helpful to anyone seeking to know more. (Steps 10 & 11).

Many traditional religions stress agreement, compliance and conformity, but only within the framework of their established belief system. The basic text of AA suggests harmony, balance and compatibility with all of reality (syn: “God”) by seeking to understand more. (review Step 11, pgs 46, 68, 71, 85, 86, 87, 89, 93, 94, 95, 129, 132, 158, 163, 164). There are fundamental differences between the two approaches. One is exclusive, the other is not. (see Tradition 3 “The Long Form”)

Relief from alcoholism occurs as the individual enlarges their spiritual life. (pg 35, & Steps 3 & 11). Here the operative word is “as” which implies a process of improving and enlarging personal understanding of the reality of life. (syn: “God”). It is a chosen attitude of willingness, honesty and open-mindedness which is indispensable to recovery. (see Appendix II).

With an enlarged spiritual life, there will be improved freedom of choices. As that understanding is improved, any choices made will be increasingly consistent with life, on life’s terms. (see pgs 83, 84 & Step 11). With that improved ability to cooperate with reality comes increased freedom to consciously choose being happy, joyous and free (syn: “God’s will for us” - pg 133). Any intentional resistance to “*the will of God for an alcoholic*” would likely be considered insanity.

When an irrational choice is linked to an unrealistic religious *belief system* any *fundamental idea of God* takes on increased significance in Steps Four and Ten of the AA program. Then a compelling need arises to challenge *beliefs* which remain unexamined. Nowhere does this need for self-examination become more obvious than with the alcoholic seeking recovery. Especially if those old ideas are still operating as guiding forces in their life. (see pg 27).

Each alcoholic has a *fundamental idea of God*. (see pg 55). They acquired their *belief*, either by conscious intelligent choice or else by unthinking default as the result of being trained by others. One way or other it is a guiding force in their respective lives. (see pgs 27 & 55). That idea either is or is not in agreement with reality. It may or may not limit spiritual progress. (pg 60). Any such limitation precludes enlarging a spiritual life by limiting conscious understanding to that which is already a *second hand belief system*. (see pgs 14,15, 35 129, & Step 11).

“Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.”

(Step 10 - pg 59)

Observe what happens whenever you challenge the *belief system* of someone with blind faith in a limited concept of God. Note that their reaction usually has strong emotional content as well as being automatic and unthinking. The emotion you have triggered is **fear**. You have just threatened their fundamental relationship to life which is

based upon what they *believe* rather than reality. This requires them to compare old ideas against reality in the light of their own intelligence. (review pg 55 & Step 11). This pits their own inherent intelligent capacity to “*improve their conscious contact with God*” against an established *second hand belief system* with a limited belief about reality (syn: “God”). Certain perils and strong emotional reactions can occur when making such a challenge.

To acknowledge the errors of an establish *belief system* is often more than some individuals are able to tolerate in a sane manner. *New knowledge* may provoke emotional and irrational behavior. You may be threatening the only thing they have to relate themselves to reality. For some individuals this will be more than they are willing to handle and may prompt vain attempts to silence the inescapable truth of reality. Because some bit of reality is a threat to everything they *believe*, it is often the messenger of truth which gets destroyed.

IF YOU LOSE SOMETHING TO THE TRUTH, YOU REALLY HAVEN'T LOST ANYTHING!

This author suggests those strong emotional reactions arise from some inherent intelligent awareness of the truth. Within every alcoholic there appears to be some intelligence which has access to more *new knowledge* than their conscious mind understands at that time.

WHERE DO ORIGINAL IDEAS COME FROM?

Consider that the suggestion “*if you don't take the first drink you can't get drunk*” may have been a novel idea to an alcoholic when they were new to the AA program. However, there is something within every alcoholic that recognizes this is true. Who do you *believe* was the first person to come up with that idea, and where did they get it? What is it in you which allows recognition that this is an accurate statement about reality?

There is deep down within every alcoholic some intelligence which is capable of recognizing *the Great Reality*. (syn: “God” - pg 55). Though it may get rejected, that inherent intelligence is there. It allows any alcoholic to improve their conscious understanding of what is good for them (syn: “God's Will for them” - see pg 55, 133 & Step 11). Enlarging that awareness is dependent upon an attitude of *willingness, honesty and open mindedness* toward accepting conscious contact with the Ultimate Reality of life on life's terms. (syn: “God”- see pgs 14-15, 42, 45, 129, 164, Step 11 & Appendix II).

From that perspective, this author offers the suggestion that, when seeking “God”:

THE THING YOU ARE LOOKING FOR

IS THE SAME THING YOU ARE LOOKING WITH

How else could you recognize it when you finally encountered it? (see pg 23).

For the alcoholic,

“Willingness, honesty and open mindedness are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable.”
(Appendix II)

Any individual shortcomings from *spiritual perfection* of an alcoholic will reflect the things they do not know. Errors in judgment result from personal ignorance of “*the elegant choice*” which would be the best of all possible choices. This is a valid principle which applies equally to anyone, anyplace at any time. It seems to have universal application to all alcoholics, rather than to just a chosen few.

As a “*principle applicable to all life*”, fear may be a natural consequence of an individual getting in over their head when dealing with some aspect of reality. (i.e.: “*life on life’s terms*”). Fear is the warning alarm that the present level of conscious contact with reality is inadequate. (Step 11). It also highlights an opportunity for *spiritual growth*.

With a concept of God as infinite knowledge, and recognition that knowledge is power,

“We never apologize to anyone for depending upon our Creator. We can laugh at those who think spirituality the way of weakness. Paradoxically, it is the way of strength.”
(pg 68)

There is a never ending process of seeking and improving conscious contact with new knowledge essential to maintain a vital spiritual experience. (pgs 12, 27, 68, & 129). **Some alcoholics try to retain a belief that traditional religions have “a monopoly on God”.** **Fortunately for many others in AA, this is not the case.** (see pg 95).

If traditional religion held “*a monopoly on God*”, many alcoholics who have recovered would not have done so. They too have tapped “*the source of all power*”, but in a different way. (pgs 59, & 163).

Alcoholics who seek and trust “God” have tapped an infinite source of *new knowledge*. They are consciously aware that improving their conscious contact with *a power greater than themselves* is available to anyone. (see pg 85). They are able to understand what it is to have a quiet mind while enjoying continuing access to an endless supply of new knowledge. (see pgs 60(c), & 68).

Continued relief from alcoholism is always possible for those who are willing to work for it. (see pgs 84 & 129). Any alcoholic who consciously chooses to retain fear of some whimsical power, is at a distinct disadvantage.

What is the difference between them? This author suggests that, as the result of an improved conscious understanding of “*the Great Reality*” (review pg 55 & Step 11):

THERE ARE THOSE WHO KNOW, AND THOSE WHO DON'T KNOW.

* * * * *

SECTION B05j:

Chapter 5

HOW IT WORKS

STEP FOUR:

“Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.” (pg 59)

READ:

Chapter 5 - HOW IT WORKS, starting at pg 68 with “Now about sex.....” through pg 71 and the end of Chapter #5.

* * * * *

COMMENTS:

Those readers who turned to this section first, will be lacking a preliminary foundation provided in earlier portions of this Study Guide. Such readers are at a disadvantage, compared with those who have given consideration to other comments on the basic text of *Alcoholics Anonymous*. As with all personal choices, it is based upon the reader’s established priorities of interest.

This author is pointing out ideas repeatedly and consistently found within the basic text for recovery from alcoholism. Not as an authority or spokesman, but “*as a member of Alcoholics Anonymous*”. (see Forward to First Edition). As such, the reader is being provided benefit of ideas of only one individual who has been over the material and is pointing out what has been found. Any other interpretation by the reader is their personal choice.

This Study Guide was specifically written for those individuals who, like the author, experience difficulty reconciling the spirituality of the AA program with concepts offered by many traditional religions. Frequent use of the three-letter word “God” appears in the basic text. Some alcoholics are disturbed by different views than those provided by their religious faith. If the reader is one of those, they are advised to stop reading now. Any of those *second-hand* old ideas which cannot be reconciled with your own inherent intelligence can produce mental confusion and emotional turmoil. (see pg 58). Where *spiritual progress* is the dominant desire (syn: “prayer”), new thought can enlarge a spiritual life. (see pgs 14-15). However, it should be recognized that “**thinking about thinking**” (syn: “meditation”) often upsets old ideas.

Be aware that when the word “God” is used in the AA text, the meaning is not identical with many religious interpretations. AA consistently leaves the concept of God open and all inclusive, (see pgs 12, 28, 45, 46, 47, 93, 94, 95). Such a choice is, and must be personal. Accordingly, AA neither endorses nor opposes any personal religious *belief systems*. (see pgs 23 & 55).

Most traditional religions provide a “*package deal*” in the form of an exclusive and limited concept for acceptance “*on blind faith*”. Oftentimes their *belief system* will

reject any interpretation which does not agree with their own. (see Appendix I - Tradition 3). Their exclusive religious views of “God” are usually considered to be the only correct interpretation. Although some other ideas may be tolerated, they are seldom embraced or included in their interpretation of reality. (see pg 53).

This fundamental difference can be an obstacle to recovery for many alcoholics. It is for those alcoholics that this Study Guide has been prepared. Others, who wish to avoid challenges to their established *belief system*, are advised to set this Study Guide aside now.

Many traditional religions have some rigid inflexible ideas, emotions and attitudes when it comes to the subject of sex. (see pg 27). Self-appointed spokesmen tell others “*what God told them they should want*”. Whenever that happens, any equality goes out the window. By contrast, AA began with a novel idea of equal access to the power referred to as “God”.

“*Why don't you choose your own conception of God?*”
(pg 12)

There is nothing in AA which claims any monopoly on understanding God nor the right to establish any spiritual or moral values for mankind.

“We have no monopoly on God; we merely have an
approach that worked with us.” (pg 95)

There is power and freedom in that statement offered by AA, but it is seldom offered by most traditional religions. In AA, every encouragement is for the individual alcoholic to develop their own potential by establishing what that word “God” means to their own mind. (see pgs 12 & 23). A careful study of the AA Big Book will help the reader establish their own concept of God which can become a fundamental basis for unrestricted reliance upon “*a power greater than themselves*”. (see pg 68).

Most traditional religions require conformity and agreement with some definition they have provided to their members. That definition is specific and is presumed to be the only correct definition possible. While there may be unquestionable value to be gained within the framework of that concept, it is nonetheless a finite definition. As such, most religions provide an exclusive and limited approach to “*the infinite power of God*”. By your own choice, you either belong with that ethnocentric group or you belong somewhere else.

For the alcoholic, such an approach is inherently incomplete. Most religions are unable to address all who wish to recover without first establishing a requirement for conformity. The conformity demanded is agreement with the concept they provide of a *power greater than ourselves*. By noteworthy contrast, the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, is inherently all-inclusive. By its own traditions

“Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought A.A. membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA

group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.”

(Appendix I - Tradition #3)

There is no discernible difference between a Buddhist “hang-over and a Baptist “hang-over”. The AA principles of recovery work equally well on both. The more recent approach of AA to recovery from alcoholism recognizes a simple fact of life.

The principles of recovery in the book “*Alcoholics Anonymous*”, have universal application. They are valid and effective when dealing with recovery from alcoholism. Therefore, a careful study of that basic text is recommended, unless the alcoholic reader has discovered something which works better.

Sex is a natural drive to preserve the species and is second only to the desire for self-preservation. Many traditional religions have made sex a major moral issue to control the behavior of the ignorant. Much of their *belief system* got developed at a time when equality and individual freedom were not commonplace. Moral codes designed to control that basic natural drive, also allowed for control of the individual. This has long been an area of conflict for many alcoholics.

Some alcoholics are either unwilling or unable to conform to unrealistic standards for sexual behavior established for them by others. Because they are equal human beings, but were not allowed a voice in making the rules, many have experienced intense personal conflicts. Many of them have sought relief by uncontrolled drinking, in their attempt to escape “*lives of quiet desperation*”.

Many religions have created that kind of conflict by claiming to know what is or is not acceptable sexual behavior to God. (see pg 133). When given the power, moral and civil legislation often follow. Restrictive controls are usually based upon emotional religious beliefs rather than any intelligent understanding of reality. (review Step 11).

The reader will note that moral values differ significantly between ethnic cultures. Wars and persecution continue amongst those who self-righteously attempt to establish who is right.

IN AA IT DOESN'T MATTER WHO IS RIGHT ONLY WHO IS LEFT.

The AA program does not claim to understand the highly controversial subject of sex. By contrast, individual alcoholics are encouraged to accept the idea that “*God wants us to be happy, joyous and free*”. (see pg 133).

Few alcoholics require a middleman to instruct them in what that is. However, freedom of choice does not relieve any alcoholic from being held accountable for the consequences of their actions.

The basic text of AA is meant to be suggestive only. (see pg 164). When it's members are being what they claim to be, AA takes no position on the controversial subject of sexual morality. (Appendix I - Tradition 10).

By it's own definition of itself:

“.....AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes.....”

(AA Preamble)

The ideas, emotions and attitudes established by the self-appointed spokesmen for *second hand religious belief systems* are not AA. Tragically, many alcoholics are unable to differentiate between the objectives of their religion and the primary purpose of AA. (see AA Preamble).

“To be helpful is our only aim.”

(pg 89)

Individual members of AA need to resolve such controversial matters for themselves. Because ideas, emotions and attitudes about sexual morality are both personal and controversial, no individual can establish guidelines for others without first disturbing the equality and unity of AA membership.

In this respect, the traditional position of AA is:

“No A.A. group or member should ever, in such a way as to implicate A.A., express any opinion on outside controversial issues--particularly those of politics, alcohol reform, or sectarian religion. The Alcoholics Anonymous groups oppose no one. Concerning such matters they can express no views whatever.”

(Appendix I Tradition #10)

At this point, it is significant to re-state that this author is merely sharing observations found within the basic text for recovery. Comments are definitely not intended to be the voice of any AA group, or implicate AA as a whole. The sole purpose of this Study Guide is to provide other alcoholics with awareness of what one individual has discovered within the book “*Alcoholics Anonymous*”. Other individual interpretations are possible.

Please note that the basic text for recovery from alcoholism is the only reference utilized in this Study Guide. It has been studied because of its demonstrated superiority in producing results. Other writings on morality exist without ability to produce comparable results in recovery from alcoholism. The reader is encouraged to accept what is useful and discard that with which they disagree.

In many western cultures, the subject of sex is equated with religious morality. This is troublesome for many alcoholics.

The basic drive for the preservation of the species seems secondary only to the desire for self-preservation. The role it plays for the alcoholic is personal, unless that

individual requires someone else to tell them if they are experiencing happiness, joy and freedom. (see pg 133). There appear to be some who do.

When making a moral inventory, the alcoholic will decide if they abdicate responsibility for their own desires. (syn: "prayers").

Whenever someone tries to decide appropriate behavior for another individual, equality gets left out of the process. While they may claim the privilege of telling you what they believe is right, they seldom allow you an equal opportunity to tell them. Accordingly, the reader may wish to consider how much of an attitude of equality is present when the subject of sex is being discussed. Is there respect for individuality in the equation? Regardless of the subject, for many alcoholics;

ANY CLAIMS OF MORAL SUPERIORITY ARE OFFENSIVE.

The reader may note when other AA members suggest "*celibacy during the first year of sobriety*", they are seldom sleeping alone. They are implying that something magical will occur, at the stroke of midnight on the 365th day, which could not have been achieved sooner. While that may have been their experience, nothing in the basic text of AA supports that sexual fantasy.

Change the ideas, emotions and attitudes you have about sex, or any other subject, and you change everything about it for you. Those changes can and will occur, *sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly* for those who work for them. (pg 84).

The rate of growth and change you, the reader, will make in your life is individual and personal. It is determined by the strength of your desire (syn: "prayer") to change the ideas, emotions and attitudes which are the guiding forces in your life.(see pg 27). Your spiritual growth and change will be affected by how quickly or slowly you are willing to let go of your old ideas (see pg 58), and displace, rearrange and replace them with a set that allows you to be happy, joyous and free. (see pg 133).

That mental action is your own version of "*the will of God*" for you, unless you have abdicated personal responsibility to some other human power. (see pg 60(b) & pg 68). This author recommends following the AA slogan of "*Let Go and Let God*" by letting go of old ideas and let what is good for you happen. (see pg 69).

As regards recovery from alcoholism, any individual sex problem is primarily one of personal attitude. Consider that the importance of sex is 10% friction and 90% mental attitude about the friction. (pg. 23).

Any attitude about sex will be uniquely personal and individual. It will reflect a *belief* about the equality of the individual to a creative power. If it is part of a *belief system* which is restrictive, grim and inflexible it will be a guiding force chosen by the individual. (pgs 27, 62 & 133).

This author enjoys humor. The comic potential was not lost when it was discovered that, by some wry quirk of events, comments about sex appear on page 69 of

the basic text. To lighten up, what is a deadly serious topic for some, here is a story which has been making the rounds. It may be amusing.

"A new comer to AA with a sex-problem affecting her sobriety, went to an old-timer for advice. She was bluntly told 'the answers are in the book'. On demanding to know 'where in the book?' the old-timer confidently referred her to page 96 instead of page 69. When doing what her sponsor told her to do, she was delighted to read the following:

"Do not be discouraged if your prospect does not respond at once. Search out another alcoholic and try again. You are sure to find someone desperate enough to accept with eagerness what you have to offer."

The moral is simple. Ultimately, it is your own understanding which is critical to your own recovery. Therefore, read the book "*Alcoholics Anonymous*" and interpret it for yourself. Others, this author included, are only an authority if you make them one in your own mind. (pg 23). In reality, they only have the power to point out what they find. You then consider it in the light of your own inherent intelligence. (see pgs 12, 27, 42, 53, 55, 86, 164 & Appendix II).

The same admonition can be applied equally to other written material. In particular are those ancient writings intended to establish a *second-hand* moral code to be followed on *blind faith*. The reader will recognize that numerous religious interpretations already exist. Usually those interpretations result in claims to have "the right answer" instead of having "a answer that works".

This author recommends the reader choose the version of morality which provides what they want the most (syn: "the answer to your prayer"). However, do recognize that others, as equals, may seek different results. What you select, from an infinite variety of options, will determine your happiness, your joy, and your freedom in your life. (see pgs 12, 27, 53, 68 & 133).

After all, it is your own mind and you can do anything with it you want to, can't you? (see pg 23).

Do not overlook the fact that, as an equal, you have as much potential for being right or wrong as anyone else. That attitude about personal equality will make a difference in how you relate yourself to others. As an individual, you will reap the benefits of the wisdom to know the difference.

The subject of sex is but one of many problem areas for the alcoholic seeking recovery. There are many other disturbing old ideas, emotions and attitudes which have dominated our lives in ways that destroy personal happiness, joy and freedom. (see pg 133). There is a continuing need to enlarge a spiritual life and constantly seek improved

understanding of a personal relationship to the endless changes in life on life's terms. (syn: "God's Will" - see pgs 14, 15, 35, 60, 68, 129 & 133).

"If we have been thorough about our personal inventory, we have written down a lot. We have listed and analyzed our resentments. We have begun to comprehend their futility and their fatality. We have commenced to see their terrible destructiveness. We have begun to learn tolerance, patience and good will toward all men, even our enemies, for we look on them as sick people. We have listed the people we have hurt by our conduct, and are willing to straighten out the past if we can." (pg 70)

If you have already made a decision, and an inventory of your grosser handicaps, you have made a good beginning. That being so you have swallowed and digested some big chunks of truth about yourself." (pg 71).

With an enlarged awareness of a unique and individual approach to life on life's terms, the reader will be in an improved relationship to reality. (syn: "God" - review Step 11). Any improvement implies some degree of change. This author suggests the change occurs in the ideas, emotions and attitudes which have been guiding forces for the individual alcoholic. (see pg 27).

Because you, the reader, probably do not possess all the answers concerning your relationship to life, you can anticipate that more will be revealed. (see pg 164). **AS** you experience more of the reality of life (syn: "more of God"), Step Ten will become increasingly useful. It provides a path allowing you to accommodate more *new knowledge* in your life. (syn: "more God", see Appendix II on "the educational variety" of Spiritual Experience.).

The author of this Study Guide has now completed personal observations and interpretations of what has been found in the book "*Alcoholics Anonymous*" specifically directed to Step Four. The section which follows is addressed to Step Five and *Chapter 6* - "*INTO ACTION*".

* * * * *

SECTION B06a:

Chapter 6

INTO ACTION

STEP FIVE:

“Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human
being the exact nature of our wrongs.” (pg 59)

READ:

Chapter 6 -- The first paragraph on page 72.

* * * * *

COMMENTS:

To this point, the alcoholic reader has been dealing primarily with their own good intentions. Retreat from further involvement with sobriety has remained an option. While a personal moral inventory may have been taken privately, some personal secrets may not have been shared with anyone else. If so, no total personal commitment has been taken which cannot be reversed out of fear of facing reality. (syn: “God” see pg 55)

Major flaws may have been set down on paper. However, the exact natures of any mistakes in judgment still remain in that nebulous and free-floating realm of the mind. (see pg 23). Step Five clearly defines those mistakes by bringing them into perspective with the rest of reality. For many, this action includes fear related to their fundamental idea of God. It is a fear that somehow, *the Great Reality* (syn: “God”- see pg 55) may have hostile motives toward certain individuals. With that attitude, trust is difficult. (pgs 23 & 68).

Most alcoholics readily acknowledge personal problems, for which they lack satisfactory answers. That awareness usually includes a desire for a solution. (syn: “a prayer for help”). If they already had the answer, they would be using it. Obviously, the solution has to come from some concept of “*a power greater than ourselves*”.

The three-letter word “God” communicates an idea of such a power. (pg55). Regardless of other special attributes assigned by traditional religions, there seems to be **universal acceptance** of certain qualities. Specifically, that “*the power of God*” is both “**omniscient**” (“all-knowing”) and “**omnipotent**” (“all-powerful”).

Omniscience and omnipotence are qualities no finite human intelligence can claim. (see pgs 53 & 68). However, individuals have direct personal access to infinite intelligence. (see pgs 23, 27, 55, 60 & 68). The specific *new knowledge*, required to correct mistakes in personal judgment is provided from the source of all *new knowledge* which is universally referred to by use of the word “God”.

This Study Guide is intended for those alcoholic readers who have experienced difficulties reconciling an infinite concept of “God” (see pg 68) with the other attributes assigned by traditional religions. Religious alcoholics trust those other qualities within the finite limits of their own “*self-knowledge*” and understanding. (see pg 68 & Step 11).

Recognizably, the variety of religious versions of “God” have tremendous value for numerous individuals. Nonetheless, each one is but a human interpretation of the source of **all knowledge**. Religious spokesmen unquestionably possess **some knowledge**. However, none can intelligently claim to **know it all**.

The wide range of optional *belief systems* available about the word “God” make it confusing to choose a personal concept. (see pg 12) This personal choice is aggravated by unfounded claims that one is superior to another. Arguments that “*my God is better than your God*” become unintelligent when it is accepted that, “*in an infinite universe, all human beings are equal*” (“in the eyes of God”). Because there is an endless supply of *new knowledge* available, any one idea of God is no more nor less valid than any other. (see pgs 23, 27 & 55). Obviously in certain areas, some are more popular than others.

When consciously recognized that no human spokesmen for God can have complete knowledge on the subject, (pg 60(b) & Step 11), it follows that the experts could be mistaken. What they *believe*, along with their good intentions are merely personal statements. The popular majority may be in control and still be wrong. (review Traditions 2, 3 & 12).

IT IS POSSIBLE TO BE SINCERE AND MISTAKEN AT THE SAME TIME.

Regardless of how much conscious understanding a person may have, there is always more. (see Step 11). Personal improvement is always possible and available. (see pg 68). Without possession of all knowledge (syn: “God’s omniscience”), no human spokesman for God can be correct in solving every problem. (syn: “God’s omnipotence” - see pg 164). However, ***IF “God” is intelligent***, the alcoholic reader may choose to seek **“the most intelligent concept available”**. (see pgs 12, 23, 27, 42, 60(b), 86, 93-95, 129, 158-159, 164 & Appendix II).

“If you have decided you want what we have and
are willing to go to any length to get it--then you are
ready to take certain steps.” (pg 58)

There was a time, before AA, when alcoholism was considered to be a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. (review pg 51). We now know alcoholics can recover. (see “Frontispiece”). For any alcoholic who wants what the AA program has to offer, their most intelligent choice would be to improve conscious understanding of what works. (Step 11). That implies being open-minded and willing to seek whatever *new knowledge* is available which will produce the results desired. (syn: “the answer to a prayer” - see Appendix II).

From its earliest beginnings, the AA approach to a solution embraced a rather revolutionary concept of spiritual equality. When dealing with an interpretation of the power, essential for a *vital spiritual experience*. (see pg 27). AA began from a simple recommendation:

“Why don’t you choose your own conception of God?”
(page 12)

If the reader can honestly concede that “God is intelligent”, then:

WHY DON'T YOU CHOOSE AN INTELLIGENT CONCEPT OF GOD?

In dealing with personal recovery, an intelligent concept of God may produce superior results to those historically produced by emotional approaches to the source of all power. (see pgs 27, 55, 59, 60(b), 86, & Appendix II).

When seeking relief from alcoholism, it could and would be produced from “*God ... if He were sought*”. (page 60(c)). Seeking a solution requires some *new knowledge* greater than possessed by the drinking alcoholic. (pgs 39, & 45). This can be synonymous with *seeking God* if it is accepted that **God is the intelligent source of all *new knowledge***. (see pgs 12, 23, 45, 46, 47, 49, 53, 55, 60, 68, 77, 85, 86 & 88). Alcoholics who are already happy, joyous and free, may not be interested in seeking improvement. (see pg 133 & Step 11).

Early members of AA were precise about where to find the infinite intelligence identified by use of the word “God”. They applied the word “***only***” when they stated that “*the Great Reality*” was deep down within ourselves. (review pg 55).

If they are to be believed, this author suggests that every man, woman and child already has equal access to that source of *new knowledge*. Every alcoholic has the “*god given*” capacity to discover the **most intelligent answer currently available**. (see pg 86). Those who deny their own inherent intelligence tend to abdicate any personal responsibility for the consequences of their own actions. (see pgs 62 & 133).

The early members of AA suggested alcoholics make use of what the spokesmen for various religions had to offer, when they were right. Not by blindly accepting all of their claims. Not by assuming they had complete answers for everything or anything. Rather, by the use of an inherent intelligence capable of being “*quick to see where they are right*”. (see pg 87).

This author suggests that conscious recognition of answers, consistent with *the Great Reality*, (syn: “God’s Will”), is **only** to be found deep down within each individual alcoholic. (see pgs 55, 87 & Step 11). Furthermore, that conscious awareness is subject to both improvement and change. It occurs **as** improved awareness of *the Great Reality* is revealed. (see pgs 55, 93-95 & 164).

DO YOU BELIEVE EVERYTHING ANYONE TELLS YOU?

Recognizably, no human intelligence has all the answers. However, *new knowledge* is available to improve conscious understanding of “*the Great Reality*”. (i.e.: “God” see pgs 55 & Step 11). That supply of *new knowledge* is endless, there is always more available. This leaves any current best answer as being suspect for error with the discovery of a different set of values which do produce desired results. (syn: “the answer to a prayer”).

Within every man, woman and child there exists some mental process allowing them to recognize the most intelligent answer currently available. Constantly seeking that elegant choice produces *spiritual progress* toward results most desired. (see pg 133).

This implies that every alcoholic has personal access to the source of infinite intelligence. (syn: "God" see pgs 55 & 60(c)).

Alcoholism was once considered hopeless without a vital spiritual experience. That vital spiritual experience requires displacement of ideas, emotions and attitudes guiding the lives of the alcoholic. (pg 27). Those old ideas must be replaced by a new set which produce results.

Although religious convictions may be very good, they do not spell the necessary vital spiritual experience required for recovery from alcoholism. (review pg 27).

This approach calls for direct confrontation with old ideas, emotions and attitudes concerning a fundamental idea of "God". (pg 55). For the alcoholic, serious about recovery, some questions get raised:

?? Do I have the power to choose what I believe about God?

?? Do I really want to let go of my old ideas?

?? Does my current conception of God stand up in the light of my own intelligence?

?? Am I really willing to seek more understanding of reality?

Results are the significant factor in recovery from alcoholism. (Review the above with pgs 42, 55, 58, (60(c), & 12). The intelligent measure is in how well either those old ideas or *new knowledge* actually produce desired results. When compared to personal survival, the agreement or disagreement of others is no longer an important issue.

CONSIDER THE MESSAGE RATHER THAN THE MESSENGER!

When the intelligence of the message is given greater importance than emotional appeals by the messenger, many alcoholics are in an improved position to recover. (review Step 11). They have improved access to intelligent power and the necessary vital spiritual experience required for recovery.

Advocates of emotional religious conversions may disagree. They are called upon to demonstrate comparable results. This author *believes* that innumerable different ways exist for any alcoholic to seek and improve personal understanding of the *Power, greater than ourselves*. (review Appendix II).

DON'T TELL ME, - SHOW ME !

Ability to access the most intelligent choice is available. It is already part of our make-up. (see pg 55). Because the only place an alcoholic finds “*the Great Reality*” is deep within themselves, this has led many to the conclusion that:

THE THING YOU ARE LOOK FOR IS THE THING YOU ARE LOOKING WITH!

By way of illustration, consider what occurs in the mind of a seemingly hopeless alcoholic when confronted with the proposition that:

?? If you don't take the first drink you cannot get drunk.

Within the mind of that alcoholic, there exists a capacity to recognize the truth inherent in that statement.(syn: “God”). If that were not the case, nothing which is true, good, or real (all syn: “God”) could ever be known or understood by anyone. Without that capacity to recognize “God”, even proponents of traditional religious ideas would have no basis to support claims made for their own particular version. However, each individual must begin their personal search from their present point of understanding of *the Great Reality*. (pg 55).

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE HOW MUCH YOU KNOW, IF WHAT YOU KNOW IS NOT SO?

Many alcoholics claim their finite fundamental “*idea of God*” is superior to all others. It may be, if that idea is capable of producing superior results. Then inherent intelligence within the individual will recognize it. However, there is significant difference between asking

?? IS IT MORAL?

and asking

?? DOES IT WORK?

A moral view requires dependence upon some appointed authority on morality and their “*second-hand concept of God*”. The practical spirituality is available to anyone, based upon their own inherent intelligence, and a “*God-given*” capacity to recognize the truth. (syn: “God” see pg 86).

Inherent intelligence is found deep down within each individual. (see pg 55). That intelligence allows evaluation of results. If results produce what is most desired, (syn: “the answer to prayers”), most alcoholics will “**trade up**” and accept improvement. (Step 11)

Without some intelligent demonstration of superiority, any concept of *the Great Reality*. (syn: "God" see pg 55). is equally as valid as any other. Those who accept their equality ("in the eyes of God") are free to suggest to those claiming spiritual superiority that:

"I HAVE A CONCEPT OF GOD AS VALID AS YOURS".

The degree of intelligence (syn: "God") present in any *belief system* is best gauged by the results it claims to produce. The only measure of validity of one concept over the other is found in how well it works. This author suggests the capacity to recognize those results is the same inherent intelligence which allows the alcoholic to **accept or reject any concept of God.**

"When we became alcoholics, crushed by a self-imposed crisis we could not postpone or evade, we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else He is nothing. God either is, or He isn't. What was our choice to be?" (pg 53)

This author *believes* that intelligence, required to make a choice, is within every individual alcoholic. The dominate desire of the alcoholic. (syn: "their prayer") will determine which choice gets made.

Fulfillment of a dominate desire for sobriety implies *wanting* sobriety above all else, and being *willing to go to any length to get it* (pg 58). Then a *daily reprieve* (pg 85) becomes acceptable to those who consciously seek improved understanding of how to apply available power. That power is in the acceptance of *new knowledge* capable of producing improved results. (see pg 60 & Step 11). The reader may equate this mental action with *a vital spiritual experience*. (see pgs 23 & 27).

Freedom to choose that mental action allows alcoholics to make decisions. As a consequence of choices made, some past decisions have placed many alcoholics in a position to be hurt. (see pg 62). Unless they are completely happy, joyous and free, (syn: "God's Will" - see pg 133), most alcoholics will desire changes to improve their personal relationship with life, on life's terms. (syn: "God" - see Step 11). It follows that the alcoholic, who wants to be more happy, joyous and free, needs to make more intelligent choices where "*their will*" is more in line with "*God's Will*". What is required is lacking. (pg 45). Without a conscious understanding of how to improve, it is likely that mistakes in judgment will continue. To correct those errors in thinking, this author suggests that additional *new knowledge* is required. (pg 23).

Few alcoholics are isolated from some involvement with other human beings. A practical need exists for dealing with others in an intelligent manner which allows personal happiness, joy and freedom. (pg 133). This then, brings up the essence of the *fifth step*

"Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs." (pg 58)

For many alcoholics, their true ideas, emotions and attitudes have been hidden from others. Fear of exposure and rejection by others has been the guiding force. (review

pgs 67-68). Exposing them to the light of reality (syn: “the light of God”) allows improved intelligence to be applied to the root of those “*wrongs*” which are errors in personal judgment. Then *spiritual progress* becomes possible. (pg 60).

Having reached that “*turning point*”, a decision is required. The alcoholic must choose either to move forward or retreat. Either to seek increased happiness, joy and freedom or else go back into old, established ways. This is a turning point for dealing with the realities of life, on life’s terms. (syn: “God” - see pg 59). This author recommends the reader consider what your choice will be. (review pg 53).

Facing fears demands courage, not denial that the fear exists. Courage is required to face the unknown after exploiting all personal resources. (pg 39). This occurs by acquiring faith that intelligent answers exist to problems which are not yet understood. (Step 11). *New knowledge* can be obtained, if it is sought. (pgs 43 & 60(c)). This author suggests that anyone can improve their conscious contact with *the Great Reality*. (syn: “God” - see pg 55).

With that recognition comes the need for intelligence greater than is currently available, at a conscious level. Freedom to seek **more God**, from within, requires using that power of free choice to seek God. (pg 60(c)).

The basic instinct for self-preservation produces courage to seek personal survival in this life. Those alcoholics with priority interests for promised benefits in some future experience may not wish to include themselves in the observation that whenever an alcoholic is sufficiently motivated, they will recognize and accept reality. (syn: “God”). Continued drinking blocks mental clarity, until the alcoholic consciously recognizes the “*phenomenon of craving*” as being life threatening. (see “*The Doctor’s Opinion*”, pgs 30-32, & Step 11).

When the desire to stay alive and carry their own keys is sufficiently strong it will match and take precedence over the desire for another drink. That new dominate desire (syn: “prayer”) will then be the motivation for the alcoholic to go to any length to recover.

Unfortunately, to be effective, that desire requires *new knowledge* of how to do what the alcoholic now wants to do. (i.e.: “*their new prayer*”). Any desire to successfully stay sober must be accompanied by the power of that *new knowledge*. Fulfillment of the new dominate desire (syn: “the answer to a new prayer”) requires “*know-how*” beyond what is understood at a conscious level by the alcoholic with the problem. (Step 11). Answers must come from some power, greater than themselves. (see pgs 24 & 43).

The capacity to recognize that other and equal individuals are enjoying successful results, make an intelligent decision possible. The alcoholic can learn and understand more of what it is that others know how to do. Improved conscious awareness of that portion of truth and reality (syn: “God”) encourages willingness to intelligently consider methods different from those which are already understood. (see Step 11 & Appendix II)

While religious convictions may be very good, unfortunately they do not spell the necessary vital spiritual experience required for recovery from alcoholism. (see pg 27).

When compared with results for survival in this lifetime, those old ideas become of secondary importance to most alcoholics because:

IT IS HARD TO ARGUE WITH SUCCESS.

This author suggests the AA approach to recovery is currently the most intelligent choice available. Anyone can have it if they are willing to let go of their ineffective old ideas. (Review pg 42).

“Rarely have we seen a person fail who has
thoroughly followed our path.” (pg 58)

For some alcoholics their dominate desire qualifies as “a prayer”. There is a *belief* that some sort of intelligence will respond. One only need be exposed to a newborn infant to recognize the demand for results exists at a very basic level. The *belief* that fulfillment is possible may be inherent in the basic nature of human beings. (see pg 55). As such, any desire incorporates a *belief* some power can fulfill the desire. (syn: “answer a prayer”). Most religions claim it to be “*their version of God*”.

For an infant the controlling adult is their “God”. In time, most enlarge their spiritual life to embrace a broader and more intelligent concept. As that new concept is understood, (see Steps 3 & 11), spiritual progress and growth is able to occur. However, at some point, many alcoholics stop enlarging their spiritual life. (see pgs 14, 15, 35 & 129). This decision produces conflict with *the Ultimate Reality* by the self-delusion that some “*second hand belief system*” adequately defines the three letter word “God”. (pg 62).

At it’s core is a *fundamental belief* something in life can fulfill a dominate desire and “*answer prayers*”. The good news is that this concept of “God” appears to be valid. For many, the bad news is that fulfillment occurs “*on life’s terms*” (syn: “God’s Will”) rather than their own *belief system*. (syn: “self-will run riot”).

Many adult alcoholics retain emotional ties to an unintelligent and infantile concept of “*a power greater than themselves*”. Often they maintain their dependence upon ideas, emotions and attitudes which they acquired from parents who continue to be “*the guiding forces in their lives*”. (see pg 60(b)). There is a need for some sort of parental authority when a child is dependent and helpless. However, continued acceptance of that authority may not hold up in the light of intelligence (syn: “the light of God”) once the child accepts responsibility for their own life. Some adult alcoholics never do detach themselves from that parental guidance and control.

When voicing the ideas, emotions and attitudes guiding their lives, it is not uncommon to hear:

- ?
? “*My father always said that*”
- ? “*My mother taught me to*”
- ? “*I’ve always been a*”

Some adult alcoholics never question those old ideas nor challenge the validity of authorities in the light of their own intelligence. (syn: "God within" pgs 53 & 55). By default, they fail to enlarge their spiritual life. (see pgs 14-15, & 35).

To the precise extent an alcoholic retains the unchallenged *beliefs* of others, do they lack their own personal concept of "God". By choosing not to choose, and refusal to do any independent thinking, they deny themselves the most intelligent choice available to guide their life. ("*Think, Think, Think*").

Without intelligent evaluation, old ideas will become an established *belief system* about the source of personal fulfillment. (i.e.: "God"). That *belief system* automatically incorporates any unchallenged authorities and the spokesmen for traditional religious ideas of God. How did you develop the free choice of ideas, emotions and attitudes which are guiding forces in your life?

Perhaps a story can illustrate the point.

A mother gave her son two pieces of cake, one being for his little sister. She told him "I'll let you choose first". When his sister reached for the piece with more frosting he grabbed her wrist and said:

"Put that back, and CHOOSE!!"

Such has been the freedom of choice allowed to many alcoholics during their formative years. From this pattern they developed ideas, emotions and attitudes which subsequently guided their lives. (pg 27) Many never recognized the truth that their parents and family are merely equal human beings (i.e.: "*in the eyes of God*"). Each having their own personal *belief system* concerning the Ultimate Reality of Life. (syn: "God").

Alcoholics who are seriously seeking progress in the AA program, will eventually be confronted with the foundation for their own concept of "God". As equals, it will constantly improve as a natural consequence of their continued assessment of ideas, emotions and attitudes guiding their lives. (see Steps 10, 11 & 12).

Challenging a basic *belief structure* is something many alcoholics will prefer not to do. **Everyone wants to believe that what they believe agrees with reality.** "*It 'taint necessarily so!!*". With a life-threatening condition of alcoholism, a more urgent need exists to make changes. The alternative choice is to hold onto old ideas concerning recovery. Inherent intelligence is capable of recognizing which mental approach produces the most desired results.

"We stood at the turning point. We asked His protection and care with complete abandon." (pg 59)

At this point, the author assumes the alcoholic reader wants to make changes which allow recovery from alcoholism. Only the reader knows their own true motives and desires (i.e.: "*their prayers*") for this lifetime. This will determine what changes are acceptable as ideas, emotions and attitudes guiding their life. Those values may have been consciously chosen or have been imposed upon them by other equal human beings. This

specifically includes well-meaning parents or any others they made an authority in their own mind. (see pg 23).

Consider that a *belief system* developed from childhood has provided the foundation for a fundamental idea of God “*as you understand God*”. There may be human errors in that foundation. Regardless of what you now *believe*, in an infinite universe, there is always more to be understood. This is based upon the proposition presented in the AA Big Book:

“.....either God is everything or else He is nothing”
(pg 53)

If that be so, there is nothing in life to accept or reject except “God”. The alcoholic chooses what they accept, or reject in life, on life’s terms. Each alcoholic has the inescapable personal responsibility to answer the question:

ARE MY CHOICES CONTROLLED BY INTELLIGENCE OR EMOTIONS?

* * * * *

SECTION B06b:

Chapter 6

INTO ACTION

STEP FIVE:

“Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human
being the exact nature of our wrongs.” (pg 59)

READ AGAIN:

Chapter 6 - The first paragraph on page 72.

* * * * *

MORE COMMENTS:

If the reader accepts the proposition that

“either God is everything or else He is nothing.”
(pg 53)

then it intelligently follows there is nothing to accept which is **not God**. Should that concept be unacceptable, then some other idea, which is different from the AA program, may be *believed* to be superior. Any *belief* is individual. Though that same *belief system* may be shared with other individuals, it is nonetheless “a choice of what to believe about God”. It may or may not be accurate.

Any declaration concerning what is or is not acceptable in life is presumptuous, and implies having “*the only correct answer*”. Such an attitude smacks of “*self-will run riot*” when accompanied by unsupported pronouncements about what God wants. Others are then expected to agree. In reality, this is not likely, and resistance can occur. (review pgs 60 & 61).

EXPECTATIONS ARE A DOWN-PAYMENT ON A RESENTMENT

Whenever a fundamental *belief system* is questioned, it presents the need for a decision. The decision is either to change or not change what is personally acceptable or unacceptable. Individuals choose what they do or do not *believe* based upon either their intelligence or their emotions. Some alcoholics suggest *the Great Reality* (syn: “God” - see pg 55) is maintained in perfect order by an intelligence which created that orderliness. Others assign body parts and emotional passions to their *fundamental idea of God*.

The choice made by the alcoholic reader about what to *believe* will be significant. It will reflect ideas, emotions and attitudes which are guiding forces in their life (see pg 27) Furthermore, it will establish the boundaries within which happiness, joy and freedom is *believed* to be acceptable.

Investigation of the AA program, implies a desire for improvement and *new knowledge*. (see Step 11 and pg 133). Presumably improved happiness, joy and freedom (syn: "God's Will" - pg 133) is already *believed* to be available and that seeking it is acceptable. Otherwise, the alcoholic reader would not be seeking the power of that "*know-how*" because the AA program would have nothing of value to offer. Examining the ideas, emotions and attitudes guiding life implies having a personal desire (syn: "personal prayer") for something more than available within the limits of old ideas. (see pg 58 & the quote in Appendix II).

Fear of the unknown (syn: "the part of God not understood" - see pg 53) is a core issue in the process of recovery from alcoholism. (pg 67). Facing fears cracks open the doors of the mind to an improved conscious awareness of life on life's terms. (syn: "God" - see pg 23 & Step 11). This mental action tends to confirm the existence of personal equality

The inherent intelligence of the alcoholic (syn: "the God within" see pg 55) intuitively recognizes that no one knows everything about everything. This author *believes* that anyone and everyone can make improvements in their relationship to life, on life's terms. (i.e.: "God" pg 53). They can if they want to.

"Willingness, honesty and open mindedness are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable."
(Appendix II)

How decisions are made will likely be guided by one of two basic mental approaches. The method chosen will determine the results.

With an **emotionally dominated moralistic approach**, someone else claims expertise on what is or is not acceptable within their chosen belief system. That "*second-hand belief system*" is usually based upon standards established by yet some other authority on morality. This provides the unthinking alcoholic with a "*package deal*" of what is "*acceptable to God*". Independent thinking is not required, and is frequently discouraged..

The **practical and pragmatic approach of the AA program** recognizes the value of the intelligence of the individual alcoholic. It encourages alcoholics to think for themselves by using their own inherent intelligence (syn: "God within") and make a decision to choose between what does and does not work. This includes accepting personal responsibility for correcting mistakes. With this approach, there is an assumption of direct personal access to whatever intelligence has the corrective power. (Steps 10 & 11). Except for the finite limits of a human lifetime, the potential for personal improvement by any alcoholic is endless.

"We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves."
(pg 68)

One approach claims to have "*the only answer*". The other accepts "*the most intelligent answer currently available*". The difference determines how much conflict there is with life, on life's terms. (review pg 55).

The author suggests the reader consider which approach they use in making their own decisions. A pre-established moralistic and “*second hand belief system*” may conflict with your own inherent intelligence. While the ideas of others may include **some intelligence**, the arguments of traditional religions frequently depend upon an **appeal to the emotions** of alcoholics dominated by a fear of the unknown. (see pg 67). For recovery from alcoholism

“Frothy emotional appeal seldom suffices”
(see “The Doctor’s Opinion”)

By contrast, **the pragmatic approach of AA** assumes the inherent intelligence of the individual is able to recognize results. (see pg 95). Does an emotional or an intelligent approach take priority for you? Do you ask:

1. “Is it good?”

OR

2. “Does it work?”

If something is “good”, then “*whose version of good?*”. If something works, any gullibility from blind faith gets resolved with “*don’t tell me, show me*”.

Any *belief system* got personally chosen by the alcoholic who believes what they believe. Some process of **acceptance or rejection** occurred within their own mind. (see pg 23). This specifically includes the method by which they chose their “*fundamental idea of God*” (pg 55). Included is anyone they have accepted as an authority on the subject.

All too often the credentials of someone claiming to be an authority have never been intelligently questioned. As a consequence, many alcoholics *believe* their chosen authorities on God are infallible. (syn: “all knowing” hence “God”). In the event they do not “know it all”, they too are subject to change and improvement. (syn: “as equals in the eyes of God”).

This thinking defines the attitude of the alcoholic about their own personal equality. They either accept or reject equal access to whatever intelligence is producing an orderly universe. That universe has infinite proportions - as far as anyone knows.

In dealing with the reality of life on life’s terms, there is nothing to accept or reject which is **not** “God”. (see pg 53). Anything which cannot be intelligently confirmed as being part of “*the Great Reality*” is either speculation, or emotional “*wishful thinking*”. Often such ideas are based upon a “*second-hand belief system*” accepted from some equally inadequate human source which has been chosen as an authority. (pg 60(b)).

An open mind is recommended. Consider that, when dealing with problems, only three intelligent options are available. When a problem exists, the ultimate reality of choice is to:

1. ACCEPT IT
2. CHANGE IT or
3. GET RID OF IT.

Anything which is a problem contains some fear of the unknown. Without sufficient *new knowledge* to resolve the problem, some fear is present that the solution will be unacceptable. When motivated by fear of reality, (i.e.: “fear of God”), the most intelligent answer can be rejected by the alcoholic seeking an emotionally comfortable solution to a life-threatening condition. (i.e.: “*self-will run riot*”).

“When this sort of thinking is fully established in an individual with alcoholic tendencies, he has probably placed himself beyond human aid, and unless locked up, may die or go permanently insane.” (pg 24)

Avoidance of reality is common practice among people who drink alcohol. That is the basic benefit provided by drinking it. However, for the alcoholic, with the phenomenon of craving, it ultimately requires complete avoidance of any people, places and things because they are unable to get what they want on their own terms. (syn: “cooperation with God’s will - pg 133” vs. “*self-will run riot*”). When using a distorted mind, this is the most intelligent choice they are able to make at the time. (pg 23).

Fortunately, it is possible to learn to enlarge and improve spiritual fitness without being threatened by reality. (see pgs 100 & 101). Others have acquired the power of *new knowledge* which they previously did not possess. With an undistorted mind, any alcoholic can learn what other alcoholics have learned. (see pg 58).

Where a threat exists to survival, more *new knowledge* is required. Seeking that “*know-how*” is like learning how to play “Russian Roulette” and still live. The formula for success is exceedingly simple.

RULE #1 IS “NO SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS”

1. **When a threat is certain, don’t take the action.**
2. **When safety is certain, the action is optional.**
3. **When in doubt - don’t choose any action until certain.**

Recognize that mistakes in judgment and human error are inevitable. However, with this formula, all your mistakes are in favor of survival.

There are some conditions which upset emotional stability, and are sometimes a threat to survival. Some alcoholics never do learn to deal with them successfully. For many alcoholics, marriage, strong emotional ties and family relationships belong in that category.

There are other troublesome situations which most alcoholics learn to handle easily without them being a threat. Office and work-place parties, with drinking as the focal point, are a common example. (see pgs 102-103).

Remember that the knowledge and intelligence of others is not your own. Neither is their degree of emotional stability. Your own emotional dependence upon others gives them ability to influence potentially life-threatening decisions. (see pg 60(b)). Alcoholics differ individually in such issues. Extreme caution is recommended when making an authority of some other alcoholic. (see pg 60(b)). It is better if you can develop your own personal connection to the source of knowledge and power which is God". (pgs 12, 55 & 60(b)).

AS an alcoholic understands *new knowledge*, they become free to change their choices. (see pg 83, 133 plus Steps 3 & 11). This new freedom comes from *new knowledge of the Great Reality*. (review pgs 45 & 55). There is enlarged and improved understanding of a fundamental relationship to life, on life's terms (syn "God").

Old ideas and erroneous *beliefs* can block spiritual growth and the *vital spiritual experience* required for recovery from alcoholism. (see pgs 14-15, 27, 35 & 58). By enlarging and improving *a fundamental idea of God*, the alcoholic is less limited by the restrictions of that old *belief system*.

From this perspective, *spiritual progress* can be viewed as a process. One capable of producing a new kind of happiness, joy and freedom. (syn: "God's Will" - see pgs 83-84 & 133). It is new because it reflects *new knowledge and new power of choice* which was not available before being sought and accepted.

It is self-evident that *new knowledge, when in harmony, balance and compatible with life, on life's terms*, does not conflict with reality (syn: "God" - see pg 18) However, in an infinite universe, every alcoholic must decide what portion is or is not *acceptable* to them. (pgs 53 & 68). Within a limited life-span, understanding everything is not an available option. Those who disagree or claim to have *the last word on something* are challenged with "Don't tell me, show me!".

Happiness, joy and freedom are reflected in how well any *belief system* works. Where it does not produce those desired results, (i.e.: "*the answer to prayer*"), the individual is making their own misery. (see pg 133). Unless the reader enjoys misery, improved *new knowledge of reality* is continually required. (Step 11). The search for *new knowledge* is then either restricted to the boundaries of *old ideas*, or else it is open to anything and everything. What is your choice to be? (pgs 53, 68 & 85).

It has been suggested alcohol is but a symptom of some deeper problem. (see pgs 23, 64 & Step 2). Presumably the alcoholic has interest in a solution. Many who had similar problems are able to demonstrate varying degrees of success. Their message is simple. It is:

"Rarely have we seen a person fail who has
thoroughly followed our path"

"Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas
and the result was nil until we let go absolutely."

(pg 58)

For the alcoholic reader who is honestly interested in making the most intelligent choice, there is a fundamental attitude no one else can provide.

ARE YOU OR ARE YOU NOT OPEN-MINDED TO NEW IDEAS?

This author *believes*, any *spiritual progress* requires maintaining an attitude of *willingness, honesty and open mindedness* to the acceptance of *new knowledge* from the source of all knowledge and all power. (see pgs 23, 27 59, 68 & Appendix II).

This mental action uses the inherent intelligence only found within the alcoholic. (pg 55). Because knowledge and ignorance are both infinite, any mental activity is limited to that which is known. Therefore, any understanding of reality is always incomplete, but can always be improved. (syn: "infinite God" - see pgs 53, 68 & Step II).

Spiritual progress occurs as conscious understanding is improved. (Steps 3 & 11). **Intelligence is required to understand what does and does not work to produce desired results.**

Conscious acceptance of reality becomes a realistic answer to problems. With this approach, the principle of seeking infinite *new knowledge* takes precedence over any personal *belief system* which relies upon human authorities on *the Great Reality* (syn: "God"- pg 60(b)).

PRINCIPLES BEFORE PERSONALITIES

Once again, there is nothing else to accept which is beyond that infinite source of *new knowledge* which is "God". (Review in sequence Appendix II, pg 27, 55, 53, 68, 60(b), Step 3, Step 11, Step 10, pg 58 & Step 12).

Acceptance of *new knowledge* can be a power, greater than any human power including any of the traditional religious "god clubs". It provides a simple foundation upon which recovery from alcoholism can be assured.

"We needed to ask ourselves but one short question. "Do I now believe, or am I even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than myself?" As soon as a man can say that he does believe, or is willing to believe, we emphatically assure him that he is on his way. It has been repeatedly proven among us that upon this simple cornerstone a wonderfully effective spiritual structure can be built. (pg 47)

The reader who rejects "*new concepts of God*" has wasted time reading this far. They are already happy, joyous and free with nothing to be gained by enlarging their understanding of "*the Will of God*". (review pg 14-15, 133 & Appendix II).

This author applauds any such success and has no desire to disrupt enjoyment of the results. However, recognize that other alcoholics may be less fortunate and not experience that same degree of personal satisfaction. It is worth noting that other approaches to personal happiness do exist. Many produce desirable results.

The primary reason for seeking *new knowledge* is to discover something better and “*trade up*”. To determine how well a *belief* works requires examination in the light of intelligence. (syn: “the light of God”). This is something any alcoholic can find within themselves. It is mental activity which occurs within their own mind. (review pgs 23 & 55). Most alcoholics intuitively recognize it is their own mind, and they can do whatever they want with it.

It is suggested the alcoholic reader consider this personal relationship to an endless source of *new knowledge* when evaluating their fundamental idea of “God”. Particularly when seeking to be more happy, joyous and free. (see pgs 60(c), Step 11, & pg 133). An AA slogan has particular significance in this process.

“THINK, THINK, THINK”.

The personal viewpoint of one sober alcoholic may not necessarily be the only valid one. That is bad news when their ideas, emotions and attitudes which are guiding your major decisions are flawed. The good news is that any of those erroneous *beliefs* can be improved with sufficient *new knowledge* and an enlarged understanding of reality. (pgs 14-15, 164 & Step 11).

This is frequently a point where inherent intelligence and personal egos clash. When unchallenged, *new knowledge and understanding* will eventually turn into old ideas. They can then become blocks and barriers to further *spiritual growth* or to accepting further improvements and the best possible relationship to life on life’s terms. (syn: “God”).

THE GOOD IS OFTEN THE ENEMY OF THE BEST

Any such close-minded mental attitude can obstruct the fullest possible experience of happiness, joy and freedom (syn: “God’s will for us”). However, improvement is available right now. It is always available to anyone who seeks it. (review Step 11 & pg 133). What is required is a desire (syn: prayer) for something more.

“What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent
on the maintenance of our spiritual condition”
(pg 85)

Acknowledging flaws in thought processes derived from old ideas reduces the emotional hold they have on choices made and current actions taken. Admitting the imperfection opens the mind to accepting improvement to a personal concept of *an infinite Power greater than ourselves*. (see pg 23).

The personal advantages of such mental action are self-evident. But what then is the value of sharing personal shortcomings with another human being? Some observations by this author are presented for your consideration.

Telling another person about fears accepts **lack of knowledge and lack of power** to control certain conditions which impact personal happiness, joy and freedom. (syn: “God’s Will” - see pg 133). Within the mind of the individual, personal fears are like “*free-floating monsters*”. They are there, but have no clear definition. (pg 23). Writing down fears, and verbalizing them to another human being assigns those fears some specific

and definable qualities. That forces the fear into perspective where it can be intelligently evaluated. Inherent intelligence (syn: "God within") allows reevaluation of their significance.

By way of illustration that alcoholics frequently assign power where it does not belong:

A woman is troubled by "a fear of high places". After numerous expensive consultations, her psychiatrist inquires: "When was the last time a high place did something to frighten you?"

Improved conscious awareness and enlarged understanding allow for spiritual growth and a more intelligent mental approach to *the Great Reality*.

New and improved understanding of *the Great Reality* (syn: "God" - pg 55 & Step 11) is required to correct erroneous ideas, emotions and attitudes. This becomes the *vital spiritual experience* in recovery from alcoholism. For this practical reason alone, discussing defects with another person has value.

The examination of personal fears, in the light of reality, does not necessarily involve other individuals. Nonetheless, any personal fears are "*our own monsters*". Be they real or imaginary, the place the fear exists, is within thought processes of the individual. (pg 23).

Enlarged understanding of reality is an intelligent power greater than any emotions or fantasy because intelligence is more stable. Eventually it will prevail over emotions. (syn: "God's Intelligence vs.: emotional self-will run riot"). A frequently heard expression is "*we know the truth, and the truth has set us free*". Consider the implications of that observation when it is paraphrased to read:

AS WE KNOW THE TRUTH, OUR MINDS ARE FREED FROM THE LIMITATIONS OF OLD IDEAS.

New knowledge and conscious awareness of reality (syn: "God" - see Step 11) is capable of producing a *spiritual awakening*. (review Step 12). Intelligent understanding is enhanced when another person shares successful results with the alcoholic seeking a solution to their problem. Mutual enrichment results. (see pg 89). One gains new knowledge, the other mentally reinforces what already works for them.

Because *new knowledge* is in endless supply, others may have awareness of some portion of "*the Great Reality*" which is unfamiliar. When what they know is valid knowledge, they have power to use it. How they use it may be intelligent or their own emotional dependence upon some erroneous *belief system*.

Therefore, consider your own *belief system* about personal access to the source of all knowledge and power. (syn: "God"- see pg 59).

For example:

?? **WHERE DO ORIGINAL IDEAS COME FROM?**

?? **CAN YOU TAP INTO THAT SAME SOURCE?**

?? **DO YOU HAVE EQUAL ACCESS TO IT?**

Your own answers to yourself may expose some personal and limiting *beliefs* which have become guiding forces. (pg 27). By way of illustration:

"A counselor commented on a client's statement

"The idea came from Freud"

The client responded:

"I've never read any of Freud"

The counselor then asked:

"Then where did you get the idea?"

The reply was:

"FROM THE SAME PLACE FREUD GOT IT!!"

This author suggests the alcoholic has **equal access to new ideas and new knowledge** as anyone else. This implies unlimited access to improved understanding of **more truth, and more reality** concerning life, on life's terms.

This observation is significant for any alcoholic seeking relief from the limitations of their old ideas. (pg 60(c)). While other alcoholics may be helpful, there is freedom from dependence upon them as the source of new knowledge and power. (see pgs 59 & 68).

AS conscious understanding of fears is improved, they get labeled and mentally placed into a more intelligent perspective with *the Great Reality*. (syn: "God"). This can be the beginning of a *vital spiritual experience*. (see pgs 23 & 27). This is no frothy emotional appeal, but a message which has depth and weight.. (review "The Doctor's Opinion", pg 12, & Appendix II).

New knowledge comes from the source of all knowledge.

Acceptance requires intelligent choices. Willingness, honesty and open mindedness are indispensable. (see Appendix II).

With the passage of time, new ideas eventually become old ideas. There shall always appear new and previously unknown conditions which require *new knowledge*. For this practical reason, constantly enlarging a spiritual life is a personal and individual responsibility (see pgs 14-15, 35 & 129). A daily reprieve from alcoholism appears to require maintaining a mental attitude of "*willingness, honesty and open mindedness*" (pg 23 & Appendix II).

This author *believes* that such mental action is the essence of "*spiritual progress*". Obviously, other views attempt to define the limits of a relationship to the source of infinite knowledge. (syn: "God"). However, relief from alcoholism is open to anyone who seeks it. (pg 58). The alcoholic reader, may wish to ask:

HOW SAFE DO I WANT TO BE?

An honest desire for personal improvement opens the mind to opportunities for spiritual progress. Willingness to intelligently consider new viewpoints, becomes an intelligent option, preferable to emotional and automatic resistance to change. Changes compatible with reality (syn: "God") enlarge a spiritual life by improving cooperation with reality. (syn: "God"). More happiness, joy and freedom is a natural consequence. (Step 11).

An open minded attitude allows the alcoholic to consider new methods. Inherent intelligence evaluates which methods produce desired results. *New knowledge* does not infringe upon valid old ideas when it is intelligently decided what is most desired. (syn: "a prayer"). When improvement is an option, many alcoholics become both willing and able to "*trade up*".

"Are these extravagant promises? We think not.
They are being fulfilled among us--sometimes quickly,
sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work
for them." (review pgs 83 & 84)

The main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind. (pg23). The ideas, emotions and attitudes which are guiding forces in his life determine the vital spiritual experience required for recovery. (pg 27)

The reader knows if they are willingly, honestly and open mindedly seeking to expand the horizons of their own mind or, if they are trying to force AA principles into some preconceived old idea of God.

* * * * *

SECTION B06c:

Chapter 6

INTO ACTION

STEP FIVE:

“Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.”

READ:

Chapter 6 - Into Action, from page 72, beginning with “*This is perhaps difficult.....*” to page 73 ending with “*.....until they told someone else all their life story.*”

* * * * *

COMMENTS:

By now the reader has given some thought to the proposition of equality, of each alcoholic, with other individuals in having personal access to the source of all *new knowledge* and all new power. (syn: “equality in the eyes of God”). It may also have been recognized, that no single individual has all knowledge. (syn: “God’s omniscience”). As equals, everyone knows something. No one knows everything. This points out a fundamental difference between AA and many religious concepts of the power necessary for a vital spiritual experience. (see pg 27).

This author *believes* the power of *new knowledge* is infinite. Accordingly, any understanding of that power by anyone, this author included, is always inadequate. (see pg 68). There is always more. The inherent intelligence of the reader will recognize that any attempt to define infinite power (syn: “God”) is inherently incomplete without claiming to know all and everything about it..

Regardless of how practical some portions of their various definitions may be, most traditional religions specify precisely what they *believe*. Each *belief system* is different from all others in some way. Most omit the addition of *new knowledge*, and usually reject any other ideas which might displace their own *beliefs*. (see pgs 55 & 95).

A similar mental process occurs within the individual alcoholic concerning ideas, emotions, and attitudes guiding their personal life. Each alcoholic has their own unique, but nonetheless finite, fundamental idea about how they relate to life, on life’s terms. Only those portions of their *belief system* which are valid avoid conflict with the Ultimate Reality of All Life. (syn: “God” - see pg 55).

Whenever there is conflict with life on life’s terms, that conflict reduces personal happiness, joy and freedom. (see pg 133). There is always a potential for creating more turmoil by coming to *believe* something which is not so and manufacturing further conflicts with reality. (pg 164 & Step 11).

This perspective on Step Five has practical value for the alcoholic seeking relief from erroneous or inadequate conclusions about their relationship to life. (pg 60(c)). It allows them to reduce conflicts with reality produced by old ideas which are not valid nor

part of *the Great Reality* (syn: "God" see pg 58 & Step 10). Each individual finds the power to recognize those mistakes within themselves (pg 55).

A *vital spiritual experience* is necessary for recovery, however religious conceptions of God are restricted by their own definitions. Most traditional definitions are inadequate because they are incomplete. (pg 27). They are limited by the finite range of their knowledge and beliefs.

Any precisely defined *belief system*, along with their accompanying moral codes, fail to accommodate *new knowledge*. Some new information about "*the Great Reality*" might be an improvement for the alcoholic as a guiding force in their life. (see pg 164 & Steps 10 & 11). Any such improvements are excluded from a precisely defined *belief system*.

This author suggests that any valid new knowledge, compatible with the Ultimate Reality of Life (syn: "God"), provides the alcoholic with *more power* than emotional and speculative wishful thinking. Many religious alcoholics will disagree. How will you seek access to "*a power greater than yourself*"?

"Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a *Power greater than ourselves*. Obviously. But where and how were we to find this Power?" (pg 45)

Sharing errors in personal judgment with another human being has value. It requires conscious recognition of the limited scope of old ideas, emotions and attitudes which have guided decisions in life. This mental action exposes the shortcomings of some of the *beliefs* supporting a desire (i.e.: "*prayer*") for oblivion from reality. Drinking alcohol does provide that oblivion. (see pgs 23 & 27 & Step 10).

WHEN WE DRINK, REALITY DOES NOT CHANGE; ONLY OUR PERSPECTIVE OF REALITY CHANGES

As an alcoholic improves their conscious understanding of reality, they automatically learn more about it. What gets learned may include what others have already learned. However, there is always more. There is more *new knowledge* available beyond the sum total of all human knowledge acquired thus far. This conscious awareness reinforces recognition and acceptance of **personal equality**, relative to the source of all knowledge (syn: "God").

What is required is a desire (syn: "a prayer") to know more than is now known. This desire gets fulfilled by seeking valid *new knowledge*, wherever it is to be found. With it comes improved and enlarged understanding of truth, good and reality. (all syn: "God" - see pg 47, Step 3 and pg 60(c)).

The natural consequence of this mental action produces improved ability of an alcoholic to claim more personal happiness, joy and freedom from life because they are equally entitled to it. (syn: "God's Will for us" - see pg 133). This author suggests the alcoholic reader give serious consideration to the implications of being an equal in the eyes of God. Especially where it involves their personal recovery from a life-threatening condition.

Within the AA basic text for recovery is oft repeated a need for power, greater than the individual. Also, that there is a need for the alcoholic to abandon old ideas and seek improved understanding of that power. (pgs 27, 58, Steps 10 & 11). **More specifically, the basic text includes a requirement to continually grow spiritually.**

“For if an alcoholic failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, he could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead.”
(pgs 14 & 15)

The claim made in the basic text for recovery is *spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection*. (pg 60). Herein lies an inherent problem which impacts numerous limited concepts established by many religious *belief systems*. It concerns the fundamental idea of *trusting God*. The “*concept of God*”, for any individual or collective religious group, is a finite concept. There is more to be known, and more to be understood.

“We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves”
(pg 68)

The problem is “*a concept of a power*”, which is trapped within the **closed loop of old ideas**. (see pg 23). Without the capacity to be *willing, honest and open minded* about admitting mistakes and making improvements, little if any, spiritual progress is possible. (Steps 10 & 11)

Such a mental attitude restricts individual thinking within the confines of what they *believe* is possible. Any freedom of choice for *spiritual growth* is limited within the **closed loop of beliefs about God**. It reflects the finite limitations of their conscious awareness of *the Great Reality* and is the only range of thinking about reality presently available to their mind. In reality, there exists more than is now known or understood. (see pgs 12, 23, 28, 39, 42, 43, 45, 46, 53, 55, 58, 85, 89, 93, 94, 95, 98, 129, 133, 157, 158, 159, 161, 164).

This author strongly recommends the alcoholic reader seriously review, with an open mind, their fundamental idea of God. (Step 10). It is further recommended you do so by trusting an infinite rather than a restrictive concept of God. (pg 68).

The **closed loop of old ideas** can be a block, barrier or obstacle to making spiritual progress toward improving conscious understanding of an infinite God. (Step 11).

“Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.”
(Step 12)

Seeking to improve conscious contact with truth, good and reality, (all syn for “God” - see Step 11) **requires recognition of some source of new knowledge which is “a power greater than ourselves”.**

As equals, it is not necessary to be dependent upon any finite human authority on “God”. (pg 12). Nothing in the basic text for recovery requires or even implies a need for reliance upon any “*second-hand concept of God*”. Each alcoholic is free to choose their own authorities on any subject. Alcoholics are equally free to develop and improve their own concept of an infinite source of power. (see pgs 12 & 95). For this, the use of intelligence is recommended.

“If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.”

(pgs 83 & 84)

To experience these promises requires intelligent examination of old ideas, emotions and attitudes. (pg 27). The inherent intelligence of the alcoholic allows conscious recognition of truth, good and reality (syn: “God”). Seeking to improve recognition of reality (i.e.: “*if you don’t take the first drink you can’t get drunk*”), enlarges conscious contact with *the Great Reality* (i.e.: “God” pg 55) and improves the freedom of choice to cooperate with it.. The power to do so (syn: “God”) is only available within each individual alcoholic. (pg 55).

Cooperation with what is true, good and real is part of becoming happy, joyous and free. For the still suffering alcoholic this requires that they enlarge their spiritual life to improve their personal understanding of what that is. (see pgs 14, 15, 23, 27, 35, 85, 129, 133 & 164).

**DON’T BOTHER ME WITH FACTS,
I’VE ALREADY GOT MY MIND MADE UP.**

Consciously seeking continued cooperation with the reality of life may be the best attitude any alcoholic can achieve. Many alcoholics would be making that choice if they knew how. Other alcoholics may prefer to remain within the **closed-loop of their old ideas**.

Regardless of the chosen mental approach, improved cooperation with the Ultimate Reality of Life (syn: “God”) is increasingly possible for anyone. Improved cooperation with reality occurs as the individual understands more about the infinite

source of *new knowledge*. (Steps 3 & 11). In this respect, they are **equals** with any of their established authorities.

ENLARGING A SPIRITUAL LIFE IS AN UNENDING PROCESS

It should be recognized any *new knowledge* comes from the source of all knowledge and power. (syn: "God" - see pg 59). Some *new knowledge* may be obtained from others who already have it. However, you, the alcoholic reader, ("an equal in the eyes of God") are free to go to the same source if you want to.

Those alcoholics who are completely happy, joyous and free now, are experiencing their own version of what God wants for them. (see pg 133). It is obvious that other versions exist. For those who seek more, it is self-evident that more new knowledge will be required.

The reader who trusts "*infinite God*" as being "*the Great Reality*" (see pgs 53, 55 & 68) will then find seeking improved awareness of how to cooperate with reality is desirable. It becomes available by realistically seeking more happiness, more joy, and more freedom. (review Steps 3, 11, pg 133 & Appendix II).

This author suggests that what you want the most is your personal desire. (syn: "*your prayer*"). If there is a power which responds to answering any prayer **that** is what it responds to.

NO ONE ELSE DECIDES WHAT YOU WANT - DO THEY?

Your dominant desire constitutes your prayer for something you are unable to obtain without the power of *new knowledge*. (see Step 11).

It is suggested that when an alcoholic knows how to fulfill their own desire then they have that power in their personal life. By mentally recognizing the infinite power of *new knowledge*, more personal power is always available. (pg 23). However, it gets provided on "*life's terms*", not by a personal *belief system*.

Recognition of personal equality allows for **other ideas** to exist. Not with the expectation some equally imperfect individual will have **all the answers**. Rather, that they may possess **some new or improved answers**.

To discover what improvements are available requires intelligent open minded consideration of new ideas. However, an open minded attitude demands that the alcoholic set aside any self-centered egotistical belief they have the only valid idea of God possible. Anyone can be mistaken. Even persons who claim spiritual authority can be mistaken, unless the reader *believes* they possess all knowledge. (syn: "God's Omniscience").

This author recommends that, whenever possible, the alcoholic reader expose the limitations of their old ideas, emotions and attitudes. Especially those which have become guiding forces in life. (see pg 27).

Starting from birth, personal survival involves some degree of interdependence with other individuals. To experience personal freedom, requires individuals enlarge their conscious awareness of reality and then accept responsibility for their own choices. (see pgs 14, 15 & 35).

Improving personal understanding of the truth about life is an intelligent way to discover who does or does not accept you as you really are. Not everyone believes they are equal to others. (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”). This author suggests that, if “*God is everything*” (see pg 53) the reader “*is something*” and really is an equal to others in access to “*infinite intelligence*” (see pg 68). The reader may prefer to believe some other attitude is superior.

Telling someone else all of your life story reduces a *false belief* of being unacceptable to the intelligent source of all creation. (syn: “God”).

While it is not essential to rashly expose one’s innermost self to everyone, it is crucial to do so with someone. (review pg 74). This is a major step toward constructing a life built upon a foundation of reality. (syn: “God”). Upon that stable foundation, anything that is true can be discovered by anyone without the collapse of a chosen way of life. Once more, the alcoholic is faced with the awesome power of their own personal attitudes in matters affecting their own life. This attitude is both important and desirable in reducing any fear of rejection.

From a strictly practical point of view, there is another important reason for taking *the Fifth Step* and “*admitting to God, to ourselves and another human being the exact nature of our wrongs*”. That reason is simple:

“If we skip this vital step, we may not overcome drinking”. (pg 72)

Some individuals *believe they are victims* without any choice about events occurring in their life. Some others hold *a conflicting belief* that no power exists greater than themselves as an independent individual. Neither view appears to coincide with reality. (syn: “God” - see pgs 62 & 133).

The alcoholic reader is asked to consider that what they most desire fits a reasonable definition of “*a prayer*”. Fulfillment of that desire (syn: “the answer to the prayer”) occurs as the individual acquires new knowledge of how to claim what they desire from life. (see pg 23 & Steps 3 & 11).

Every alcoholic gets life dealt out to them on the basis of a daily reprieve. (pg 85). That “*gift of life*” (i.e.: “*a gift of God*”) includes all and everything in the *infinite universe* which is part of their experience in this lifetime. “*The gift of Life*” includes access to all *new knowledge* and an equal opportunity to cooperate with it, on an individual basis.

This daily reprieve from oblivion occurs on life’s terms. (see pg 85). Life’s terms are not necessarily the same as the *belief systems* offered by authorities of numerous religions. Individuals joyfully accept what they want to believe. Unfortunately, for many, the introduction of reality (syn: “God”) disrupts false beliefs.

This author *believes* that a mental attitude of *willingness, honesty and open mindedness* to accept reality is an indispensable requirement to the maintenance of the spiritual condition essential for recovery from alcoholism. (review Appendix II).

If any one individual knows how to claim what is most desired from life, that same knowledge is equally available to others if it is sought. (see pg 60(c)). The reader may also recognize that more new knowledge exists beyond that which others may now know. There is an endless supply of *new knowledge* available to be discovered. This author *believes* there is more *new knowledge* to be learned about an *infinite universe* than the entire human race has discovered thus far. How much of it are you willing to seek to understand? (see pg 60(c) & Step 11).

Seeking new knowledge is the personal responsibility of the individual who wants more knowledge than they now possess. (i.e.: "*the answer to their prayer*"). Specifically, each individual is responsible for open mindedly seeking whatever *new knowledge* lies beyond the closed loop of their old ideas and erroneous beliefs. (see pg 60(c)).

Any fundamental idea of the power required for recovery from alcoholism exists within the individual. It is their concept of that power. (see pg 12 & 55) and is a guiding force within their mind. (pgs 23, 27 & 55). Erroneous or limited *beliefs* impact decisions about what is important. For example, as an equal human being, is your personal priority to:

1. RECOVER FROM ALCOHOLISM?

or do you prefer to

2. HOLD ON TO OLD IDEAS?

Without adequate conscious understanding of life, on life's terms, (i.e.: "God" - review pgs 30-32, 42, 53, & Step 11), it may not be possible to have it both ways within the closed loop of your limited present range of understanding all of reality. More *new knowledge* may need to be revealed. (pg 164).

Until an alcoholic has revealed all their life story to someone else, there are parts that remain hidden from view. Under that condition it is virtually impossible for them to expose those guiding forces to the light of any intelligent self-examination.

Someone without emotions might be able to do this. More likely, their emotional defenses, are protecting their personal egos (syn: "self-will") in a struggle to survive against reality. For many alcoholics this mental action reflects the *exact nature* of what is wrong in their life. (see pgs 23, 62 & Step 5). For some, it has stood in the way of their personal recovery.

No inventory process is complete until all mental flaws get identified. (see pg 23). Step Four was but a beginning. It needs to be continued as conditions change. (pg 84). The best approach in the beginning may no longer be the current best choice to apply after conditions have changed. (see Step #10).

MY BEST EFFORTS TODAY MAY NOT BE THE SAME AS MY BEST EFFORTS FOR YESTERDAY OR TOMORROW

Up-dating a personal inventory requires that items in it be identified, and assigned value in terms of present time reality. (syn: “the will of God now”). The only reality an alcoholic can understand will be **what they think** at that point in time. (pg 23).

Any limited, finite present time belief does not rule out there being more to understand. No one, not even authorities of religions, fully understand what new awareness of *the Great Reality*. (see pg 55) may be discovered at any given moment. However any individual may acquire some additional valid new knowledge about reality at any time, merely by seeking it. (review pgs 60(c), 87 & 89)

This author submits that, as an equal, any one personal concept of an infinite power is either as valid or as incomplete as any other. As valid *new knowledge* is discovered, more improved understanding about reality will be revealed. (see pgs 68, 164 & Step 11). The only intelligent value of one *belief system* over another is found in how well it works. (i.e.: AA vs. “*other approaches to recovery*”). To produce any results, a *belief system* requires some agreement with reality and those principles which are applicable to all life. (syn: “God” - see pg 53).

Conditions in an *infinite universe* are constantly changing. The relative importance of any item in a personal inventory is only applicable to present time conditions. Their significance is assigned by individuals according to how well it fulfills present time goals and objectives. Present time versions of happiness, joy and freedom) (syn: “God’s will” - pg 133) are temporary and can change by improved awareness that something better is available. (Steps 10 & 11). The desire (i.e.: “*the prayer*”) to “trade up to something better” must come from the individual seeking the improvement.

The reader will probably recognize their personal desires (syn: prayers) have continually changed. In addition, recognize that how well anything which provides personal happiness, joy and freedom now is also subject to change.

Any improved understanding of life’s terms produces an enlarged spiritual life. (see pgs 14-15, 35 & 164). This improved conscious understanding of reality (see Steps 10 & 11) allows for up-grading goals and objectives. The decision to “*trade up*” to something more desirable will displace and rearrange old ideas, emotions and attitudes which are guiding forces in life. (see pg 27). This mental action enlarges a spiritual life

The alcoholic reader is now asked to intelligently consider the practical impossibility of enlarging their conscious understanding of “the Great Reality” (syn: “God”) within the closed-loop of old ideas, emotions and attitudes.

Rigid thinking, as a mental condition, has become a guiding force for many alcoholics. (pg 23). Either those thought processes change or they stay the same. In this context, old ideas and values acquire deadly significance.

Some conscious understanding of the awesome power of *new knowledge* is required before it can be used effectively. Recognition of equal access to that power is part of the process. Denial that anything exists beyond a limited personal *belief system* is

clearly “*self-will run riot*”. This author suggests that constantly enlarging personal understanding of the Ultimate Reality of Life (syn: “God”) is a continuing requirement for continued experience of personal happiness, joy and freedom (syn: “God’s will” see pgs 14-15, 35, 133, 164, Step 11 & Appendix II).

For now, it may be enough for the alcoholic reader to recognize that **breaking out of the closed-loop of old ideas** is a crucial part of the recovery process. Step Five, provides that opportunity by giving definition to the problem. Step Ten provides the opportunity to continually up-grade a personal relationship with present time reality. (i.e.: “God” pg 53).

DO YOU WANT MORE HAPPINESS OR NOT?

The author suggests Step Five is an opportunity to identify and give definition to the exact nature of character defects blocking personal happiness. Those who already have all the happiness they desire will have no need to proceed. For those who want more, the freedom of choice to seek more *new knowledge* is their own.

WHAT YOU DO HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU.

Fear of exposure and rejection can be a block, barrier or obstacle to admitting mistakes in personal judgment. Often, the fear stems from failure or unwillingness to accept life, on life’s terms. (i.e.: “God”). This occurs because some other restrictive idea is believed to be more valid.

ANYTHING WHICH CAUSES A PROBLEM IS A PROBLEM!

To maintain control of human beings often requires fear and intimidation. However, improved awareness of reality is available to anyone. Keeping others in a condition of gullible ignorance requires maintaining control of their access to *new knowledge*. This is difficult, if not impossible, to sustain without the willing cooperation of the ignorant.

On the premise that “*God wants us to be happy, joyous and free*” (pg 133), anything which stands in the way of acquiring that *new knowledge* is an obvious problem. Any *belief system* is directly related to understanding any problem with reality. (i.e.: “God” see pg 53). If ignoring valid *new knowledge* of reality produces desirable results, then choose to use “*your own old idea of God*” (pg 12).

“IF IGNORANCE IS BLISS, ‘TIS FOLLY TO BE WISE”

Where there exists any fear of exposure to the truth, the alcoholic may choose to enlarge and improve their conscious understanding of how to cooperate with reality. (syn: “God” - see pgs 14-15, 35 & Step 11). The desired *new knowledge* may already have been discovered by other alcoholics, or they may need to seek it directly from the source of all knowledge. (pg 60 (a), (b) & (c)).

YOU CAN BE MOTIVATED BY INSPIRATION OR DESPERATION.

Fear is frequently nothing more than an old idea with strong emotional overtones. (syn: "self-will run riot"). Sometimes that old idea is a belief which is in conflict with reality because it reflects a personal belief of being singled out for rejection. There is a seeming conflict between being both unique and equal. (pg 23).

Resolving that conflict is significant in terms of personal happiness. (syn: "God's will" - pg 133). The alcoholic reader may wish to investigate where they acquired their belief system. Then, intelligently consider how and why that belief system is still a present time authority as a guiding force in life.

OTHERS MAY NOT BE AGAINST YOU, THEY MAY JUST BE FOR THEMSELVES.

With a newborn infant some dominant adult is in control of their life. The child is both dependent and powerless. That infant remains controlled by decisions and choices of others, until they claim their human equality. ("*in the eyes of God*" see pg 23). Unless they claim that personal equality and freedom of choice, those dominant adults will continue to control their behavior.

IF NOTHING CHANGES - THEN NOTHING CHANGES!

When beliefs, from the dominant adult, get accepted by the child without thinking, those ideas, emotions and attitudes become habitual. Once they are habit patterns they become guiding forces for decisions and choices in life. (see pg 27).

For the adult alcoholic, those same concepts have determined what is their fundamental idea of what is the truth, good and reality (syn: "God" - see pg 55). This author assumes the reader has sufficient inherent intelligence ("*the God within*") to recognize that the beliefs of others do not always produce personal happiness, joy and freedom (syn: "God's Will - see pg 133).

"Think - Think - Think"

Parents, or the dominant adults who control the life of a child, do not know everything. They do have their own belief system but cannot transmit something they haven't got. (see pg 164). Some portions of what they believe may not be accurate. Without "*all knowledge*" (syn: "God's Omniscience"), there is always more to be revealed. However, when trapped in the closed-loop of limited individual beliefs, there is no opportunity for the introduction of new knowledge (syn: "more God" as the source of all knowledge). Because of this limitation, it is understandable that:

"In actual practice, we usually find a solitary self-
appraisal insufficient." (pg 72).

Alcoholics who are unwilling to intelligently confront the *beliefs* of their childhood have limited their own opportunities to choose changes and improvements. By their own choice, they remain within the closed-loop of old ideas, emotions and attitudes. (see pg 27). The result is they become like the man who stood on his left foot with his right foot while complaining he could not run.

Discussion of fears with another human being is an action which gives the fear some definition, form and personal value. That action brings the fear into reality and allows the intelligence, inherent within the individual, to recognize other options and make a choice to “trade up”.

Whenever old ideas, fail to “*answer prayers to be happy, joyous and free*”. (syn: “God’s Will for them” - see pg 133) it becomes understood that the *belief system*, obtained from dominate adults during childhood, does not always produce desired results. *New knowledge*, or different ideas may work better for that individual alcoholic.

YOU DON’T KNOW UNLESS YOU KNOW!

At this point, many alcoholics discover, they are equally entitled to use “*the power of God to be happy, joyous and free*”. This power they find deep down within themselves (pg 55) may conflict with the *beliefs* of others, but this is the same power they are seeking, to provide them with relief from alcoholism.

THE THING YOU ARE LOOKING FOR IS THE THING YOU ARE LOOKING WITH

NOTE OF CAUTION TO THE READER:

There is a significant difference between privately telling someone else all their life story, and in telling anyone and everyone. The author recommends using intelligence (syn: “God”) when selecting another individual for this confidential step in personal recovery.

Participation in AA does not necessarily qualify someone to be “*a close-mouthed friend*”. (see pg 74). Not every AA member will continue their sobriety.

Your own intelligence will recognize that no one is barred from attending AA meetings. Nothing in the AA program requires “*airing dirty linen*” at that public a level. All manner of people may be in any AA meeting. You have no way of really knowing their true objectives for being there. Some may have personal agendas which are not compatible with the basic text or your own recovery from alcoholism.

Before choosing a person with whom to take this intimate step, this author recommends the reader be guided by intelligence (syn: “God”) rather than any blind trust or emotional wishful thinking. (syn: “self-will run riot”).

Exposing a *belief system* to reality includes the personal priority given to that *belief* over other ideas. Any alcoholic is always free to accept or reject *new knowledge beyond the "closed-loop" of present knowledge* (review Appendix II). Valid ideas can be recognized by the use of your own inherent intelligence (syn: "the God within") and ultimately will prevail over wishful thinking.

**IF YOU LOSE ANYTHING TO THE TRUTH ,
YOU HAVEN'T LOST ANYTHING!**

Seeking to improve understanding of how to be happy, joyous and free in all relationships and affairs (syn: "God's will" pg 133, & Steps 11 &12) is not a "*one-time event*". Instead, it is an "*on-going activity*" for which continuous action will be required.

"It is easy to let up on the spiritual program of action and rest on our laurels. We are headed for trouble if we do, for alcohol is a subtle foe. We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition."
(pg 85).

By now, the choice for the alcoholic reader should be clear. Either you prefer to protect a *belief system*, which probably came from others, or else increase awareness of personal equality "in the eyes of God".

Either choice requires using your own inherent intelligence. Something which exists within each individual as their chosen "*concept of God*". (see pgs 12, 27 & 55). However, a "*one time choice and decision*" alone is not sufficient to produce permanent recovery from alcoholism. Once again:

"What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition." (pg 85).

A story provides an illustration:

A Native American youth came to a wise elder for advice, telling him he wanted to be useful, but part of him was destructive. 'Grandfather' he asked, 'what is wrong with me?'
The old man told him "you have two dogs fighting to dominate your spirit - one is helpful, one is harmful"
The young man then asked "which one is going to win?"
The old man smiled and said "the one you feed".

Human beings have been discovering these same truths about life (syn: "God") for so long as individuals have been thinking about life. In an infinite universe, any definition of reality based upon finite human awareness, is obviously incomplete. (pg 60(b)).

"Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us."
(pg 164).

Accordingly, no human power has sufficient awareness to provide any alcoholic with complete understanding of their greatest good. (syn: "God's will for them"- Step 11). To blindly accept the limited *beliefs* of others as being complete is a choice not to seek new knowledge greater than what they claim to understand. This author contends that more than that *new knowledge* is required to continually enlarge a spiritual life. (review pgs 14, 15, 35, 60(c), 164 & Appendix II).

"The gift of life" is provided on a daily basis (see pg 85) and is filled with unlimited opportunities for spiritual growth. An alcoholic is free to seek more new knowledge of whatever portion they most desire any time that is their dominate desire (syn: "their prayer").

Sadly for some alcoholics, what is desired gets provided on life's terms, not those of the alcoholic with the desire. Trying to force reality to suit a *belief system* can be considered self-will run riot. (review pgs 60 & 61).

Enlarging conscious understanding of life's terms is equivalent to "*trading up*" and "*turning your will and your life over to the care of God, as you understand Him*". (Steps 3 & 11). The success of "*Alcoholics Anonymous*" demonstrates this choice is possible. The alcoholic reader is free to use this as *new knowledge* of recovery and as a guiding force in their life.

".....we had to fearlessly face the proposition that God is either everything or else He is nothing. God either is, or He isn't. What was our choice to be?" (pg 53)

The alcoholic who accepts that "*God is everything*" faces the inescapable responsibility of continually seeking to improved their conscious understanding of life's terms in order to assure their own survival. Some understanding of the Great Reality is required to use that power in an intelligent manner. Many alcoholics *believe* they have already found all the power they will ever need within their religion. Only those alcoholics who *believe* they understand all and everything about life, on life's terms, would claim to really be certain. This author suggests the alcoholic reader consider how safe they want to be.

"Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a *Power greater than ourselves*. Obviously. But where and how were we to find this Power?"

Well, that's exactly what this book is about. Its main objective is to enable you to find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem." (pg 45)

Enlarged awareness of reality occurs with Step Five. The basic text "*Alcoholics Anonymous*" provides a valid path for personal recovery from alcoholism. The results speak for themselves.

This author suggests the alcoholic reader will choose whatever path to recovery they most desire. (syn: "*the answer to their personal prayer*"). That choice will reflect a

personal *belief system* and your own version of happiness, joy and freedom. That personal freedom already exists. The choice made will either be limited within the boundaries of old ideas or your thinking will be enlarged by accepting an enlarged awareness of the Great Reality. (see pgs, 23, 53, 55, 129, 164 & Appendix II).

WHAT YOU WANT IS WHAT YOU GET

* * * * *

SECTION B06d:

Chapter 6

INTO ACTION

STEP FIVE:

“Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.”

READ:

Page 73 from “*More than most people,*” to bottom of page 73 ending with “*.....have a low opinion of alcoholics and their chance for recovery!*”

* * * * *

COMMENTS:

By now the alcoholic reader should be aware of some reasons for revealing *all* of their life story to another person. Caution is recommended when selecting the person or persons with whom this vital step is taken.

Revealing ones innermost self to another human being requires identification and definition of some of the fears which have made oblivion by drinking alcohol desirable. Doing so requires mental action to identify some personal limitations in understanding *the Great Reality* of life, on life’s terms. (syn: “God” see pgs 23 & 55). For some alcoholics those shortcomings in awareness of reality, are blocks and barriers to personal recovery. Furthermore, if they are not dealt with, there is a chance that recovery will not occur.

This author proposes that seeking an enlarged understanding of life, on life’s terms, is equivalent to seeking an improved understanding of God. (see pgs 12, 23, 45, 53, 68 & Step 11).

Any personal concept of “God” is found within each individual. (see pg 55). If the reader agrees, then being honest with one’s own self about any blocks or barriers to recovery becomes a matter of enlightened self-interest. (pg 58). One of the significant benefits from this mental action is the reduction of fear of rejection. That fear usually omits recognition or acceptance of any personal equality (“*in the eyes of God*”).

Where an individual desires equal access to the power of *all new knowledge* they have the responsibility to seek it. (pg 60(c)). When an individual denies their own personal access, they cannot use *new knowledge*, and others become their personal concept of God.

**FEAR OF REJECTION IS A BELIEF PERSONAL HAPPINESS
DEPENDS UPON THE GOOD OPINION OF OTHERS.**

The natural consequence is that other equal human beings get assigned the role of being “*a power greater than ourselves*”. In reality, they are not. But, within the mind of the alcoholic, those equal individuals are *believed* to be superior. Because of that *belief*, they place their trust in the messenger, rather than the message of improved new knowledge which the messenger presents.

Inherent intelligence intuitively recognizes that individual uniqueness is part of “*the Great Reality*”. (syn: “*God within*”- pg 55) No one can be someone else. However, anyone can learn what anyone else now knows. Assignment of human superiority to another individual denies personal equality. (“*in the eyes of God*”). Recognition of greater wisdom and *new knowledge* does not. (see pg 23).

This author suggests that making other equal humans the sole source of *new knowledge* creates both dependency and limitation. Any awareness of an infinite reality then becomes limited to their personal concept of “*a power greater than themselves*”. Any such *belief system* makes others the power required to be happy, joyous and free and limits personal freedom to their finite human knowledge as being the source of new knowledge. In reality, there is more. The source of all knowledge (syn: “*God*”) provides for endless personal freedom for spiritual growth. (review pgs 12, 14-15, 42, 45, 53, 68, 129, 164 & Appendix II).

Assignment of superiority to another individual may utilize some *new knowledge*, and utilize some intelligence in the process. (syn: “*the God within*” - see pg 55). Often however, the assignment of such authority is the result of accepting, with blind faith, the *fears and beliefs* of dominant adults in childhood.

Regardless of how it occurred, making others an authority does establish dependency upon their ideas, emotions and attitudes. Without independent thinking, the result is a “second-hand concept of God” as a guiding force in life. When it produces desired results some portions may be worth retaining. If their *belief system* does not produce results, acceptable to you, then it may be necessary to displace and rearrange those ideas, emotions and attitudes. (see pg 27).

Recognizing how and why personal decisions get made is a significant factor in the recovery process. For some alcoholics this is extremely difficult because their *belief system* remains their childhood idea of God. (i.e.: “*the source of happiness, joy and freedom*”). It is restricted to the limits of the wisdom and knowledge of equal human authorities who are still allowed to dominate their lives. (see pg 164). Sometimes that belief system conflicts with reality. (syn: “*God*”).

Some individuals may be authorities of medicine, science, religion, or any other area of knowledge about *the Great Reality* of life on life’s terms (syn: “*God*”). However, all have limitations in their understanding an infinite reality. (pg 68). As an equal, anyone can learn what others have learned. In an infinite universe there is an endless supply of *new knowledge* still to be discovered by humanity.

No human intelligence possesses all knowledge. Knowing everything and the accompanying power of that knowledge (i.e.: omniscience & omnipotence) are mental qualities reserved to define a fundamental concept of God. (review pg 23).

This author contends, it is self evident, that there is always more to be understood by both science and religion. (see pg 68 & Step 11).

The reader who desires to understand more about life is responsible to seek new knowledge. Others are equally free to restrict their awareness of reality (syn: "God") to what someone else claims to understand. However, that attitude of "*knowing enough*" becomes increasingly difficult to defend with intelligence as new awareness of reality is forced upon them by life, on life's terms.

Every alcoholic has sufficient access to enough more intelligence that they are always free to improve their conscious awareness of *the Great Reality*. (see Step 11). Lack of understanding reality (syn: "God") is lack of power to cooperate with it. (see pg 45). Without awareness of reality, personal decisions will eventually conflict with life, on life's terms. Seeking *new knowledge* from the source (syn: "God") provides relief. (pg 60(c)).

. As a result of inadequate understanding of reality (syn: "God"), there occurs a personal conflict with reality which blocks available happiness, joy and freedom. (syn: "*God's will*" - see pg 133). Relief from the consequences of errors made in ignorance, by the alcoholic, comes as a daily reprieve for those who become *willing* to let go of their old ideas. (syn: "*Let Go and Let God*"). By replacing those conflicts with *new knowledge*, the alcoholic reduces the obstacles to their own personal recovery. (review pgs 58 & 132).

This mental process emphasizes that, in recovery:

".....the main problem of the alcoholic centers
in his mind, rather than in his body." (pg 23)

The mental activity of the alcoholic is guided by ideas, emotions and attitudes. At least some of them require displacement and rearrangement for recovery to occur. To accomplish this requires a vital spiritual experience which religious convictions do not sufficiently provide. (see pg 27).

The author of this Study Guide suggests the reader has the ability to change the ideas, emotions and attitudes guiding their decisions in life.

IT'S YOUR MIND, AND YOU CAN DO WITH IT WHAT YOU WANT - CAN'T YOU?

Those who believe they cannot change also believe they are victims and therefore, in their own mind, the AA program would be a waste of time. (pg 23) This is a difficult belief to maintain with any intelligence when faced with the facts that countless other alcoholics do recover. (see Frontispiece).

This author suggests such an erroneous belief has strong emotional and egotistical overtones of having been singled out for specialized personal attention by life. (syn: "God"). It adds additional support to a false belief of personal inequality, and creates conflict with any equal opportunity to recover from alcoholism. (pg 58).

The capacity to recognize reality is part of any alcoholics ability to seek and understand God. That intelligence is found deep within every man, woman and child. (see pgs 53, 55 & Step 11). The power of that inherent intelligence to recognize reality exists within each individual. The mind-altering effects of drinking alcohol diminishes the capacity.

If the alcoholic reader agrees, then they will recognize that, as equals, other alcoholics have that same capacity. Each alcoholic has the capacity to point out to others what *new knowledge* (i.e.: “the power of God”) they have learned from life, on life’s terms. Your own inherent intelligence will recognize that no individual is an authority on the source all new knowledge. (i.e.: “God” see pg 59). The author of this Study Guide is no exception and is specifically included.

What another person is able to point out is not all knowledge (syn: “God”) but what they *believe* about all knowledge. There is a significant difference because there either is or is not some intelligence involved in the *belief*.

The only intelligent measure of validity in any *belief* is in how well it conforms to reality.

It is suggested, each alcoholic has some intelligence able to recognize what does or does not conform to reality. That inherent intelligence is their personal capacity to recognize the truth (syn: “God”). This can be demonstrated with the proposition “*If you don’t take the first drink, you can’t get drunk*”. Any alcoholic can recognize this as a valid observation of reality.

Using inherent intelligence is a valid concept for developing a different or new “*fundamental idea of God*”. It is an approach which the reader is free to choose as their own. With that new concept they become free to seek, and find more *new knowledge*. (pgs 12, 55, 60(c) & Step 11). Many traditional religious ideas will not provide the alcoholic that same freedom by claiming their ideas are the last word on some subjects. Regardless of any claims made by their spokesmen, the alcoholic reader may choose not to believe that religious experts know enough for all the new changes which may arise in this lifetime. (review pgs 14-15, 35, 129 & 164).

As “*the Great Reality* is better understood, there is conscious awareness that more *new knowledge* is available. This spiritual growth has value when dealing with life, on life’s terms. Furthermore, as an individual enlarges their conscious awareness of reality they have more power to make intelligent choices. Not all choices will be intelligent, but more of them will be. This improvement is equivalent to having “more God” in the life of the alcoholic concerned. (Steps 3, 10 & 11)

Acquiring a more intelligent understanding of reality, beyond the existing limits of self-knowledge, is crucial to recovery. (see pgs 14-15, 35, & 135). This author *believes* it is the essence of *a vital spiritual experience*. (see pg 27). Without some enlarged spiritual awareness of reality (syn: “God”), there is little successful recovery for the alcoholic who insists upon holding onto old ideas. (pgs 35, 58 & 68).

“.....the actual or potential alcoholic, with hardly an exception will be absolutely unable to stop drinking on the basis of self-knowledge.” (pg 39).

The power of existing self knowledge, is limited and restricted by the old ideas, emotions and attitudes, which are inadequate for continued recovery. However, other alcoholics, who are equals (“*in the eyes of God*”), have recovered. What alcoholics who have already recovered now know can be understood by others.(See Frontispiece to the

AA Big Book). The *new knowledge* they learned can be learned and equally understood by all who seek awareness of reality. *That valid new knowledge is demonstrably a power greater than their old ideas.*

Those who have demonstrated successful recovery from alcoholism have provided their *new knowledge* to others. They made it available in the basic text “*Alcoholics Anonymous*”. The reader is at liberty to accept or reject the contents of that book, or prefer the results produced by some other approach. Those early members of AA did not claim any ***monopoly on God*** only an approach that worked for them. (see pg 95).

The author of this Study Guide suggests that:

?? **Existing self-knowledge is not enough for continued recovery from alcoholism.** (see pgs 14, 15, 35 & 129)

?? **More *new knowledge* of self can be acquired from the source of all knowledge.** (see pgs 53, 55, & 164)

?? **Enlarged awareness of reality provides relief from restrictive limitations of old ideas.** (see pg 60 (a-c), pgs. 68 & 164).

This educational approach to recovery (see Appendix II) specifically involves the source of all knowledge. (syn: “God”). Other ideas exist.

The reader is being offered one of many different mental approaches to recovery from alcoholism. It is recommended that any ideas about recovery be evaluated in the light of your own intelligence before making a choice of which to use for your own personal recovery. This mental action requires consciously improving your own inherent intelligence rather than blindly accepting the “*second-hand beliefs*” developed by other and equal human beings. (See Step 11).

“Pie man, Pie man - let me taste your wares”

“MAY I CHECK A SAMPLE OF RESULTS BEFORE I BUY?”

The result of Step Five is to increase self-knowledge by detecting mistakes in moral values which guide personal decisions in life. Any errors in moral judgment produce conflict with reality (syn: “God” - see Step 10).

With enlarged self-knowledge of reality (syn: “*awareness of reality equals conscious contact with God*” - see pgs 85 & Step 11) comes increased power to cooperate with “*the Great Reality*”. (syn: “God” see pgs 55 & 85). Any such spiritual growth enlarges the spiritual life for the individual. This author *believes* the opportunity to align self-will with “the vision of God’s will” is without limitation. (see pgs 85 & 133).

As conscious understanding of reality occurs, alcoholics acquire more power to align their will with “*a vision of God’s will*”. This improvement is contingent upon the maintenance of their spiritual condition. (see pg 85 & Step 11). Seeking more *new knowledge* from the source (syn: “God”) reduces conflict with reality. As a by-product there is more happiness, joy and freedom. The writers of the AA text were sure that was

“what God wants for alcoholics”. (pg 133). They may be right, therefore ask of yourself:

?? **Is that what you want for yourself?**

?? **Are you willing to go to any lengths to get it?**

This author maintains that spiritual progress enlarges happiness, joy and freedom. (syn: “God’s will for us” - pg 133). Improved understanding of life, on life’s terms, makes spiritual progress possible. (see Step 11). As personal awareness is enlarged, so is the power of personal freedom of choice to cooperate with life on life’s terms. (see pgs 53 & 68).

“If we are painstaking about this phase of our development we will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.”
(pgs 83 & 84)

An examination of ideas, emotions and attitudes guiding the life of an alcoholic is an essential ingredient in the recovery process. (review pg 27). This idea is the basis for the author’s *beliefs* about seeking more *new knowledge* (syn: “more God”) from the source. The reader may prefer a different approach.

Regardless of the approach, any personal success requires *some knowledge* of the principles used by others to accomplish their recovery from alcoholism. **The capacity to intelligently choose cooperation with the Great Reality** (syn: “God”) **is denied to no one**. Once acquired, any valid *new knowledge* improves conscious understanding of life, on life’s terms. (syn: “God” see pg 53, 55 & Step 11). This educational process effectively produces an enlarged spiritual life. (see pgs 14, 15, 35, 129 & Appendix II).

Several observations about ideas, emotions and attitudes of alcoholics can be found in the basic text for recovery. One of them is:

More than most people, the alcoholic leads a double life. He is very much the actor. To the outer world he presents his stage character. This is the one he likes his fellows to see.”
(pg 73)

What the alcoholic wants others to see is a desire (syn: “a prayer”) based upon a personal *belief system* concerning “a power greater than himself”. It includes the *belief* that the favorable opinion of others is the source of personal happiness, joy and freedom. If there is some power which responds to a prayer, that is what it will respond to. The entire action occurs within the mind of the alcoholic. (see pg 23).

**WHAT YOU SEEK IS WHAT YOU FIND
BECAUSE IT HAS ALREADY BEEN PROVIDED**

This author *believes* an alcoholic, seeking the favorable opinion of others *as their source of happiness*, will find it within the limits of what is possible on life's terms. (i.e.: "God's will" - see pgs 85, & 133). Happily for most, there is more.

There also appears to be intuitive recognition of personal equality of the alcoholic with other human beings. Not because someone else said so, but because the alcoholic has the capacity to recognize the truth (syn: "God") if they are able to be honest with themselves. (see pg 58).

Battle lines get drawn between *a desire for equality*, and *a desire to control reality*. The battlefield is the mind of the alcoholic. Until it is resolved, the battle goes on.(pg. 23). Which desire (syn: "prayer") will be the dominant desire? That is "the prayer" to be answered. Will it be "*unity and oneness with others*", or "*self-will run riot*"? Here, the concept of "*surrender*" has particular relevance.

Therefore, in all honesty, ask yourself:

?? Which one do you want the most?

?? Is your desire based upon intelligence? - or-

?? Do you just want what you want when you want it?

The choice made will support *a desire for personal fulfillment*. The desire includes *a belief* about what produces the most happiness, joy and freedom. For the alcoholic, it is that belief which establishes their personal concept of God's will. (see pgs 12, 55 and 133). Other ideas on the same subject exist.

From this approach, what needs to be examined is the *belief system* of the alcoholic and what they *believe* has power. Personal *beliefs about the power* may require change to agree with reality (syn: "God" see Step 10) depending upon how well the old idea produces desired results.

Only the individual alcoholic can determine if improvements are *desired*. The choice will either be from intelligently accepting principles (syn: "God's will) or emotionally demanding agreement with personal preferences. (syn: "*self-will run riot*" - see Tradition 12).

PRINCIPLES ALWAYS WORK, PERSONAL DEMANDS MAY NOT.

This observation may help some alcoholics reconcile what they *really desire* with the *beliefs* of traditional religions when they honestly ask themselves:

?? Do I want results now? - or-

?? Do I prefer to wait for results in some next life? - and

?? Can I afford to wait?

This author suggests that self-honesty by the alcoholic will help clarify the lengths they are willing to go to achieve sobriety by accepting help from their present concept of “*a power greater than themselves*”. Some alcoholics really do *believe* they have no choice in their own life. Others disagree.

Only the reader can determine their primary purpose now. Some alcoholics seek improvements and benefits to be provided in a subsequent life. This author recommends consulting experts who have an intelligent understanding of what that is.

Due to lack of experience, with any other life than this one, this author is not qualified to provide that information.

However, if the primary purpose of the alcoholic is to stay sober in this lifetime, then observations in this Study Guide may be useful. Drinking alcohol produces mental oblivion from reality. (syn: “God”). Excessive drinking provides an extreme method for resolving problems. When combined with a phenomenon of craving. (see “*The Doctor’s Opinion*”) it takes the alcoholic even more out of agreement with reality. That phenomenon of craving separates some individuals from others, as alcoholics.

Because alcoholics often go to extremes when dealing with life on life’s terms, it has been humorously observed that:

ALCOHOLICS ARE JUST LIKE OTHER PEOPLE - ONLY MORE SO!

Distorted minds have a distorted perception of reality. The only reality anyone can know or understand, exists within the confines of their own mind. Anything which distorts that mind has questionable value when seeking to intelligently cooperate with life, on life’s terms. (pg. 23). **Mental clarity** is required to seek any intelligent understanding of “*a power greater than ourselves*”. **Mental confusion** is created by individuals in many different ways.

Unless you are a mind-reader, there is speculation involved in anything you *believe* that others are thinking. You leave reality and enter fantasy-land when making decisions based upon what you think they think. It may be insanity to take actions on the basis of what you think they think you think. Nonetheless, this state of mental confusion occurs with disturbing frequency.

There is no restriction of this observation to alcoholics who have acknowledged a need to be restored to sanity. (Step Two). This irrational behavior is also part of the human society we all live in. Those claiming we live in a sane society are invited to make their case in an intelligent manner. They may find some strong evidence for disagreement.

Seeking the most intelligent choice available at the time (pg 164, & Appendix II) is a desire to cooperate with reality (syn: “prayer”-see Step 11). That desire expresses a personal choice to make spiritual progress and relates to a *belief system* about the power required. The abdication of personal responsibility for desires, (syn: “personal prayers”), and **blindly accepting** “*a second-hand concept of God*” as “*a packaged deal*”, does not seem to produce comparable results for recovery from alcoholism.

Willingness, honesty and open-mindedness are ingredients for:

- ?? a desire to seek improved understanding of reality.
- ?? a choice to surrender old ideas in order to “trade-up”.
- ?? acceptance that some power produces results.
- ?? a desire to cooperate with whatever produces results.

If this is what the reader desires, it is the experience of this author that their desire (syn: “prayer”) is sufficient to access the power required for recovery.

“The only requirement for AA membership is a
desire to stop drinking” (Tradition 3)

The alcoholic reader who is mentally confused about differences between AA and “their personal concept of God” will note that:

THERE IS NO “SECOND REQUIREMENT” FOR MEMBERSHIP IN AA

If something else is *believed to be indispensable* then no alcoholic could recover without it. This is troublesome to many alcoholics involved with traditional religions because they are unable to intelligently explain recoveries outside of their personal belief system.

Attitudes about the power for recovery in this lifetime exist within the mind of the individual alcoholic. Results or rewards in some future life have little or no relevance to the AA program now.

While the *beliefs* of others may offer unrealistic comfort, many of those *belief systems* cannot be intelligently confirmed as being valid. Promises made frequently contain **fear**, due to speculation and uncertainty. Alcoholics who question religious experts often find their explanations to be either unintelligent or else unacceptable. If so, they are always free to follow the AA suggestion:

“Why don’t you choose your own conception of God?”
(pg 12)

With this approach the individual alcoholic is freed to displace and rearrange the ideas, emotions and attitudes which have been guiding their life. (pg 27). This is accomplished by developing “a personal concept of a power” to fulfill their dominant desire. (syn: “answer their prayer”). However, the individual must also assume responsibility for what they want the most. (see pgs 31, 32 & 58).

In this manner, devout adherents to traditional religious ideas also retain their personal freedom of choice. In AA, those with a different concept of the power have an equal opportunity.

IN AA IT DOES NOT MATTER WHO IS RIGHT IT ONLY MATTERS WHO IS LEFT!

To begin spiritual progress requires some intelligent understanding of where you are at in *the Great Reality* as a starting point. (syn: "God" - see pg 55 & Step 4). Spiritual progress occurs by seeking and enlarging *new knowledge* of how to relate to life, as it really is. (see pg 53). Improving awareness of reality is a vital spiritual experience. (pg27). This improved awareness provides more freedom and more power to use it. (review Step 11).

From this perspective, any intelligent inquiry into the fundamental nature of their *belief system* has immense personal value in the recovery process for an alcoholic. Is it not self-evident that what they observe, evaluate and act upon is determined by the **"closed-loop of their own thought"**? These thoughts make up their *belief system* about the nature of life. Any observations about life in an infinite universe are limited to what they understand. There is nothing else available to do this with except their own mind. (see pg 23).

Other minds function in a similar manner- as equals. They too have the *closed-loop of their own thinking*. Your ideas are part of "their outer world". Inherent intelligence indicates differences are possible between what you think and what others think. Anyone can *believe* that their limited knowledge is *the last word* on any subject. (review Step 10). If that is their *belief*, then they also *believe* when others do not agree with them that they should. (i.e.: "*self-will run riot*").

In a society, of questionable sanity, where the favorable opinion of others determines personal happiness, joy and freedom, it becomes clear that others are similarly presenting their stage character while seeking your approval. In AA such behavior has the humorous pathos of "*a flasher in a raincoat exposing himself in a nudist colony*". It can be a surprise to discover the response is not what was anticipated. (review Tradition 3 - "The Long Form"). A *belief* about being personally unacceptable to life is not consistent with equality. ("*in the eyes of God*") and does not stand up to the light of intelligent examination.

Herein lies a key to understanding "*the exact nature of our wrongs*". (review pgs 23, 27 & Step 5). Any *belief* in personal inequality with life, on life's terms is a "*second-hand concept of God*". This concept usually gets provided by unquestioned authorities on the subject. This author makes no such claims. By contrast, this author suggests that alcoholics are not "*inferior to others*". Undeniably, what they have done with their individuality has not always been particularly intelligent. Few real alcoholics attempt to defend their drinking behavior as examples of intelligent living of life, on life's terms.

Lack of power (syn: "lack of valid *new knowledge*") is the dilemma which produces individual conflicts with life on life's terms. (see pg 45). This concept is not necessarily the same one offered by many religious authorities. Each self-proclaimed moral expert has their own unique moral sin list and is prepared to define spiritual perfection for you. (see pgs 60 & 133).

This author contends that improved understanding of life's terms is available to anyone who seeks it. (see pg 60(c)). The alcoholic either is capable of knowing when they are happy, joyous and free, or else require a "*second-hand-belief system*" from others to understand what that is for them. This observation includes both the alcoholic reader and

any of those authorities who claim special knowledge about the power that produces happiness, joy and freedom in this lifetime.

Many alcoholics have already discovered that accepting the *belief system* of someone else has produced conflict with the Ultimate Reality of Life (syn: "God"). This can be upsetting. Not because of a mistake in *believing* a power was available. The conflict with reality occurs as a result of insisting that *what they believed* had to be correct and that others must agree. Such an attitude can be viewed as self-delusion or self-seeking.

".....we invariably find that at some point in the past we have made decisions based on self which later placed us in a position to be hurt." (pg 62)

Many alcoholics reduce their conflicts in life by seeking improved understanding and cooperation with reality. (see Step 11). In the process, the experience, strength and hope of other individuals may be useful. While the limited awareness of others may be valid for them, it may not necessarily be valid for everyone. Intelligent evaluation of the results produced is required.

Only principles, applicable to all life apply to anyone and everyone. No one could recover from alcoholism without utilizing some portion of universal principles of recovery which apply to all alcoholics. Those principles exclude no one who is an alcoholic. There is no second requirement for recovery in AA. (review Traditions 3 & 12 - The Long Form).

The **principles of recovery** found in AA will accommodate *any belief system*, regardless of how unintelligent some of those beliefs may be. Many traditional religions have difficulty reconciling this self-evident fact with their own limited *ethnocentric* understanding of *the Great Reality* (syn: "God" see pg 55).

Their usual tendency is to try to "force fit" the AA program into the "closed-loop" of their "old ideas".

An infinite supply of *new knowledge* is available to anyone seeking to improve conscious understanding of universal principles. (Step 11). However, most of the various religious *belief systems* include an *insupportable belief* that theirs is the only correct approach to life. A question for the alcoholic reader to resolve, in their own mind, is:

?? do you *believe* their understanding is valid for you?

if so

?? what do you utilize when those authorities are not available?

For the alcoholic seeking recovery, telling another human being ***all*** their life story has value. It helps improve conscious awareness of *ideas, emotions and attitudes* guiding their life (see pg 27). Telling someone else *what they believe* allows recognition that other equally valid *belief systems* exist. (review Appendix II). Furthermore, that anyone, including religious experts, the reader, and the author of this Study Guide all can be mistaken. (Step 10)..

**IT IS A VITAL SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE
TO RECOGNIZE HUMAN EQUALITY AND IMPERFECTION**

Discarding *old ideas* in order to “*trade up*” to an *enlarged belief system* and an *improved understanding of reality* is spiritual progress. (see pgs 14-15 & Step 11) **The benefits of any spiritual progress made during this lifetime will be experienced during this lifetime.** Therefore, on the basis of “*First Things First*”, this author recommends the alcoholic reader seek their own personal spiritual progress:

ONE LIFE AT A TIME !

* * * * *

SECTION B06e:

Chapter 6

INTO ACTION

STEP FIVE:

“Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.”

READ AGAIN:

Page 73 from “*More than most people,*” to bottom of page 73 ending with “*.....have a low opinion of alcoholics and their chance for recovery!*”

* * * * *

MORE COMMENTS:

Whatever produces personal conflict is resisting happiness, joy and freedom. (i.e.: “God’s will” pg 133). In order to obtain relief, an alcoholic needs to seek more *new knowledge*, and improve their *conscious understanding* of life on life’s terms. (pg 60(c) & Step 11).

There is more to reality than religious explanations of it. Religious convictions alone are not sufficient for the *vital spiritual experience* required for recovery from alcoholism. (pg 27). Erroneous ideas, emotions and attitudes guiding the life of an alcoholic need to be displaced and rearranged.

By it’s very nature, alcohol distorts reality in the mind of the person who drinks it. Nothing real gets changed, only their individual perception of reality. That effect appears to have universal application to all human beings. What is important to recognize is that there are individual variations in the degree of distortion. This has particular significance for someone with a *phenomenon of craving* for more because any evaluation of the effect of drinking alcohol gets increasingly distorted as more is consumed.

**WHEN YOU DRINK, THE THING THAT LETS YOU KNOW
YOU ARE MESSING UP, - IS WHAT GETS MESSED UP**

This *phenomenon of craving* differentiates alcoholics from others. (see “The Doctor’s Opinion”). Those who are alcoholic cannot change their basic physical nature. However, they can change what they do with it. That choice is individual.

The very action essential for recovery is hampered by mental distortion. (pg 23 & Appendix II). Understanding the validity of that observation is one thing. Making a decision to want to do something different is another.

**SOME ARE MOTIVATED BY INSPIRATION
OTHERS BY DESPERATION**

Self-knowledge without any power of *new knowledge* to change results has little practical value. Seeking the power of *new knowledge* allows for changes and provides additional choices in how to cooperate with reality. The author *believes* this to be at the core of enlarging a spiritual life. (see pgs 14-15, 35 & 129).

Complete understanding of reality in an infinite universe (syn: "God") is beyond the finite limits of any human intelligence during a single lifetime. (pg 68). There are also finite limits to how much total *new knowledge* has been acquired by humanity to date. There are no limits upon how much more new knowledge can be acquired by anyone at anytime. (see pg 68).

Similarly, there is no limit to how much *new knowledge* any individual alcoholic can seek from the source of all knowledge. (syn: "God"). Seeking *new knowledge* serves no useful purpose at that time unless it fulfills a desire. (syn: "answers a prayer"). Understanding the value of *new knowledge* may occur later when it provides answers to problems which are then beyond the limits of existing self-knowledge. (see pgs 42, 45, & Step 11).

An endless supply of *new knowledge* is always available to anyone who seeks to improve their understanding of *the Great Reality*. (syn: "God" - see pg 55 & Step 11). **What both science and religion discover is life, on life's terms.** (see pg 53).

This author suggests a desire to distort reality reflects a *belief* that mental oblivion will enrich personal happiness. What actually occurs is that reality remains what it is. However, conscious awareness of reality in the individual shifts toward unconsciousness and oblivion. The most significant impact upon the alcoholic lies in their ability to be intelligently involved with what is occurring in their life.

That inability to care about consequences invites decisions, choices and actions which might otherwise be rejected. This often violates *personal concepts of right and wrong*, or *religious beliefs of good and evil*. That creates fear, anger, guilt, shame and remorse *within their own mind*. (see pgs 23, 27 45, 62, 64, & 133). When those conditions exist, consuming more alcohol once again provides temporary relief.

For the alcoholic, with a *phenomenon of craving*, this temporary relief produces more of the same results. Hence, the "*merry-go-round*" continues with less caring, more *fear, anger, guilt, shame and remorse*, and an increased desire (syn: "prayer") for more temporary relief.

In many cases, restrictive religious *belief systems* intensify emotional disturbances which occur as the outgrowth of drinking. This further aggravates the desire for escape, and the alcoholic seeks relief from that emotional pain because their *chosen moral code* is being violated. Often, what they require is "a new sin list".

Telling all their life story to someone with that same restrictive *belief system* will further intensify that same emotional disturbance. Instead of questioning their *belief system*, many of those alcoholics intensify futile efforts to comply with it and adhere to an "impossibly good" moral code of *right and wrong*. The result of their failure can feed a *false belief* that they are not equally acceptable in life. ("in the eyes of God").

With tragic results, some of those alcoholics attempt to be "*good enough*" to be non-alcoholic. (see pgs 30-32). Others may *believe* they are being punished because they

are not able to be something they probably cannot be. (see pg 60(b)). Deep spiritual disappointment can occur when their best efforts to be good fail to produce results acceptable to those who made the rules.

This author disagrees with that frequently tried religious approach to recovery. While the reader is free to stake their own life on such a *belief system*, there is an alternative option. It is for the alcoholic to change their belief system to one where they recognize they are already an acceptable part of *the Great Reality* (syn: "God" - see pgs 33 & 55). Furthermore, that by acquiring additional *new knowledge* it will allow them to better cooperate with life, on life's terms.

Obviously any drinking alcoholic has a need for improved awareness of reality (Steps 10 & 11) in order to more intelligently cooperate with it. The ability to cooperate gets restricted within the *closed-loop of old ideas, emotions and attitudes* which guide choices and decisions. (see pg 27). Difficulties with that limited awareness of reality are further aggravated by unquestioned acceptance of a "*second-hand concept*" of the power required for recovery. Usually it is a concept provided by some chosen authority on religion. This assignment of spiritual superiority denies human equality. ("*in the eyes of God*"). Such a *belief system* blocks direct personal access to the endless source of *new knowledge*. (syn: "God").

Many religious specialists have valuable information which can be intelligently utilized in the recovery process. (see pg 87). However, many of them have mistaken beliefs about life, on life's terms. Asking for examples of recoveries produced by utilizing those various *belief systems* will clarify how well they understand alcoholism or the *phenomenon of craving*. (see pg 30 & "The Doctor's Opinion"). Obviously, they cannot transmit something they haven't got. (pg 164). The inherent intelligence of the reader will recognize desired results.

Within "*the closed-loop of their own belief system*", most alcoholics have "*a fundamental idea of some power guiding their life*". (pg 55). Many pursue an illusion that the favorable opinion of others is the source of their happiness, joy and freedom. This amounts to direct denial of equality with others ("*in the eyes of God*") and the principle of equality with life on life's terms. The laws of life do not play favorites, but human beings do. However,

WHAT WE WANT THE MOST IS WHAT WE SEEK THE MOST!

Most alcoholics want to be happy, joyous and free. The authors of the basic text for recovery were "sure" this was what God wanted for them.(pg. 133). No other assumptions about "*the Will of God*" are made. The principles of life, on life's terms (i.e.: "God's will") are reliable. The *belief systems*, created by human personalities, are not necessarily valid as principles. What is your choice to be? (pgs 12, 23, 27, 42, 45, 47, 52-53, 55, 68, 164, & Appendix II).

Within AA's basic text for recovery is unrestricted freedom to seek a *vital spiritual experience* in whatever manner works best for the individual. (see pgs 12, 27, 28 & 95). Frothy emotional appeals seldom produce results. (see "The Doctor's Opinion"). Seeking an intelligent concept of the power required for recovery seems to work best.

(see pg 45). This author suggests that seeking power from an infinite supply of *new knowledge* is an available choice. It is one which allows for intelligent improvement in understanding of a “*a power greater than ourselves*”. (see Step 11).

Some religious alcoholics may prefer a different approach. Many traditional religions will attempt to define *the Great Reality* (syn: “God”), within the finite limits of their own *belief system*. The mental quality of *open mindedness* frequently gets overlooked or omitted in the process. (see Appendix II). This can become **unintelligent and awkward** after more reality is revealed. It produces an **enlarged and improved understanding of reality** after the *belief system* has already been firmly established. (pgs 14-15, 42, 164, & Step 11). As a result, what they believe does not include *new knowledge of reality*. Any efforts to hold onto old ideas can be an obstacle in recovery from alcoholism. (see pgs 58 & 164).

By now the alcoholic reader may recognize they have an inescapable responsibility to be honest with themselves about what they believe concerning *new knowledge* which produces recovery from alcoholism. If “*God is everything*”, there is nothing to accept beyond “*that Great Reality*”. (pgs 53 & 55).

THERE IS NOTHING TO ACCEPT OR REJECT EXCEPT INFINITE GOD.

(pg 53)

New awareness of reality may come from “*religious specialists*” without accepting all of their “*second-hand concept of God*”. What is required is a *belief in personal equality regarding access to the power*. (Appendix II). **Personal responsibility to cooperate with reality exists, regardless of unique individual physical or mental differences. (see pg 30).**

Every human being possesses some degree of personal uniqueness which identifies them as an individual. Differences which are understood by others get more readily accepted than those which are not. Nonetheless, all individuals share the same basic qualities which define all human beings. The importance assigned to differences becomes personal and reflects the *moral value system* of the individual rendering judgment. (see pg 23, Steps 4 & 10).

There is personal choice involved in what gets labeled as important or desirable. Those choices reflect ideas, emotions and attitudes which are guiding the life of the person doing the judging. (see pg 27). Many of those *beliefs* have never ever been evaluated or challenged in the light of intelligence. (syn: “the light of God within”). Some labels are nothing more than a mental habit of allowing others to think for us. The result is unthinking acceptance of a “*second-hand value system*” provided to you by others who are only your equal.

Each individual has different fingerprints and DNA structure. Similarly, no two individuals have identical experiences in life nor identical ideas about their relationship to life on life’s terms. Accordingly, everyone has their own unique concept of “*a power greater than themselves*”. (syn: “God” - see pg 55). Different value

systems are part of individual uniqueness. No two individuals have identical *beliefs* or the same set of *moral values*. Making a personal moral inventory helps identify *beliefs* and discovering where they came from. Telling all of ones life story helps to recognize that *other value systems* exist. Some work better than others.

The newcomer to AA will do well to use intelligence when choosing “*a close-mouthed understanding friend*”, (review pg 74) and avoid emotional decisions which could later produce *tragic mistakes*. Remember that other alcoholics have *equal certainty* about the rightness of their own values which may differ significantly from many others, including your own *belief system*.

Whatever characteristics define a human being, those same characteristics are possessed by each and every other human being. However, some qualities may be more developed on an individual basis. The significance of differences is a cultural matter, with infinite variations.

From this viewpoint, there is opportunity for improved understanding of the observation that:

“.....the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than in his body.” (pg 23)

First, however it is important to recognize and accept the physical uniqueness in individuals who are alcoholic. Self-evident individual differences exist such as fingerprints and DNA structure. Some physiological uniqueness is characteristic of all humans. It is part of their human *sameness*. In AA is the *belief* that a unique physiological phenomenon of craving arises whenever an individual who is alcoholic takes the first drink. (see “The Doctor’s Opinion”).

“We do not like to pronounce any individual as alcoholic, but you can quickly diagnose yourself. Step over to the nearest barroom and try some controlled drinking. Try to drink and stop abruptly. Try it more than once. It will not take long for you to decide, if you are honest with yourself about it. It may be worth a bad case of jitters if you get a full knowledge of your condition.” (pgs 31 & 32)

There are theories galore on why alcoholics are different from their fellows. (review pgs 30-32). Medical science has not yet come up with a definitive explanation. The author of this Study Guide is not proposing yet another theory. The emphasis here is not upon **why**, but rather upon **what can be done** about it.

Most people know that mixing the colors blue and yellow creates the color green. That physical reality can be understood and we can use that knowledge. However, no one knows **why** it occurs that way. Neither does anyone know **why** some individuals have a

craving for more alcohol, once they take the first drink. Similarly, no one understands **why** some alcoholics desire to stop drinking rather than pursue it into the gates of insanity or death. (pg 30). This author is no exception. Whatever explanation given is as valid as any other until there is understanding of the principles involved. Principles, (i.e.: "The Laws of Life/God's Law") apply equally to anyone, anyplace, and at any time.

There is, however, general awareness that some individuals drink alcohol differently than others. Science has not yet provided a definitive explanation as to why this is so. (pg 31). More *new knowledge* continues to be available which may one day provide for more *spiritual progress* and understanding. What the AA program provides is some improved understanding of what can successfully be done about that condition. (see pg 60 & Step 11).

When the desire to stay alive and carry their own keys (i.e.: "prayer") equals the desire for another drink, most alcoholics become sufficiently *open minded* to consider *new knowledge* about recovery. What is significant about the AA program is that intelligently chosen actions produce success in recovery. (review pg 58). The desire (syn: "prayer") for that corrective action to a life-threatening problem comes from something deep down within the alcoholic. (see pg 55). This author suggests it is their own ability to establish a conscious contact with *the Great Reality*. (syn: "God" - see Steps 1, 3, 10 & 11).

When an alcoholic is consciously aware that they cannot both control and enjoy drinking alcohol, their main problem is not in understanding **why** this is so. Their real problem is in acceptance that this is the way it is.

"No person likes to think he is bodily and mentally
different from his fellows." (pg 30).

Acceptance of reality (syn: "*acceptance of God*") is a mental action. For the alcoholic, it is an individual choice based upon understanding the true nature of their unique personal relationship to life. (see pages 31-32).

The author suggests that once the physical craving is dealt with, the alcoholic then has a mental problem. (pg 23) They want to be happy, joyous and free (syn: "*God's will*" - see pg 133) but lack sufficient *new knowledge* of how to get what they want.

"Lack of power, that was our dilemma." (pg 45)

Alcohol does what it does very well, on life's terms. It is an unrealistic desire (syn: "prayer") to want liquor to do something it is incapable of doing. Particularly when the desire comes from an alcoholic with an abnormal craving for more. This is akin to the insanity of demanding "*fat-free chicken fat*". It is a contradiction of terms and not part of "*the Great Reality*". It appears that some body processes, unique to alcoholics, fail to provide the same mental defenses normally enjoyed by those who can regulate how they dim the functions of their mind. The alcoholic is recognizably not one of those.

"IF I WEREN'T AN ALCOHOLIC, I'D DRINK ALL THE TIME"

It is imperative individual alcoholics understand they are in a limited class. (see "The Doctor's Opinion"). Accepting this difference in mind and body is critical to

recovery because the consequences of consuming alcohol will always be on life's terms, not those of the individual. (syn: "God's will" vs. "self-will run riot").

This author submits that craving alcohol is a desire. (syn: "a prayer"). When drinking more is the dominant desire (syn: "dominant prayer"), the alcoholic will accept that "*gift of God*" when it becomes available. Life (syn: "God" - see pg 85) provides the alcoholic what he wants most, when he is physically free to accept it. In this regard, "*his prayers get answered*". (see pg 101). However, that "*gift from God*" will always be provided on life's terms, rather than his own.

"The idea that somehow, someday he will control and enjoy his drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker. The persistence of this illusion is astonishing. Many pursue it into the gates of insanity or death." (pg 30)

Any alcoholic is free to want (syn: "pray for") whatever they choose. They simultaneously *believe* some sort of "*power greater than themselves*" (syn: "a fundamental idea of God" - see pg 55) is capable of providing what they want. This leads to an inescapable conclusion that:

WE CAN PIT INFINITE POWER AGAINST INFINITE POWER WITH OUR PERSONAL LIVES AS THE BATTLEGROUND

Many alcoholics eventually understand they have been using "*a power greater than themselves*" to overcome "*a power greater than themselves*". (see pgs 62 & 133). As they improve their understanding of life, on life's terms, they can then choose to cooperate with the Great Reality. (syn: "God" - review Step 11).

Individual alcoholics may have "*lost the power of choice in drink*" because of their unique physiological difference. (see "The Doctor's Opinion" & pg 30). What perhaps they never had, is the dubious luxury of regulating how they can turn off their own inherent intelligence. (syn: "*the God within*").

It appears that those who are non-alcoholic have been endowed with a "*dimmer switch*" to turn down the light of reality. (i.e.: "*the light of God*"). By contrast, the alcoholic appears to be physiologically wired with an old-fashioned "*ON/OFF switch*". Those endowed with the *phenomenon of craving* are restricted to being either a drinking alcoholic or a sober alcoholic. Like it or not, they do not have that middle-range of oblivion which is highly prized by so many.

Nonetheless, as equal human beings ("*in the eyes of God*"), the alcoholic always retains the choice of pitting their personal desires (syn: "*prayers for self-will run riot*") against their own physical nature. They also retain the option to accept and cooperate with that reality. (syn: "God" &/or "God's will"). *New knowledge* can provide improved understanding of what best produces happiness, joy and freedom. For many drinking alcoholics it is sufficient just to change what they are experiencing at the time. (see pgs 31 & 32).

Any alcoholic who believes a power runs their life also knows that they have the personal choice to go get drunk if they really want to.

Their personal freedom of choice is part of *the Great Reality*.(pg 55). Regardless of how intensely they may want to hold onto their old idea about God, they eventually reach the inescapable conclusion that:

REALITY PREVAILS OVER FALSE BELIEFS

Some alcoholics want to believe some power controls their life, thereby relieving them of having any responsibility for what happens to them. At the same time, they recognize their personal power to get drunk if they want to. (review Step 2). If those conflicting ideas were both valid, then alcoholics who are capable of getting drunk would be more powerful than “*that God of their understanding*”.

By being unwilling to accept the responsibility for a lack of intelligence when making decisions, they cannot understand why they got drunk. Of course, they are always free to blame their chosen concept of “God”. However, if they accept the premise in AA that “*God wants them to be happy, joyous and free*”. (see pg 133) they then create a massive conflict within their own mind. (see pg 23).

One option is to continue *believing* they are hopeless, helpless victims of a capricious power which plays favorites in some obscure and unintelligent manner. The other is to discard the old ideas found in that *belief system* by choosing a more intelligent concept of the power. (see pg 12). This anyone can do, if they want to.

Access to *new knowledge* and “*a power greater than ourselves*” is available to anyone during their lifetime. It further appears that each individual gives some direction to that power. They become inescapably responsible for the consequences of their choice to give that power direction in their own lives. That personal power of choice appears to be a fundamental principle in life which has equal application to all.

Without equal access to the power, one person could change the desires of another without their permission. For the alcoholic, this concept has particular significance in terms of personal survival. (review pg 101). Their inherent intelligence **knows** that no one else can make them get sober when they are free to get drunk. It is equally valid that, short of physical force, no one else makes them get drunk, if their dominate desire (i.e.: “prayer”) is to stay sober. Therefore:

GUARD AGAINST THE POWER THAT FORCES A DRINK DOWN YOUR THROAT WHILE YOU SCREAM “RAPE”.

Physical compliance to get drunk or stay sober can occur as the result of using force, fear and intimidation. However, once left to their own devices, the alcoholic will do whatever they *believe* will give them what they want the most. What they want will be their own desire, (syn: “*their own prayer*”) not that of some other equal human (“*in the eyes of God*”) which may or may not be intelligent.

Fortunately, the only requirement for recovery from alcoholism in AA is a desire to stop drinking. That desire is personal power that no one else can either provide nor take

away. The alcoholic, *capable of being honest with themselves*, already knows what they want the most. (syn: "knows their dominant desire" - see pg 58). Any alcoholic is free to desire mental oblivion from drinking in preference to staying sober to survive in reality. Each individual does their own wanting. What is your choice to be? (see pg 53).

This author *believes* that instead of being a victim of "*a power*", the alcoholic is really a willing participant in their own life. (see pgs 62, 67, 68, & 133). They are free to cooperate or oppose reality, as they understand what they are doing. If anyone knew better then they would do better. Life, on life's terms tends to support this concept of human equality, ("*in the eyes of God*"), and that knowledge is power.

The concept of an alcoholic having direct personal access to the power of *new knowledge* conflicts with many religious *belief systems*. There are those who want religious *beliefs* to prevail, without ever being subjected to intelligent investigation. (see Appendix II). That attitude can be a block to personal happiness, joy and freedom, (pg 23), because the only thing that counts are the results obtained. The alcoholic either is or is not experiencing their greatest good and highest happiness with life on life's terms, during this lifetime.

Those who already are happy will probably want to continue with their chosen method, and this author encourages them to do so. It is difficult to argue with success. Only the individual alcoholic can decide what that is for themselves.

Once the *physical phenomenon of craving* has been dealt with, the main problem of the alcoholic is dealt with at the mental level. (pg 23). The alcoholic can become freed from an *erroneous belief* they are the *victim of some cosmic deity which whimsically plays favorites*. Some intensely religious alcoholics will choose to hold onto that old idea as their preferred *belief system* for being happy, joyous and free. (review pgs 59, 62 & 133).

With improved understanding of reality, (Step 11), the alcoholic has *new freedom* to choose whatever approach to recovery produces desired results. Those results, of necessity will occur within the confines of:

- 1. Their unique individual physical characteristics.**
- and**
- 2. Their conscious understanding of reality.**

Ideas, emotions and attitudes will guide choices of each individual and determine how to cooperate with or resist reality. (see pg 27). This author *believes* any choices will be rooted in a personal belief structure which includes a concept of some power capable of producing results. (syn: "*the answer to their prayers*" - see pg 55). Intelligent acceptance of "*the Great Reality*" appears to produce more practical results than any unrealistic or emotional wishful thinking. Some of the more religious members of AA may disagree.

When seeking sobriety, the alcoholic is seeking a concept of God by asking (syn: "praying") for some power to do for them what they do not know how to do for themselves. This can be an admirable quality, but it will not be an intelligent choice if it does not produce desired results. (syn: "*the answer to their prayers*").

Repeatedly making choices which do not produce what is desired becomes difficult to defend as being sane behavior. Especially when that same alcoholic rejects as unacceptable the demonstrated success of others.

“However intelligent we may have been in other respects, where alcohol has been involved, we have been strangely insane. It’s strong language - but isn’t it true?”
(pg 38)

Questions of intelligent choice and sane behavior seem to resolve themselves around the direction given the power of choice. This is the way an alcoholic uses any available power to produce changes in their life. Like it or not, whatever physiological uniqueness they have is an inescapable reality.

**IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR A HUMAN TO DO
ANYTHING WHICH IS INHUMAN.**

Successful recovery from alcoholism does not require changing basic human nature. (i.e.: “*God given*”). **It does require changing what the alcoholic does with what they have to work with.**

Understanding human equality is equivalent to claiming the right to exist and be happy, joyous and free in the process. One alcoholic observed, after having spent 40 years in penal institutions:

“It took me all those years locked up to figure out that it wasn’t that people didn’t like ME, - they just didn’t like WHAT I DID”

Some past choices obviously were **not intelligent**, (syn “*God’s will*” - see pgs 62 & 133), **unless being locked up was a dominant desire**. (syn: “prayer”). Improved options were available once **new knowledge of reality** was understood. (see Step 11). **By giving the power of new knowledge a new direction, that same individual tapped an ability to change their own life, and the entire universe - by the count of one** (pg 163).

Different choices produce different results. Wanting what the AA program has to offer recognizes that choice is available as part of *the Great Reality* of life, on life’s terms. Early members of AA promised some changes would always occur if the alcoholic was willing to work for them. All they had to do was to thoroughly following their path. (see pgs 58 & 83-84). This author agrees and *believes* the reader has the power to cooperate with *the Great Reality* and produce similar results. But, first it is necessary for the alcoholic to want those results.

The early members of Alcoholics Anonymous offered their experience with reality to other alcoholics who wanted what they had. What they had then is available to any alcoholic during this life experience. The frontispiece of their book claims it to be:

The Story of

How Many Thousands of Men and Women

Have Recovered from Alcoholism

The reader is always free to disregard or reject their demonstrated success. However, they will lack an intelligent basis for making that choice. With an attitude of contempt, prior to investigation (see pg 27 & Appendix II) many alcoholics will never understand just how well the AA program really does work. By default, such an attitude is a conscious choice of not wanting the successful recovery which AA is able to produce. (see pgs 58, 83-84). This decision is usually based upon an old *belief system* about what will make them happy. Many alcoholics discover their old *belief system* is flawed, and let go of those old ideas in favor of a different concept which produces better results.

Most results get determined by what we do. (see pg 62). When a *belief system* is intelligent, it will include some conscious understanding of *the Great Reality*. (See Step 11). Any concept that incorporates all knowledge (syn: “omniscience”) and all power (syn: “omnipotence”) qualifies as “*a power greater than ourselves*” (syn: “God”).

The ONLY place that *Great Reality* is to be found, is deep down within ourselves. (review pg 55). Seeking it there, or by blindly accepting a “*second-hand belief system*” becomes a matter of personal choice. This author suggests any alcoholic may utilize, but does not require a “*second-hand concept of God*”. Few individuals need another person to let them know if they are happy, joyous and free. (syn: “*the answer to their prayers*” - pg 133). In addition, without already having a direct connection to *the Great Reality* (syn: “God”), there would be no way for an alcoholic to recognize successful results when they occurred.

Individual alcoholics can change what they want. They also have the ability to change their “*fundamental idea of the power*” which produces results. For some alcoholics, this is a new freedom and a new happiness. (see pgs 55 & 83).

It is assumed the reader wants to be happy, joyous and free. Some alcoholics may *want to believe* they are victims. For those who do not seek change, no action is required. Others, may want to seek additional *new knowledge* to enlarge and improve their *spiritual life*. (review pgs 14-15 & Step 11). For them, there exists an endless supply of better options and more intelligent choices which improve their cooperation with reality.

When taken in that context, for the alcoholic who wants to recover, there is a need to intelligently seek *new knowledge* which is capable of producing desired results. (syn: “*the answer to a prayer*”). Those desired results are a vision of things to come. (pg 85). Without sufficient understanding, that vision of the unknown may or may not be compatible with *the Great Reality*.

YOU DON'T KNOW UNLESS YOU KNOW

This author suggests that *what we believe* has something to do with what happens to us. An intelligent belief system produces improved spiritual progress over any emotional fantasies or wishful thinking.

“Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God’s will into all of our activities.These are thoughts which must go with us constantly. We can exercise our will power along this line all we wish. It is the proper use of the will.” (pg 85)

A *belief* that any bit of finite human knowledge is the last word on any subject creates conflict with reality. (syn: “God”). It is nothing more than an incomplete belief based upon an *ethnocentric old idea* of reality which has become a guiding force in life. (see pgs 23, 27, & 55).

Individual understanding of reality is limited to total personal experience. This obviously has the limitations of how much *new knowledge* can be acquired during a single lifetime. All human knowledge, acquired since the dawn of time, is unquestionably extensive. Nonetheless, it too has its limits. There is more.

Regardless of how much humanity *believes* they understand about an infinite universe, there remains an endless supply of more *new knowledge* still to be revealed.(see pgs 68 & 164). For any alcoholic there is always more to be understood at a conscious level. (Step 11).

By telling all of their limited life story to another individual, an enlarged understanding of human equality (“*in the eyes of God*”) becomes revealed. The conscious mind of the alcoholic gains improved understanding of reality. (Steps 10 & 11). The result is a *spiritual life* which is enlarged. (see pgs 14, 15 & 35). This allows the alcoholic who is *willing, honest and open minded* to experience *spiritual progress*. (see Appendix II and pg 60).

This author maintains that their human equality (“*in the eyes of God*”) is revealed to the alcoholic when they consciously understand that:

IF KNOWLEDGE IS INFINITE, SO IS IGNORANCE

* * * * *

SECTION B06f:

Chapter 6

INTO ACTION

STEP FIVE:

“Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.”

READ:

Page 73 beginning with *“We must be entirely honest with somebody.....”* to page 75, ending with *“.....they will be honored by our confidence.”*

* * * * *

COMMENTS:

In the previous section some of the reasons **why** Step Five is important for recovery from alcoholism were offered as motivation for taking this vital step. There now follow some specific suggestions as to **how** to do this in a manner which agrees with the book *“Alcoholics Anonymous”*.

The alcoholic reader will be interested in a review of what the basic text has to offer concerning recovery from alcoholism. Many will recognize and choose to accept what the early members of AA had to offer. Comments by the author of this Study Guide are not intended to replace any part of that information. It is hoped these additional personal comments may provide some improved understanding of what the basic text contains.

It is recommended that the reader evaluate these, and any other comments about the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, in the light of their own intelligence. Take full advantage of what is useful and set aside any portions where you disagree. Just remember that they may have value at some later point *“as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny.”* (pg 164).

Recognize that some comments, with which you disagree, may have value and usefulness to another alcoholic seeking recovery. While those other alcoholics are equal as human beings, (*“in the eyes of God”*), they are also unique individuals. They may have an *equal desire* (syn: *“equal prayer”*) for recovery from alcoholism, but require different bits of new knowledge to enlarge their spiritual life. Unless you are a mind-reader, or claim *the last word* on some subject, you have no way of really knowing.

To escape the **closed-loop of old ideas** guiding our lives, it has been stated that *“we must be entirely honest with somebody if we expect to live long or happily in this world”*. (pgs 73-74). This implies identifying and giving definition to **the thinking** which is guiding our lives. Any effective changes will require some *new ideas* beyond those **thought patterns** which are now operative when making decisions. (see pgs 27 & 42).

There are valid reasons for doing this. The free-floating nature of fear is found in our mental attitude. It runs through the very fabric of our existence and our relationship with *the Great Reality* of life. (syn: "God"). These "**thoughts**" seem to creep into mental activities as if they somehow had a will of their own. The good news is that they do not.

IT'S YOUR MIND, AND YOU CAN THINK OF ANYTHING YOU WANT TO - CAN'T YOU?

The bad news is that those fears are like loose cattle which need to be corralled and branded. The only direction they will ever receive will come from your own mind. (pg 23). That direction will be determined by your *beliefs*. **It is your "thinking" which needs to be disciplined.**

This observation may be equated with the idea of having a "*committee in the mind*". It is necessary to remember who is "*Chairman of the Board and wields the power of the gavel to establish order and set the agenda*". **What gets your present time attention is determined by your thought and your belief system.**

WHATEVER HAS YOUR ATTENTION - HAS YOU!

By "*being entirely honest with somebody*", it is necessary to verbalize thoughts. By defining thoughts to someone else they acquire specific and finite dimensions. The fears that accompany them stop being free-floating monsters in the mind, and get precise definition. (see pg 23 & 62). Fears which are identified can then be corralled and branded by their rightful owner.

YOUR FEARS DO NOT BELONG TO ANYONE ELSE

Once claimed by their rightful owner, those same fears no longer need to be nebulous "*stray ideas, emotions and attitudes*" which are allowed to appear at inopportune moments and disrupt other activities. When situations occur in life which require all available intelligence be focused on priority concerns, any of those fears can be a distraction which results in choices which are not intelligent. (syn: "not God's will"). For a solution, the problem requires *new knowledge*.

Until they are disciplined, fears are like "*little gods*" disrupting the most intelligent choices. (i.e.: "God's will"). When a fear has limits which are defined, it is more easily recognized and better understood. When claimed by the individual to whom it belongs, it no longer has undirected power. That same fear may continue to disrupt some activities, but it no longer is "*a power greater than yourself*". Responsibility for the activities of your own mind has been consciously restored to it's rightful owner. (review Steps 2, 10 & 11).

Once personal responsibility for consciously dealing with fears is accepted, there is freedom of choice about what to do with them. This permits the alcoholic, to whom the fear belongs, to assign it whatever role of importance it will play in their life. This will then be done according to their own values, and not as a victim of something outside of their own mind. (see pg 23). Until that is done, those same fears are free to roam around

without any direction from the only mind that can provide them with direction. The alcoholic reader has a choice to face their own fears or try to ignore them. Direction for any mental activity is provided either by decision or default. (see pg 23).

THE MIND WITH THE RESPONSIBILITY HAS THE FREEDOM TO CHOOSE

Discussing your thought processes with another person is a recognized successful way to improve understanding of what is going on within your own mind. It is assumed the reader has the capacity to think honestly and use their own inherent intelligence in the process. (see pg 58). This is of particular importance when considering the admonition in the book “*Alcoholics Anonymous*”.

“Rightly and naturally, we think well before we choose the person or persons with whom to take this intimate and confidential step.” (pg 74).

The author of this Study Guide has observed newcomers make tragic blunders by thoughtlessly and indiscriminately choosing an individual who is not equipped to keep personal information confidential. Accordingly, the reader is cautioned to consider their choice of action carefully. Avoid letting the strong emotions of fear crowd out your own inherent intelligence. Improved conscious understanding will occur as *new knowledge* is revealed and *spiritual progress* is made. (pgs 60 & 68). Obviously you cannot use *new knowledge* you do not yet possess. (see pg 164). Happily, there is an infinite supply of *new knowledge* available from the source. (syn: “God”)

There are intelligent reasons for the recommendation:

“Though we have no religious connection, we may still do well to talk with someone ordained by an established religion.” (pg 74).

Specialists in an established religion, have probably encountered your specific problem before. Though they may not have an acceptable solution, they are probably already aware of similar problems with other individuals. This reduces their thought about your uniqueness and allows them to be more understanding and open-minded about a solution which is acceptable to you.

One immediate benefit may be their commitment to confidentiality as a matter of professional ethics. Their ethical standards usually cover how, when and where they will share your personal information with others. Understanding that commitment will be helpful in making an intelligent choice which could have a significant impact upon your life.

The alcoholic reader should also be aware that undesirable exceptions can exist concerning professional ethics. **Some religious experts, specifically including military chaplains, are often expected “to keep the commander informed” and report**

“anything unusual” to their superiors. If no intelligent thought has been provided, an *“unthinking personal confession”* can have far reaching implications.

This author suggests the alcoholic use extreme caution and their best intelligence when selecting the person with whom to share all their life story.

In addition, the reader may also wish to consider how a *“properly appointed authority became an authority in their own mind”*. Without some certificate from *“the God of your understanding”*, it is only *“your personal belief”* which gives them that special status in your mind. You may find it beneficial to evaluate how and why that occurred. Did they become an authority to you because of:

1. Your own intelligent choice and decision?

or by the

2. Blind acceptance of the beliefs of someone else?

For some alcoholics, confidentiality may be important to their personal recovery. Most doctors, psychologists, professionals and religious authorities are legally restricted from engaging in damaging gossip. Within certain limits, their professional code of ethics is often protected from having to reveal privileged information to others. The alcoholic, who is new to AA, may overlook this when selecting someone as *“a close-mouthed, understanding friend”*. (pg 74).

By contrast, public disclosures are not bound by those same constraints, and have few legal protections. This potential for error is particularly acute with the newcomer. In their eagerness to proceed, some alcoholics make tragic mistakes about keeping personal information confidential. Frequently they fail to make an intelligent choice when selecting someone with whom to take their “Fifth Step”. (see pg 45). Later on, those errors get explained with:

?? I didn’t know.

?? I had know idea.

?? If I knew then what I know now..... etc.

Be aware that an AA meeting is open to anyone. This author wishes to point out that nothing in the book *“Alcoholics Anonymous”*, suggests *“airing dirty linen in public”*. Nothing requires taking Step Five with *“a sponsor”*, or another AA member. Although a *“sponsor”* may be useful, you will not even find the word *“sponsor”* mentioned in the basic text for recovery. This often surprises established members who have read their own beliefs into the basic text.

For successful recovery from alcoholism, this author suggests that “*the answers are in the book*”. (*“Alcoholics Anonymous” - see the Frontispiece*).

When taking Step Five, a careful review of the basic text is advised. (review pg 74). It can be your best guide to a prudent and intelligent course of action. It should be self-evident some AA members return to drinking. Even long-time established members may get drunk again. During that time they can be expected to behave accordingly. Some even *believe* it was “*God’s will*” that they do so.

After establishing the admonition to use caution, this author wishes to point out a contrasting personal perspective. Namely that no greater serenity is possible than to live a life built upon the acceptance of all life, on life’s terms. (syn: “God” pgs 53 & 68). **There is serenity and peace of mind when anything that is true can be exposed at a public level without the collapse of happiness, joy and freedom.** (see pg 133).

For a newly sober alcoholic, this is not likely to occur simply by stopping drinking. It requires constant work and attention. (See pgs 83 & 84).

IF YOU LOSE SOMETHING TO THE TRUTH YOU HAVEN’T REALLY LOST ANYTHING

The mental work involved in recovery requires continually displacing and rearranging ideas, emotions and attitudes which are guiding forces to accommodate *new conditions* which require *new knowledge*. (see pgs 14-15, 27, Step 11 & Appendix II) This is a never ending process during this lifetime. (see pg 129). It is one way any alcoholic can acquire the *vital spiritual experience* necessary to *enlarge their spiritual life*. (see pgs 14-15). Sudden and spectacular upheavals, which are experienced by some, are not necessarily a requirement for recovery. Most alcoholics experience the “*educational variety*”. (see Appendix II). As far as AA is concerned, it is the results during this lifetime which matter the most. Some alcoholics have other priorities.

Many newcomers to AA expect instantaneous serenity just because they are no longer distorting their minds by drinking. Some *believe* they are entitled to rewards because they have stopped destroying their own lives. Any benefits they do experience are the consequences of their own actions. Many are surprised to learn that the benefits of serenity and a quiet mind require effort, thought and concentration.

The alcoholic needs to develop an honest, open-minded and willing attitude to put forth an effort to acquire what they want the most. (syn: “*pray for*”). Otherwise, they are expecting something for nothing. By maintaining that childish attitude, little if anything will get done to produce fulfillment. Especially if they continue with an unrealistic *belief* some “*power greater than themselves*” is going to do it for them. Whenever a frustrated alcoholic overlooks personal responsibility for seeking *new knowledge from the source*, (syn: “God”) any such expectation is a down-payment on a resentment. (see pgs 59, 60(c) & 64).

The process by which an alcoholic builds a life that allows them total openness is not something done quickly nor easily. A continual choice of intelligent action produces increased benefits. There is always room for more personal improvement. When maximum improvement is most desired (syn: "*the dominant prayer*"), then the AA program of recovery can become a chosen way of life. The opposite choice is equally available.

The personal serenity that comes with total openness in all relations and all affairs (review Step 12) either is or is not desired. Seeking that goal does not require elimination of all personal privacy nor preclude expressing unique individuality. However, eliminating the mind-altering effects of alcohol from thought processes is an essential element for personal recovery.

Eventually, every alcoholic is accountable to reality, (syn: "their idea of God" - see pg 55), and for the results of their decisions. Except for their own *belief system which exists within their own mind*, (see pgs 23 & 27), nothing else is "*keeping score*". If **what** you believe is not intelligent then you have a conflict within your own mind about "*your own conception of God*". (see pgs 23 & 27) You could decide to choose another concept. (see pg 12).

Fear of rejection by others ("*equal in the eyes of God*") can be a block and barrier to personal peace of mind. No individual is totally independent from relationships with others. As children, personal survival gets translated into a need for approval and acceptance by others. Accordingly, any rejection by others is closely allied with a death threat because that child intuitively knows they lack sufficient knowledge to survive in life, on their own. Coping with such threats to survival demands maximum use of whatever intelligence is available. Many alcoholics choose to remain within the **closed-loop** of those old ideas, and never will seek a *belief system* that is really their own intelligent choice.

Many of those alcoholics, require *new knowledge* which was not provided when they were children. As a result, old ideas, emotions and attitudes acquired from others, are still guiding their life. (see pg 27). To experience a *vital spiritual experience* necessary for recovery, they need the power of more new knowledge which is available from the source. ("God"). To acquire that *new knowledge*, an attitude of *willingness, honesty and open mindedness* is indispensable. (see Appendix II).

From infancy, each alcoholic is taught various behaviors to gain approval from the adults in control of their life. Cooperation appears to be a form of self-preservation. Very possibly it may be a "*God-given instinct*" for survival.

Some other behaviors are often intentionally trained into an infant. They usually reflect the *beliefs* of the adults, including *their version* of right and wrong. Other behaviors get taught indirectly by example. If a child never develops their own inherent intelligence, (syn: "*the God within*"), they may retain the *ideas, emotions and attitudes* of their childhood. That unchallenged *belief system* easily gets translated into a *personal belief* that some human power is "*a power greater than themselves*". ("*in the eyes of God*").

When this occurs it should be no surprise that some alcoholics will only look to other human beings for the answers to their problems. (See Step 11, pg 55, & pg 60 "(b)"). While others may have some answers, what gets overlooked is that there is always more available from the source. (syn; "God"). This author suggests this "*erroneous fundamental idea of God*" (see pg 23) can later produce difficulties and conflicts with life,

on life's terms. Often such a *childish belief* about life is accompanied by a *childish reaction to life* with the adult alcoholic demanding:

“I want what I want, when I want it, the way I want it”.

Such extreme examples of *self-will run riot* are commonplace. They reflect an unrealistic but nonetheless *fundamental idea of power* required for personal fulfillment. (review pgs 55, 60 & 61). The entire “*script*” for the childish behavior got written by equal humans. (“*in the eyes of God*”). While there are some recognizably strong emotions involved, there is little evidence of using inherent intelligence. (syn: “*the God within*”).

“Each person is like an actor who wants to run the whole show; is forever trying to arrange the lights, the ballet, the scenery and the rest of the players in his own way.” (pg 60).

“Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity, we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate.” (pg 62).

For the reader who has difficulty with traditional religious concepts of power, nowhere does personal decision have more significance than when choosing “*your own conception of God*”. (pg 12). Will *your choice* be to:

- 1. Retain the ideas, emotions and attitudes imposed by human authorities during childhood? - or to -**
- 2. Improve conscious contact with some greater source of *new knowledge* by using your own inherent intelligence?**
(Step 11)

Most children recognize their actions have some measure of control over the adults in their life. They often know precisely just how far they can go with their demands. Anyone exposed to 4 or 5 year old children is aware of the influence they have. Their influence is usually based upon their emotions rather than the use of intelligence.

By contrast, universal principles provide evidence of some intelligence (syn: “God”) which is indifferent to demands for change. Principles work equally well for anyone, anyplace and at any time. In that regard, principles (i.e.: “*the laws of life*” &/or “God”) are truly loving because **they do not play favorites**. Furthermore, they do not change because of human behavior nor are they influenced by emotional demands for special privileges.

THE PRINCIPLES OF LIFE TREAT EVERYONE EQUALLY

Alcoholics who recognize this fact of life often discover their *old idea of God* is threatened. (review pg 42). Especially when their ability to exercise control over others with their emotional desires (syn: “*emotional prayers*”) is a large part of that *old idea*. As

a *belief in God*, it does not stand up well to examination in the light of intelligence. (syn: “*the light of God*”).

Being able to get special results, not equally provided to others, is an important element of many traditional religious *belief systems*. That *old idea of God* frequently includes a requirement for some human power to intervene and do the manipulation for them.

The real power functions according to universal principles which are not subject to change by human manipulation. Fortunately, the direction power is applied can be changed by the individual in their own life. This is accomplished by changing what they want the most from life. (syn: “*the power of their dominant prayer*”)

This is where many individual alcoholics stand at a *turning point* in their recovery. (pg 59). They are torn between *old ideas* which require the *belief system* of an equal human (“*in the eyes of God*”) to produce rewards in some next lifetime, or else abandon those *old ideas of God* in order to seek *new knowledge* acquired by other alcoholics who are able to demonstrate results now. Often, it becomes a choice between accepting results now or *continuing to believe promises* about some subsequent life experience.

One path relies upon a “*second hand concept of a power*”. (pg 58). The other upon learning how to improve cooperation with reality now. Each individual alcoholic will use their own power of intelligent choice (syn: “*the God within*” see pgs 31, 32 & 55) to create their own relationship to *the Great Reality*. (syn: “*God*”). Often it is a choice between holding on to insupportable *old ideas and beliefs*, or accepting recognizable access to an infinite source of *new knowledge and power*.

This author suggests the choice will be based upon what the individual *believes* will produce what they most desire. Some religious alcoholics will disagree they have any choice, and prefer to believe they are *unfortunate victims* in life.

There is no way for anyone to tell another equal human which path to follow without allowing them an equal turn to do the same in reverse. Inherent, intelligence recognizes that reality simply is what it is. Continually seeking *new knowledge and improved understanding* of reality *enlarges a spiritual life*. (see pgs 14, 15, 35 & Step 11). To achieve that *spiritual progress*, it is often necessary “*to throw several lifelong conceptions out of the window*”. (see pgs 27 & 42).

Many traditional religions claim special privileges for *believing* their special version of the power. Often their *belief system* includes rewards for following pre-established rules of mental and physical behavior. While much of that *belief system* may have admirable qualities, some portion of reality usually gets excluded in their concept. (review pg 53 & Tradition 3 “The Long Form”). The religious experts get their power and authority over equal human beings because they are believed to have special access to power not enjoyed by others on an equal basis. (see pg 23 & Step 2). This just is not so with a universal principle of life. (i.e.: “*God’s laws*”).

Any response to a desire (syn: "prayer") **in this lifetime occurs on life's terms.** (syn: "God's Will"). **It is not subject to the ethnocentric beliefs of any special group of individuals.** (syn: "collective self-will run riot").

Any *belief system* based upon changing equal human beings, without their cooperation, is an illusion of questionable sanity or intelligence. At a minimum, any results will require the use of *physical restraints*, or the application of *fear, guilt or intimidation*. The choice of the alcoholic is either to yield to those pressures, or else seek *new knowledge* of how to cooperate with life, on life's terms. One approach accepts superior power of others which includes a *belief* in personal inferiority. The other accepts equality along with an incomplete understanding of reality. This *belief system* in equality (i.e.: "in the eyes of God") also allows for an individual path of *spiritual progress* which is not controlled by others.

It is the experience of this author that reality eventually prevails over illusions. Universal principles are not subject to controls. (Step 1). With *new knowledge* it is possible to give those principles *new direction* in the life of the individual alcoholic. (see pg 133).

Any mental conflict is between two opposing desires. (syn: "two opposing prayers"). It is akin to a charioteer driving two horses toward a fork in the road where one horse takes one direction, and the other takes the opposite path. The choice is to get ripped apart by the conflict, or else shoot one of the horses. Any indecision becomes critical.

Such a mental conflict is commonplace among many alcoholics when they first come to the AA program. Much of their life has been guided by old ideas, emotions and attitudes which were never their own. (pg 27). *New knowledge* is a threat to a familiar way of life. Some prefer to close their minds in fear and try to avoid changes. (pg 58). Others willingly seek *spiritual progress* and find it.

Atheists and agnostics are not the only ones with problems concerning power. It has a broader application in AA with religious members who insist they have *the last word on God*. This usually includes a *belief* there is no valid view other than their own.

"Instead of regarding ourselves as intelligent agents, spearheads of God's ever advancing Creation, we agnostics and atheists chose to believe that our human intelligence was the last word, the alpha and the omega, the beginning and end of all. Rather vain of us, wasn't it?" (pg 49).

No human power has all the answers in life. (pg 60(b)). Any *spiritual progress* requires seeking more *new knowledge* from the source. (see pgs 14, 15, 53, & 68).

"Remember that we deal with alcohol-cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power -that One is God. May you find Him now!" (pgs 58-59)

One primary objective for telling all our life story to another human being in Step Five is to reduce fear. Fear of rejection is based upon an *erroneous belief* that some other human power controls our personal happiness, joy and freedom. (see pgs 60 (a), (b), (c) & 133). That specific fear is reduced by revealing our innermost self to another person. Verbalizing the fear provides for improved understanding of reality. (Step 11). This is part of enlarging a personal spiritual life.

The application of some knowledge and intelligence (i.e.: "*the God within*") is required in the process. Without giving realistic direction to a desire (syn: "*prayer*") for *spiritual progress*, it is possible to pit the desire for happiness against itself. Two opposing desires (syn: "*prayers*") are being fulfilled simultaneously. One desire is to conform with and hold onto an *old idea*. The other desire is to grow spiritually by acquiring *new knowledge and awareness of the Great Reality*.

To resolve any conflict between two desires (syn: "*two conflicting prayers*"), more *new knowledge* is required. That *new knowledge* comes from the source of all knowledge. (See Step 11) The battle can continue indefinitely until the alcoholic surrenders by accepting one desire as being their dominant desire. ("*their dominant prayer*").

The process of seeking more *new knowledge* is not a one-time event.

"We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really
have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of
our spiritual condition." (pg 85)

Seeking more *new knowledge* provides an opportunity for progress in building a life which allows for total openness. *Spiritual progress* comes from aligning personal desires with life on life's terms. As progress is made there is an accompanying degree of serenity and a quiet mind which follows. Many recovered alcoholics have found they are willing to go to any lengths to get and maintain this freedom from a fear of reality. (see pgs 58, 84 & 85).

After Step Five, the remainder of the AA program involves actions required to maintain that spiritual condition. Continued enlargement of a spiritual life is necessary to maintain a daily reprieve from alcoholism. (see pgs 14, 15, 35 & 85).

**This author suggests a daily reprieve is the relief experienced
from the consequences of personal ignorance about how to cooperate
with life, in an ever changing universe.** (syn: "God" - see pgs 53, 60(c) &
85).

If maximum benefits are desired, the AA program offers an intelligent choice capable of producing excellent results. (pg 58). Anyone can claim those same results on an equal basis. The only requirement is a desire to stop drinking. **There is no second requirement.** (review Tradition 3 "*the Long Form*").

The path of action called for by the AA program requires seeking *more new knowledge and understanding of the Great Reality* (syn: "God"- see Step 11). Many alcoholics have become increasingly happy, joyous and free by thoroughly following that path. It has become **a chosen way of life** which continually provides desirable benefits. Those benefits will always be provided on life's terms and are there to be claimed by any

alcoholic with a desire to stop drinking. (see pg 58 & Tradition 3). There is always room for more personal improvement, **if you want it.**

WE LEARNED THE TRUTH, AND THE TRUTH SET US FREE.

* * * * *

SECTION B06g:

Chapter 6

INTO ACTION

STEP FIVE:

“Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.”

READ:

Page 75 beginning with *“We pocket our pride.....”* and ending with *“Have we tried to make mortar without sand?”*.

COMMENTS:

To avoid wasting time, anyone seriously considering becoming involved with the AA program needs to answer to themselves:

- 1. Do I believe I have a problem with alcohol?**
- 2. If so, do I want to do something about it?**
- 3. If I do, then WHEN?**

By now the author of this Study Guide assumes the reader has answered the first two questions, with a **“Yes!”** response. If so, then the final question of **“When?”** becomes the next matter for consideration. Only the individual can determine **when** they are willing to go to any length to recover.

THE POWER OF DECISION IS AN INNER RESOURCE

Once the decision has been made to proceed with the AA program of recovery, it includes a willingness to reveal their innermost self to another person. This creates the need for another decision as to whom that person shall be.

The previous section recommended intelligence be used in the selection process. The reader may now wish to think about how they gain access to any intelligence used in the decision process. (review pg 55).

The following section deals with some specific mental attitudes, once the reader has decided to take this intimate and confidential step. While many alcoholics choose someone ordained by an established religion, there are many others who would rather not do this. Therefore, they search out a close-mouthed, understanding friend. (pg 74).

When we decide who is to hear our story, we waste no time. We have a written inventory and we are prepared for a long talk. We explain to our partner what we are about to do and why we have to do it. He should realize that we are engaged upon a life-and-death errand. Most people approached in this way will be glad to help; they will be honored by our confidence.” (pg 75)

At this point the alcoholic has decided to get into action on this life-and-death errand. The decision is a conscious choice regardless of the path taken

DECIDING NOT TO DECIDE IS ALSO FREEDOM OF CHOICE BY DEFAULT

Many reach the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous prematurely. Being only mildly inconvenienced by drinking, they fail to recognize their alcoholism as a life-threatening condition. Those who are alcoholics, when left to their own devices, will eventually drink themselves into the gates of insanity or death. (pg 30). Because they are presently only mildly inconvenienced by drinking, many make choices out of ignorance of their real condition. (i.e.: “*ignorance of the truth*” = “*ignorance of God*”).

Many of those alcoholics will attempt to hold onto old ideas, emotions and attitudes which remain as guiding forces in their lives. (see pg 27). In doing so, they are ignoring reality, and due to their personal ignorance of the truth they make decisions which later have undesirable consequences. (see pg 62). One choice is to protect the *belief* there is something of value in distorting their mind with alcohol. That erroneous idea often includes *a firm belief* their condition really is not critical.

BECAUSE YOU *BELIEVE* SOMETHING DOES NOT MAKE IT TRUE

This erroneous old idea is so commonplace with alcoholics that the writers of the basic text for recovery offered a fool-proof suggestion for self-diagnosis to those who are not convinced they are in the grip of a progressive illness. It is simply:

“Step over to the nearest barroom and try some controlled drinking.” (pg 31)

“Old-timers” sometimes made a recommendation to simply: “*Give them plenty of bourbon and kindness!!*” as a method of dealing with the defiant individualist who denies having a problem. Alcoholics who are unable to be motivated by inspiration, then become motivated by desperation. The physical consequences of continued drinking at all costs eventually will force them to seek recovery if they desire to survive.

“*FIRST THINGS FIRST*”

There is little likelihood an alcoholic will understand this until they have exploited all of their known methods to control and enjoy their drinking. (pg 30). This *new awareness of reality* (syn: "God") produces improved understanding. They recognize there is some power in *new knowledge*, which is required for recovery. (See pg 60(a), (b), (c) & Step 11). No matter how much *self-knowledge* they have acquired, that *new knowledge* is a power they cannot manipulate

A PRINCIPLE DOES NOT PLAY FAVORITES WITH INDIVIDUALS

When an alcoholic knows the truth, they recognize personal powerlessness over alcohol. Probably no human power can change this condition for them. (pg 60(b)). However, *the Great Reality* of life, (syn: "God"), has provided some *new knowledge* which does produce recovery from alcoholism if it is sought. (pg 60(c)). That *new knowledge* had already been revealed (i.e.: "*from the source*") to other alcoholics who were desperate enough to seek it without any mental reservations. The power of that *new knowledge* enabled them to demonstrate that recovery is possible.

A MIRACLE IS SOMETHING THAT HAPPENS YOU DIDN'T BELIEVE COULD HAPPEN

Those alcoholics who *miraculously recovered* shared their *new-found knowledge of reality* (syn: "*enlarged spiritual life*" see pgs 14-15, 35 & Step 11) in AA's basic text for recovery from alcoholism. It is available to anyone who wants what they have.

This *new knowledge* of reality (syn: "God") enables the alcoholic, interested in recovery, to make informed and more intelligent decisions based upon the experience of other recovered alcoholics. Armed with the power of this *new knowledge*, their mind may then be in a better condition to honestly face their own problem with intelligence. (see pg 23 & Appendix II).

It is not necessary to immediately abandon all of an *old belief system* in order to recover. (Appendix II) However, *the necessary vital spiritual experience* does require changes to the old set of guiding forces in order to be effective.

"Ideas, emotions, and attitudes which were once the guiding forces of the lives of these men are suddenly cast to one side, and a completely new set of conceptions and motives begin to dominate them." (pg 27)

Self-reliance, even including reliance upon a *second-hand concept of God*, has a useful place in the life of any alcoholic. Without the ability to make choices, alcoholics would be mere automatons with no personal responsibility for any of the events in their lives.

Happily this is not the case, and such a *belief system* would not be consistent with *a concept of a God* that wants the alcoholic to be *happy, joyous and free*. (pg 133). However, placing complete and total self-reliance upon the finite limits of accumulated human intelligence is also unrealistic. (syn: "not God").

“We trust infinite God rather than our finite
selves.” (pg 68)

Everyone has some awareness of reality. No one has it all. By placing personal reliance upon the source of all *new knowledge*, spiritual progress is possible. An enlarged spiritual life becomes available to any alcoholic who seeks it, on an individual basis.

Regardless of how any improved conscious understanding of reality is acquired, (see Step 11), it is essential to recognize that personal and collective human knowledge are both finite and limited. Continued recovery requires continued access to *new knowledge of reality*. (see pgs 14-15, 35, 60 (a-c), 129, 164, & Appendix II).

Most traditional religions settle upon a *belief system* which places focus upon *old ideas, emotions and attitudes*. This may explain their inability to produce recoveries from alcoholism comparable to AA.

For the individual alcoholic with a dominant desire to recover, (syn: “prayer”), that desire involves either holding on to those old ideas of God, or else choosing their own conception. One which allows them to further enlarge their spiritual life. (see pgs 12, 14-15, 35, 95, 129 & 164). Such a decision requires them to use their own inherent intelligence, (syn: “*the God within*” - see pg 55), or else place their reliance upon those *second-hand concepts* developed by others.

It is the *belief* of this author that alcoholics have *some responsibility* for the consequences of their own choices.

YOU ARE NOT THE POWER, - BUT YOU GIVE DIRECTION TO THE POWER

For those alcoholics seeking a *vital spiritual experience*, perhaps the most fundamental change required is one of mental attitude. Specifically, an attitude concerning personal ability to change reality. Often, this process is hampered by *old beliefs* acquired during childhood which have never been examined in *the light of intelligence*. (syn: “*the light of God*”). Often that *belief system* came from some other equal human whose credentials to be an authority have never been questioned. **Many alcoholics are surprised to discover they have the power to change the entire universe, but only by the count of ONE.**

“....we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else He is nothing. God either is, or He isn't. What was our choice to be?” (pg 53)

Any alcoholic who is part of life is also part of *the Great Reality*. (syn: “God”). If “God” really is all and everything, then the alcoholic is also part of that power. Not all of the power, just some of it. (see pg 45). The place they find the power to understand *the Great Reality* is deep down within themselves. (see pg 55 & Step 11). The alcoholic enlarges

their *spiritual life* by seeking to improve their conscious understanding of life, on life's terms. (i.e.: "God" pgs 60(c)). **This requires that they rearrange or displace some of the *old ideas, emotions and attitudes* which have been the guiding forces in their life.** (see pg 27).

"With this attitude you cannot fail. The consciousness of your belief is sure to come to you." (pg 55)

Many alcoholics are surprised to discover a difference between "*their idea of God*" and "*the Great Reality which is God*".

The selfishness and self-centeredness which is at the root of troubles (pg 62) can manifest itself in a variety of ways. The author suggests one of those problem areas is in how a concept of God got chosen. (pg 12). Choices as to what to believe seem to revolve around two conflicting attitudes. (pgs 23 & 27).

1. Moral Superiority: "My God is better than your God!"

OR

2. Does It Work?: "Don't tell me, show me"

Certainly any inner conflict of such massive proportions will significantly impact personal happiness, joy and freedom. (syn: "God's will" see pg 133).

Whenever an alcoholic attempts to reconcile differences between two conflicting concepts of God it calls for a decision. Without making a choice, the individual is being pulled apart by two conflicting desires. (syn: "prayers").

On the premise there is some power which responds to something called "*a prayer*", the question for the individual alcoholic then becomes:

1. Do I abdicate responsibility for all my actions?

OR

2. Do I use my own best intelligence when choosing a concept of a power greater than myself?

One approach completely relinquishes the power of any choice. The other accepts it, along with responsibility for the consequences of errors in personal judgment. Because the inner conflict is so pervasive, reconciling this *idea of God* is essential to being *happy, joyous and free*. (see pg 133).

With both desires being answered at the same time the inner conflict continues. (see pg 59). The indecisive alcoholic will continue being torn apart by two conflicting desires (syn: "prayers"). Eventually, reality will demand action. Recognized lack of knowledge and understanding produces fear. (see pg 67). Strong emotional reaction to

fear blocks the ability to make *the elegant choice* of using the best intelligence available at the time. There is no time left to think.

INDECISION IS HELL!!

On one side is an *old idea* of God and the *unwillingness* to challenge it out of *fear* of possible rejection by chosen human authorities. This is often accompanied by a *belief* that those other humans control personal *happiness, joy and freedom*. (i.e.: “*God’s will*” see pg 133).

On the other side is a growing *conscious awareness* that continued drinking leads to jails, insanity and death. This often includes *awareness* of the need for more *new knowledge* in order to stay alive and “*carry your own keys*” in this lifetime. That mental conflict is pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization! (see pgs 23, 30).

One intelligent basis for making a decision would be to consider letting go of the *old idea of God*, and admit the possibility of a mistake. (see Step 10). This would allow the alcoholic freedom to consider a concept of God that allows for personal choice. It is fascinating to watch the thought processes of “*close-minded*” alcoholics shut down or slam shut when they encounter any new idea which is different from their established *fundamental idea of God*. (see pgs 12, 23, 27, 42, 45, 53, 55, 85-86, 93-95, 129, 164 & Appendix II). Try it and see for yourself.

This exposure to reality may not be acceptable to those alcoholics who are determined to retain their traditional religious views at all costs. (syn: “*self-will run riot*”). Any such reader may want to avoid *open-mindedly* considering this section. (review Appendix II for a potential conflict of interest).

This author *believes* that **self-preservation** is so basic it could rightly be considered “*A Law of Life*” - or “*God’s Law*”. The desire (syn: “*prayer*”) to survive is so basically intelligent that it will instinctively over-rule any learned behavior -unless there is some even greater emotional demand. Wars could not be fought without strong emotions and fear to override that basic intelligent demand for self-preservation. (review pg 68).

Traditional religious beliefs are fundamental ideas of God which have been learned from some human source. (pg 55). **For those with a rigorously honest desire to stay alive, a choice to abandon that training to accept self-preservation may be the most sane option.**

Most alcoholics will make that choice instinctively unless instilled with an overwhelming **fear of God** which is sufficient to produce blind obedience. Such a *fear* is required to wage any war, be it religious or otherwise. **Both require blind unthinking obedience to the edicts of other equal human beings designated as superior.**

Arguments in support of religious and military objectives often bear great emotional similarities. In both cases, established authorities make unchallenged pronouncements about the obedience they desire. **Equality is not an issue.** Furthermore, intelligently choosing *a power greater than themselves* is not possible without some conscious mental cooperation. (pgs. 23, 62 & Step 11).

All alcoholics are subject to the “*Laws of Life*”. (syn: “*God’s Laws*”). This condition applies regardless of how well or poorly they understand them. Before one

human being can control or manipulate another, it is first necessary to eliminate *any belief in personal equality* (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”). Cooperation is required to retain any “*superiority*”. Continued control requires maintaining *ignorance of the truth* by “*those inferiors*” who have equal access to the same source of *new knowledge* and all the power that goes with it.

WHAT ONE CAN LEARN ANOTHER CAN ALSO LEARN

To obtain personal freedom from limitations imposed by others requires a decision to break loose from those bonds of ignorance. With a concept of “God” as the intelligent source of all knowledge and power: (pgs 12, 45, 53, & 68):

IGNORING THE TRUTH IS IGNORING GOD

To reduce personal ignorance first requires recognition that many choices are made according to values established by others. Those values may be intelligent and agree with *the Great Reality* of life, on life’s terms. (i.e.: “*God’s will*”). They also may be merely the continuation of emotional attitudes and *old ideas* which do not stand up to the light of intelligent examination. (i.e.: “*the light of God*”). The only way to find out is to use your own inherent intelligence to decide.

Whenever an alcoholic acquires a conscious understanding of their equality (syn: “in the eyes of God”) they gain new freedom and a new happiness. (see pgs 12, 83 & Step 11)

YOU DON’T KNOW UNTIL YOU KNOW

A decision to choose a concept of God which includes equality and freedom of choice, allows any alcoholic to change direction. (see pgs 59 & 164). This allows them, to accomplish what other alcoholics have done as equals. Other alcoholics have demonstrated what can be done because they have tapped the source of power of that *new knowledge* and they use it. (pg 163). The problem of the still suffering alcoholic is **ignorance of *the Great Reality***. (syn: “God” - see pg 55).

IGNORANCE OF REALITY IS IGNORING GOD

Personal ignorance is both real and endless. Every alcoholic has some, but fortunately it can be reduced although never eliminated completely. (pg 68). Improved understanding is possible. When it is sought, the alcoholic will “*know a new freedom and a new happiness*”. (pg 60(c)). It will always materialize if the alcoholic will work for it. (see pgs 83- 84). What others have learned can also be learned by those who look beyond the horizons of their *old ideas*. (pgs 23 & 58).

A decision to confront ignorance of reality (syn: “God”) opens up a pathway to infinite learning and an endless opportunity for self-improvement. Tapping that unsuspected inner resource is not a reward granted to selected individuals by some outside intelligence. (see pg 163 & Appendix II).

“We found that God does not make too hard terms with those who seek Him. To us, the Realm of the Spirit is broad, roomy, all inclusive; never exclusive or forbidding to those who earnestly seek. It is open, we believe to all men.” (pg 46)

This author *believes* that when the dominant desire (syn: “*dominant prayer*”) of an alcoholic is to *seek the source of all knowledge to survive* (syn: “God”) then some intelligence responds with the *gift of life* on a daily basis. (see pg 85). What the alcoholic gets *as a daily gift from God* is an infinite universe. Included is the equal opportunity to seek *new knowledge* and all the power contained in any enlarged or improved understanding of life, on life’s terms. Some alcoholics daily trudge through a “*diamond field of life*” emerging with nothing but “*mud on their shoes*”.

Some *greater intelligence* (i.e.: “*greater than finite understanding*”) provides for fulfillment of a dominate desire. The direction comes from the dominant desire. (syn: “prayer”). For recovery from alcoholism, the AA program suggests that the alcoholic pray **only** to improve conscious contact with the source of all knowledge and the power to carry it out. (review pg 68 & Step 11).

The power of *new knowledge and improved understanding of the Great Reality* (syn: “God”) is always available. It is always available right here and right now. (see pgs 23, 55, 60(c), Step 11 & Appendix II).

No individual is blocked from seeking and acquiring *more new knowledge*. Because **knowledge is infinite**, no person can ever acquire *all knowledge*. By either decision or default, the alcoholic must choose *what portion of infinite new knowledge* they most desire. (syn: “*pray for*”).

This author suggests a desire (syn: “prayer”) for *more knowledge of God’s will* (see Step 11) is an intelligent choice of direction. For those who *believe* that God’s will for them is to be *happy, joyous and free* (review pg 133) then *seeking more knowledge of that* would be an intelligent place to begin.

A life which is *happy, joyous and free* (i.e.: “God’s will” pg 133) will be more worth living than one of *blind conformance to the second-hand values of others*.

A new desire (syn: “*new prayer*”) for *personal equality and freedom* can replace *old ideas, emotions and attitudes* which previously had been guiding forces. (pg 27 and Step 11). The more religious alcoholic may prefer to retain a different *belief system* to avoid making changes to their old ideas.

What are the consequences of making such a drastic change in mental direction? (see pg 23). First, it involves changing *the fundamental idea of power* required for recovery. (pgs 55 & 60(c)). It also disrupts *old ideas* about **how** “*God wants us to be happy, joyous and free*”. (see pg 133). The personal value of any *new knowledge* acquired from telling someone else *all* their life story is clearly stated.

“We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone at perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator. We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a spiritual experience.” (pg 75).

A previously indecisive alcoholic never needs to again experience those *old conflicts*. (i.e.: “*based upon old ideas*”). They are no longer able to *intelligently believe* their problems have been imposed upon them by some *whimsical tyrant* that unequally plays favorites with some but not others. Instead, there is conscious awareness of personal *equality* accompanied by an inescapable responsibility for personal choices. Those decisions, made with or without adequate knowledge, provide direction to the power - on life’s terms. The alcoholic then consciously understands and accepts that they are free to drink, anytime they want to. Their only problem with alcohol becomes one of deciding intelligently what it is they want the most. (i.e.: “*their prayer*”).

“The feeling that the drink problem has disappeared will often come strongly.” (pg 75).

That *new awareness* (i.e.: “*a revelation from God*” - see pg 164) does not mean other problems will not exist. The power of *more new knowledge* is required whenever other *new problems* arise. Hence, there exists a requirement to constantly enlarge a spiritual life in order to maintain recovery from alcoholism. (see pgs 14-15, 23, 35, 85, 87 & 164).

From this approach, the “*God problem*” gets a new perspective. With awareness that *knowledge is infinite*, there is an accompanying awareness that *personal ignorance is also infinite*.

The author readily acknowledges the *superior power of different knowledge about some things* which others may have already acquired from the source. That *personal awareness of part of reality* is their superior power. With that knowledge, they then have the freedom and power to make choices which are more intelligent than those who don’t know. Their choices are *more intelligent* when they do not conflict with life on life’s terms. (syn: “God”).

For anyone with a dominant desire (syn: “prayer”) to reduce personal conflict with reality, developing the power of *intelligent choice* is obviously desirable. It will become their *fundamental idea* of what is “**good**” (syn: “God”) for them. This tends to simplify matters for alcoholics having difficulty blindly accepting pronouncements by traditional “*religious specialists*” about what is “**good for everyone**”.

Within the AA program, a *change in attitude* is required. (pg 27). There is a need to let go of old ideas of **fear, shame and guilt** about telling *all* their story to another person and accept their equality as a human being in the eyes of their creator. (“Let Go and Let God”). Most alcoholics find it is hard to argue with success.

“Here are thousands of men and women, worldly indeed. They flatly declare that since they have come to believe in a Power greater than themselves, to take a certain attitude toward that Power, and to do certain simple things, there has been a revolutionary change in their way of living and thinking.....after they wholeheartedly met a few simple requirements.”
(pg 50)

“When we saw others solve their problems by a simple reliance upon the Spirit of the Universe, we had to stop doubting the power of God. Our ideas did not work. The God idea did.”
(pg 52)

“Hence we are at pains to tell why we think our present faith is reasonable, why we think it more sane and logical to believe, why we say our former thinking was soft and mushy when we threw up our hands in doubt and said, “We did not know.”
(pg 53)

The “*Spirit of the Universe*” is a concept of a power compatible with an “*Infinite Source of New Knowledge*”. (see pg 12). The reader may choose some other limited and finite *second-hand idea* of that power developed by other equal human beings. This author *believes* that reliance upon an infinitely greater concept is a more intelligent choice. (see pg 68). It is a matter of either *knowing* or of *believing*. At this point it may be worthwhile to ask yourself:

“Who are you to say there is no God”
(pg 56)

which can be followed by a companion question.

“Who are you to say that your concept of God is superior to any other concept of God?”

Those questions may be extended to include anyone claiming to be an expert on what is “**good**” (syn: “God”) for you. Do you *know*, or do you just *believe you know*? Do they really know, or do you just *believe they know*?

The answers demand the use of *your own inherent intelligence* unless you prefer to be a victim of your own ignorance and deny your own equality as a human being. (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”).

There are significant differences between what you *know* and what you *believe*. Your own inherent intelligence is capable of recognizing the difference. You may choose not to use your own intelligence, and rely upon a *second-hand concept* of what is “**good**” (syn: “God”) for you as the guide for your life. (see pg 27). This does not imply that the spokesmen for traditional religions are necessarily wrong. Their *beliefs* might be accurate,

or they may be incorrect because they are incomplete. Only a person with *all knowledge* could be certain. **Do you really believe you know enough to bet your life on them?**

For the individual who *believes* they already have all they need to know about God, no intelligent basis for self-examination exists, in their mind. (see pg 23). Seeking more *new knowledge* would not produce anything of value which they desire. (i.e.: “pray for”). However, those who desire recovery from alcoholism, by using the AA program will recognize it is based upon seeking the *power of new knowledge from the source of all knowledge*. (i.e.: “God” - review pgs 58-60 & Appendix II).

Anyone who already has all the power they desire is wasting time here which could be applied more beneficially to other pursuits.

This will not be so for the alcoholic whose inherent intelligence has recognized they do not know everything about being happy, joyous and free. (see pg 133). If their **primary purpose** (syn: “dominant prayer”) is to stay sober, and to help other alcoholics achieve sobriety in this lifetime, then careful consideration of how thousands of men and women have recovered from alcoholism merits their attention. (Refer to AA Preamble and Frontispiece of the basic AA text). As alcoholics and as equals, their stories may have value to you. Similarly, your story may have value to others.

“Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us.”
(pg. 77)

Those alcoholics who cannot or will not share *all* their life story with another human being, may only experience *partial freedom and equality*. The necessary *vital spiritual experience* suggested by the AA program calls for constant maintenance to enlarge a spiritual life. (see pg. 14-15, 35, 85 & 129). The prerequisite *new knowledge* is never withheld by the source of all knowledge. (syn: “God”) to those who seek it. (see pg 46 & 60(c)).

“Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us.”
(pg 164)

Step Three becomes intelligently understandable with this relationship to the *source of all new knowledge*, (syn: “God”).

“Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.” (pg 59).

Alcoholics who choose to seek a *new relationship* to the source of *all new knowledge* now have the option to develop some *new ideas, emotions and attitudes*. (review pg 27). This enlarged *spiritual life* can become a *new guiding force* in their lives as truth, good and reality (all synonyms for “God”) are consciously understood. (Step 11). For those who choose it, Step Three can become a personal attitude of:

1. I would rather be told the truth than something I would like to hear.
2. I would rather get what is good for me than have my own way if there is a difference.
3. I would rather live in reality than in the fantasy land and illusions of my own wishful thinking.

This author *believes* that as there is improved understanding of **truth, good and reality**, there is **improved conscious contact with God**. (Step 11). When this is sought, as a dominant desire (syn: “*dominant prayer*”), it becomes equally available to anyone in life, on life’s terms.

For many alcoholics, it is sufficient for them to place their personal trust upon *truth, good and reality* (syn: “God” - see pg 68) when honestly telling *all* their story to another person. Once completed, some specific suggestions have already been made about what to do next.

“Returning home we find a place where we can be
quiet for an hour, carefully reviewing what we have done.”
(pg 75)

This author suggests this will include reviewing any personal *beliefs* about limitations to **the power of new knowledge** in the recovery process. Exclusive reliance upon finite boundaries of “**old ideas from any traditional religion**” may be skimping on an infinite source of power. (see pg 68). Any *truth, good or reality* outside of that religious definition would not be available without first acknowledging an error or oversight in that *belief system*. (Step 10).

Until human knowledge and understanding reaches the boundaries of a seemingly infinite universe, this author *believes* there shall always be more to be revealed. (pg 164). What it is the reader *believes* will define **the horizons of their own mind**. (see pg 23). This will establish the limits of how far they *believe* they are free to apply the power of *new knowledge* in their personal life.

Hopefully that very personal choice of a *belief system* will produce the fulfillment you, the reader, most desire (i.e.: “*the answer to your prayers*”) as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny. (see pgs 77 & 164).

This completes the sections devoted to Step Five.

* * * * *

SECTION B06h:

Chapter 6

INTO ACTION

STEP SIX:

“Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.”

READ:

Page 76, the first paragraph, beginning with *“If we can answer to our satisfaction,.....”* and ending with *“.....we ask God to help us be willing”*.

COMMENTS:

By now the serious reader will have gained improved understanding of some intelligent reasons for taking Step Five. The *“admission to God”* is recognition that a concept of God exists in the mind of the individual. (pg 55) Many different concepts exist. The degree of intelligence involved with any one concept is resolved within the mind of the person who claims it as their own. The only valid test of any concept is in how well it works.

The ideas and *belief systems* of others are just that. They have their ideas guiding their lives, you have yours. (see pg 27). The reader may consider the extent any of those differing concepts are intelligently compatible with *the Great Reality* which you discover by using your own mind. (syn: “God” - see pgs 23 & 55). There are many differing views of an *infinite reality*. (see pg 68).

There are always some *ideas, emotions and attitudes*, in the mind of any alcoholic, which could benefit from improvement. The *“admission to ourselves of the exact nature of our wrongs”* mentally acknowledges personal imperfections in a personal understanding of reality. (see pg 23 & Step 11). By contrast, the Ultimate Reality of life, on life’s terms presumably expresses *“the will of God”*. The early members of AA were sure this included that the alcoholic is supposed to be *“happy, joyous and free”*. (pg 133).

This author *believes* if any alcoholic already knew how to produce that condition on a continuing basis, they would utilize the knowledge. Therefore, the alcoholic is either experiencing their own best version of happiness now, or else more new knowledge is required. Many alcoholics seek to *“trade-up”*. (see pgs 14-15, 35 42, 55, 60(c), 68, 129, 163-164 & Appendix II).

New knowledge is available to any human being from the source of all knowledge (syn: God). Humanity has already acquired some of it from an infinite source. (pg 68). There is more to be revealed. (pg 164 & Appendix II). Before an alcoholic starts seeking more understanding, it is a good idea to identify what portion of self-knowledge needs to

be improved. (Steps 10 & 11). It is intelligent to evaluate if some portion conflicts with the Ultimate Reality. (i.e.: "God").

For the most part, traditional religions have established moral concepts for application to all of humanity. They then attempt to have those values be adopted by each individual. Sometimes by attraction, but more often by promotion.

Spokesmen for traditional religious *belief systems* may or may not be correct. If their claims are accurate, they would be *principles of life* (i.e." Laws of Life = God's will"). As such, those principles would be essential for the personal happiness, joy and freedom of anyone. (see pg 133). Without ability to demonstrate results, no one can be certain if they have universal application. Where recovery from alcoholism is concerned, no one could get sober and stay sober without them.

Within that framework, Steps Four and Five of the AA program do not attempt to address moral shortcomings of the human race. Rather, they allow the individual alcoholic to examine their own values. Those values either do or do not produce personal happiness, joy and freedom. (pg 58). They include *a fundamental idea* of some power that produces fulfillment. (see pg 55). The alcoholic decides what concept of power produces their own personal fulfillment.

"Why don't you choose your own conception of God?"
(pg 12)

"We represent no particular faith or denomination.
We are dealing only with general principles common to
most denominations."
(pgs 93-94)

"We have no monopoly on God; we merely have an
approach that worked with us."
(pg 95)

"Admitting to another human being" the exact nature of what is wrong allows for improved understanding of what does not produce happiness, joy and freedom. (review Steps 10 & 11). Errors in judgment and mistakes in decisions may be the result of *erroneous beliefs* about "God's will".

I NEVER MADE A MISTAKE BEFORE, BUT THIS LOOKS LIKE IT MIGHT BE ONE

There have been observations made that an alcoholic is *sensitive, childish and grandiose*. At the same time they often insist upon being "*right*" at all costs. This author suggests those mental characteristics may be the exact nature of their wrongs. (see pgs 23, 60-62). If this is valid, then any improved awareness of that mistaken approach to life would allow an alcoholic to improve a conscious contact with what is good for them (syn: "God for them"). With that *enlarged spiritual life* they would then have a capacity to make *more intelligent* choices. (see pgs 14-15, & 35).

An alcoholic knows if they are giving their best effort to their present understanding what is good for them, and recognizes when they have satisfied their own intelligence. (i.e.: "*the God within*" - pg 55). With that "*vision of God's will*", they are

ready to approach Step Six. (see pg 85). This is where they will decide if they want to keep repeating the same mistakes or not.

An acknowledged defect of character is something the alcoholic *believes* would be a good idea (syn: “a God idea”) to either remove or improve. There is value in understanding what is being eliminated or changed, (Step 11), and the intelligence of the individual (syn: “the God within”) has practical application. The alcoholic has the choice to use their own intelligence, or else blindly rely upon *second-hand thinking of others* which has a different price-tag. It forces a mental confrontation with *beliefs* of others and poses questions which need to be answered..

1. **Have those values of others ever been challenged with intelligence?.** (syn: “God”).
2. **Are their *ideas, emotions and attitudes* really my own?**

Those questions are directly related to any *fundamental idea of God* for the alcoholic, and unavoidably include a *belief system* about “what God wants for them”. (see pgs 55 & 133). Readers adhering to traditional religious concepts of God are involved with a “*second-hand belief system*” and already know what they believe. Alcoholics honestly seeking recovery are now obliged to answer, to their innermost self, “*is that what I really believe ?*”

THE PRICE OF SELF-DECEPTION IS PAID WITH LOSS OF SELF-RESPECT

Those experiencing difficulty reconciling the results of *what they believe* with *their own inherent intelligence* (syn: “the God within”) will find the book “*Alcoholics Anonymous*” is a practical guide to recovery from alcoholism. It contains the practical experience of thousands of man and women who have recovered. This includes observations which may not agree with theoretical concepts that were part of their religious training. Decisions involving personal values may be required.

“We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous and free. We cannot subscribe to the belief that this life is a vale of tears, though it once was just that for many of us.”
(pg 133).

The primary purpose in AA is to stay sober, and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety. (see AA preamble).

This is something which occurs as a “*daily reprieve*” during this lifetime. (pg 85). Most traditional religions have different objectives pertaining to some **different primary purpose and some other lifetime**. It is not an uncommon mistake for an alcoholic to *believe* the objectives of AA and those of various religious *belief systems* are one and the same.

Any unintelligent mixing of goals and objectives for this life will produce mental confusion and emotional turmoil. In AA, the primary objective relies upon a *fundamental idea of God* as **a guide for living this life**, on life's terms. With confusion about that, any conflict of interest about the power required for the recovery process in this lifetime needs to be resolved.

Resolving any conflict in the primary objective of an alcoholic will include their own concept of what is wrong in their life. (Step 5). This author *believes* any religion will fit into AA's concept of an *infinite God*. (pg 68). However, problems arise when trying to fit AA into the finite limits of any *religious definition of God*. Particularly any *religious belief system* which identifies itself as being different from *other belief systems*.

The author suggests that whatever a religious alcoholic decides is wrong will reflect their *belief* it is "*the will of God*" to eliminate or change it. Hence the personal choice of a belief system plays a significant role in their recovery process. That *belief system* may be intelligent and the result of their own thinking. It may also be an emotional or *second-hand idea* which has been blindly accepted from others. If the expectations of their *belief system* is not producing *happiness, joy and freedom*, (i.e.: "God's will for them" - pg 133) it would be well to take a fresh look at the **primary objective**. Is it:

1. **To stay alive and carry their own keys while seeking to be happy, joyous & free during this lifetime? (see pg 133).**

OR

2. **To be rewarded with preferential treatment and/or other insupportable promises to be provided in some next lifetime?**

The *truly open minded* alcoholic will consider Step 10 when attempting to resolve any conflict between the AA program and their *fundamental belief system* concerning God. (pg 55).

Any *belief system* which stands in the way of being happy, joyous and free now, (pgs 85 & 133), can be improved by seeking more *new knowledge of reality now*. (syn: "God" see Step 11). **There is more happiness, joy and freedom available to be revealed now, if it is sought now. (pgs 60(c) & 164).**

Undeniably, there is mental action required when choosing **a primary purpose in this life**. (see pg 23). Effort, thought and concentration are required to establish what will satisfy inherent intelligence now. (i.e.: "*the God within*").

WHAT IS IT YOU WANT THE MOST?

(syn: "*what is your dominant prayer?*")

If others have achieved what you want the most during this life, they have also acquired the knowledge of how to claim it. The promises of traditional religions concerning any "*next life*" at their best, are speculative ideas of God. (pg 55). You may choose to *believe* them or not. Eventually, everyone will depart "*this life*" and become an equal authority on what comes next.

As an alcoholic, when establishing your primary purpose during this lifetime, consider what it is you want the most now. Is it:

?? **To get well?** If so, who knows how?

?? **To be good?** If so, whose version?

Both desires (syn: “prayers”) require the use of some intelligence by the alcoholic for their fulfillment. What else, but personal intelligence allows an alcoholic to recognize when they are getting what they want? You, the reader, either do or do not *believe* you have that ability to recognize what you desire.

**WHY BOTHER TO “PRAY” FOR SOMETHING
IF YOU CANNOT RECOGNIZE AND ACCEPT IT
WHEN IT IS GIVEN TO YOU?**

If what you want is a *second-hand idea* of what someone else *wants you to want*, then you have chosen their version for your own personal happiness, joy and freedom.

**DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE YOU NEED SOMEONE ELSE
TO TELL YOU WHEN YOU ARE HAPPY?**

The author of this Study Guide *believes* every individual does their own wanting. The desires (syn: “prayers”) of each individual are their own. It is also the *belief* of this author, that some intelligent power allows for fulfillment on life’s terms of that which is most desired. Accordingly, this author suggests the alcoholic apply “*First Things First*” by directing their attention to living

“ONE LIFE AT A TIME”

The reader may find this perspective useful when evaluating the statement about Step Six:

“We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable. Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable? Can He now take them all - every one? If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing.” (pg 76).

Firstly, “*willingness*” is a mental attitude. In Step Six, it is willingness to let go of old ideas, and let what is good replace them. (i.e.: “*Let Go and Let God*”). Improved understanding of what really is good may be required. (syn: “God” - see Step 11)

When continual improvement during this lifetime is their dominant desire (syn: “dominant prayer”) then the alcoholic has a **primary purpose** consistent with the AA

program. (pg 77 & AA Preamble). As a natural consequence of any self-improvement during this lifetime, other people will benefit indirectly.

The *spiritual improvements* prescribed by many religions may have unquestioned value applicable to some next lifetime. Unfortunately, many of them have no direct application to recovery from alcoholism now.

“FIRST THINGS FIRST”

The AA program provides recognizable personal benefits in this lifetime. Many alcoholics prefer that over some *promise of a later reward*.

Next comes the mental *readiness* to willingly allow some greater power to produce those changes which are desired now. (Step 3 - see pgs 47-48). Once again, this reflects a chosen belief about when and how the power works. That *belief* was chosen either by intelligent conscious decision or by blindly and unthinkingly accepting the “*second-hand beliefs*” of others. Because what an alcoholic *believes* about God defines their capacity to make intelligent choices, it is significant that:

“Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God’s will into all our activities. “How can I best serve Thee - Thy will (not mine) be done.” These are thoughts which must go with us constantly. We can exercise our will power along this line all we wish. It is the proper use of the will. (pg 85)

“*The vision of God’s will*” for the alcoholic seeking recovery will be determined by their *beliefs about God*. That “*fundamental idea*” (pg 55) may be intelligent. It can also be an emotional unthinking *second-hand* concept with little or no relationship to reality. Only the alcoholic concerned can make that determination within their own mind. (pg 23).

To make a beginning toward improved understanding of reality (syn: “God” - see pgs 12, 59-60 & Step 11) only requires adopting an attitude of *willingness, honesty and open mindedness*. (see pgs 23, 27, 42, 47, & Appendix II). This attitude enlarges a spiritual life. Others may militantly attempt to convince you that their way is the only right way. If they are correct, the intelligence of the reader will recognize that no alcoholic could or would ever recover without doing it that way.

In recovery from alcoholism, it doesn’t matter “who is right”. The only thing that matters for the alcoholic in AA, is “who is left”.

Those aspects of *self-will* which are in agreement with “*God’s will*” are rarely objectionable. (pgs 85 & 133). Some inherent intelligence within the alcoholic recognizes if and why they are disturbed.

It is on that point many **finite traditional religious ideas** part company with **all-inclusive concepts** of “*a power*” found in the AA program. The alcoholic will **only** find “*the Great Reality*” deep down within themselves (pg 55).

Any disturbances the alcoholic does experience are likely to revolve around:

1. Conflict with what someone else *believes* they should want?

OR ELSE SOME PORTION OF REALITY WHICH

2. Blocks their own version of being happy, joyous and free?

(syn: God’s will - pg 133).

Most religions have a creed or statement defining their *belief system* about God. It invariably differentiates itself from *other belief systems*. This may also include the **ethnocentric idea** of “*being specially chosen for superior status in the eyes of their Creator*”. Their members have chosen to live within the limits of a *belief* about God which “*disallows equality*”. According to their own *belief*, that is what they claim from life. To the surprise of many, what they get is provided **on life’s terms**, rather than complying with their limited *belief system*.

Alcoholics who are not in agreement are not really **honest members** and get excluded from the benefits of an **ethnocentric idea of God**. (pg 55). The promised rewards of membership to be provided in some *next lifetime* are usually offered by some group spokesmen who claims direct knowledge, which the other members do not possess. Some of those “*religious experts*” may even seek to reap benefits *during this lifetime* for dispensing those rewards which will be provided in some *future experience*. Only the inherent intelligence of the individual alcoholic can determine if they are being gullible or not.

Such religious *belief systems* may or may not be correct. However, almost invariably **they claim to be correct**. This may be a harmless *egocentric or ethnocentric attitude*, when in contrast to AA. (pg 164). It is undeniable that impressive benefits may be gained by some alcoholics who adhere to some traditional religious belief systems. However:

Most religious *belief systems* provide benefits which do not apply to alcoholics outside of their specific definition of God and “God’s will”. By significant contrast, the AA program has universal application for any alcoholic, anyplace, anytime regardless of their beliefs.

AA principles do not require conformity to any particular *idea of God*.

**THE ONLY REQUIREMENT FOR MEMBERSHIP IS
A DESIRE TO STOP DRINKING.**

This is the point where the AA program is separately identifiable and parts company with most finite traditional *religious beliefs*.

With most religions, use of the three-letter word “God” is restricted to what they *believe*. In the AA program, use of that same word is not limited. (review Appendix II). **The limits of religion are set by the spokesmen and authorities who establish what you should believe.** In AA, the alcoholic is restricted only by their own conscious understanding of reality. (see pgs 12, 23, 42, 53, 55, 68, 95, 129, 163-164 & Step 11).

This author *believes* that willingness to go to any lengths to stay sober is not compatible with establishing limits to the power required for recovery.

When we became alcoholics, crushed by a self-imposed crisis we could not postpone or evade, we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else He is nothing. God either is, or He isn't. What was our choice to be?" (pg 53)

Anytime traditional *religious beliefs* produce desired results they have recognizable value. Until proven differently, those *beliefs* may be intelligently trusted to continue producing the same benefits. However, whenever those *old ideas* conflict with personal happiness then a new direction may be required.

Intelligence would suggest placing trust in a different *fundamental idea of God that produces results*. (see pgs 55, 62, 68 & 133) Here is where experience of thousands of men and women who have recovered from alcoholism has value. (see Frontispiece) Those alcoholics have tapped a limitless load of *new knowledge* which produces an endless supply of *spiritual growth*. (see pgs 42, 60, 129, & 163-164). Any alcoholic who wants it can have it. (see pg 46).

“We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves.” (pg 68).

The alcoholic reader should recognize their mind is restricted only by the finite limits of learning possible during a single lifetime. During that lifetime, they also have the capacity to *believe* something which is not true, therefore “not God”. (see pgs 23 & 27)

Small children *believe* stories of a fat Santa Claus coming down a small chimney to provide gifts to good and obedient children. The similarities between that *childish belief* and some traditional religious concepts about God is not lost.

What is important to recognize is that the human mind can *believe* almost anything. What is *believed* usually comes from someone else (see pg 23 & Step 2) **and it may not always be true.** (syn: “God”).

Many alcoholics *believe* something simply because they *want to believe it*. That desire (syn: “*prayer*”) can determine if intelligence is getting applied to improving any conscious understanding of *the Great Reality* (syn: “God” - pg 55, Steps 10 & 11).

For a non-alcoholic, this may be harmless. For an alcoholic with a physical malady that jeopardizes their life and freedom, the “*frothy emotional appeals*” of most traditional religious *belief systems* have seldom produced lasting recoveries. (see “The Doctor’s Opinion”), Nonetheless, noteworthy changes occur when those same alcoholics have “*a vital spiritual experience*”. That *vital spiritual experience* produces miraculous recoveries from a once seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. (see pg 27 & Appendix II).

“Ideas, emotions, and attitudes which were once the guiding forces of the lives of these men are suddenly cast to one side, and a completely new set of conceptions and motives begin to dominate them.”

“Upon hearing this, our friend was somewhat relieved, for he reflected that, after all, he was a good church member. This hope, however, was destroyed by the doctor’s telling him that while his religious convictions were very good, in his case they did not spell the necessary vital spiritual experience.” (pg 27).

The author of this Study Guide *believes* strict adherence to any limited concept of God, as the power sought for recovery from alcoholism, also limits conscious contact with that infinite power. (See pg 68 & Step 11).

Any *belief system* claiming to be the only answer for happiness, joy and freedom (syn: “God’s will), is a *closed-minded attitude* about other concepts. The vanity of such an *ethnocentric attitude* blocks spiritual progress. (pg 60).

The alcoholic reader should recognize that this Study Guide, like the basic text of “*Alcoholics Anonymous*”, is meant to be suggestive only. (pg 164). It is recommended the reader use their own inherent intelligence (i.e.: “*the God within*” - pg 55) to choose their own primary purpose in this life, and decide what it is that they most desire. (i.e.: “*their dominant prayer*”).

The early members of AA were sure that God’s will for the alcoholic was to be happy, joyous and free. (pg 133). **If an alcoholic is not, then as far as any AA version of “*God’s will*” is concerned, they are defective.**

The finite *beliefs* of an alcoholic about life give each one their unique character and personality as an equal individual. (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”). Each has equal access to an infinite source of *new knowledge* and power. (syn: “God”). On the basis of placing **principles before personalities**, this author has concluded that *closed-mindedness is a defect of character*. (review Step 6).

The more religious reader may prefer other ideas which they are able to intelligently reconcile with their *fundamental belief system* about *the Great Reality*. (syn: God - pg 55):

“Instead of regarding ourselves as intelligent agents, spearheads of God’s ever advancing creation, we agnostics and atheists chose to believe that our human intelligence was the last word the alpha and the omega, the beginning and end of all. Rather vain of us, wasn’t it? (pg 49).

It is interesting to note that there is a common thread connecting atheists and agnostics with theists of traditional religions. They all claim to know and understand “everything worth knowing about an infinite God” (pg 68).

The agnostic claims to know human intelligence cannot understand anything called “*God*”. The atheist claims to know there is no such thing as “*God*” to be understood. The theologian claims to know there is “*a God*” and then defines the infinite. Meanwhile, science seeks to understand anything beyond present limits of human knowledge. (review pgs 52-53) By contrast, the basic text of AA demonstrates that some alcoholics have already discovered:

“THERE IS A POWER FOR GOOD AND YOU CAN USE IT IN YOUR LIFE NOW!”

The power of that *new knowledge* fits a *fundamental idea of God*. (see pg 55 & Step 11). It is infinite and available to any alcoholic who seeks it. (see pgs 46, 56, 59-60, & 68). More power produces more *spiritual growth*, if sought. (pg 60(c)).

The AA basic text for recovery from alcoholism suggests unlimited *spiritual progress* is possible without establishing any boundaries or making any claims of *spiritual superiority* restricted to some specifically defined *belief system*. In sharp contrast to other ideas, the validity of AA the approach is demonstrated by both experience and results. This author *believes* that *closed-mindedness* is a principle defect of character blocking acceptance of that recovery process.

“There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance—that principle is contempt prior to investigation.”

- Herbert Spencer

(Appendix II)

* * * * *

SECTION B06i:

Chapter 6

INTO ACTION

STEP SEVEN:

“Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.”

READ:

Page 76, the second paragraph beginning with “*When ready, we say.....*” and ending with “*We have then completed Step Seven*”.

COMMENTS:

The preceding section on Step Six encourages the reader to become teachable about *what they believe* concerning a *power greater than themselves*. This is a power required for recovery from alcoholism. Whatever that *belief system* is, it contains the limitations inherent in finite self-knowledge. Those *short-comings* need to be recognized and conscious awareness and understanding of *the Great Reality* (syn: “infinite God”) needs to be enlarged. (see pgs 14-15, & 55).

This mental action is an ingredient essential to improving personal judgment and correcting errors when dealing with life on life’s terms. (see pgs 23, 27, 133 & Step 11). In Step Six, there is acceptance that some intelligence, greater than the individual, can provide whatever *new knowledge* is required. That *new knowledge* comes from the infinite source of all knowledge. (syn: “God” - see pgs 53 & 68). Some of that *new knowledge* may already be understood by some other individuals, (i.e.: “*those who have recovered*”). There is always more.

An attitude of *open mindedness* to new ideas, emotions and attitudes is an indispensable element of a *vital spiritual experience* required for recovery from alcoholism. (see pg 27 & Appendix II). This has particular application to whatever *fundamental idea of God* is a guiding force in the life of the alcoholic. Correcting an error in a *false belief* is essential for any *spiritual progress*. (pg 60).

For the alcoholic who wants to recover, a new and different personal relationship to some “*power greater than ourselves*” is required. It occurs if they are willing to consider an “*idea of God*” which extends beyond the finite limitations of many traditional *religious ideas*. More *new knowledge* cannot be revealed to produce a *vital spiritual experience* without first accepting that more is available.

IF NOTHING CHANGES, THEN NOTHING CHANGES

When the alcoholic accepts an “*idea of God*” which extends beyond traditional religions, there is a new and different approach. This enlarged spiritual life occurs

regardless of what may have already been included within the “*old idea*”. While a *belief system* may contain some elements of truth (syn: “some understanding of God”), none is complete. Personal *beliefs* about *the source of new knowledge* have significant influence upon recovery from alcoholism.

A separately identifiable definition of “God” is incomplete, including any observations provided in this Study Guide. To be complete, an *idea of God* requires interpretation by someone who understands all and everything about life and is in possession of “all knowledge”. The sum total of all human knowledge is finite, and is limited. The expertise of any individual in any field of knowledge is similarly limited to a single lifetime of learning.

The principle of limited knowledge applies equally well to those who are professionals in psychiatry, psychology, and medicine. Each has some degree of expertise, but all have limitations to their understanding of the Great Reality. (syn: “God” pg 55).

An alcoholic cannot intelligently place complete reliance upon any human power to relieve their alcoholism. (pg 60(b)). Each alcoholic is part of *the Great Reality* which is infinite. (review pgs 53 & 68). There shall always be *new knowledge* required to enlarge a *spiritual life* and accommodate new conditions. (see pgs 14-15, 35, 129 & 164). Regardless of how much any professionals may know, it will never be sufficient to anticipate all new requirements which demand *more new knowledge*. (see Appendix II). Therefore, successful recovery depends upon “*a power greater than ourselves*”. (Step 2 & pg 60(a-c)).

“We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves.”
(pg 68)

Step Six also includes an attitude of willingness to have some power respond to a personal desire (syn: “prayer”) for removal of defects of character because they stand in the way of maximum usefulness to God and the people about us. (see pgs 77 & 133). This requires doing some intelligent thinking unless “*blind acceptance of a second-hand belief system*” is the preferred choice. (see pg 86).

Obviously some concept of power (syn: “God”) exists within the mind of the alcoholic. (see pgs 23, 27 & 55). Other views exist about the same power in other minds. Because alcoholism impacts every mental, physical and spiritual aspect in the life of the alcoholic, any help from professionals is limited to their fields of expertise. None has all the answers to all problems.

“Without help it is too much for us.” (pg 59).

The problems of alcoholism have already proven to be too much for an alcoholic to resolve alone. (review pgs 30-32). There is a need for more *new knowledge* of what works. If it were not so, most would have already recovered if they wanted to. It is also too much for any professional human resource, religious or otherwise, to provide all the answers. (see pg 164).

AT THE PRESENT TIME, THERE IS NO “CURE” FOR ALCOHOLISM.

“Science may one day accomplish this, but it hasn’t done so yet.” (pg 31).

If the reader agrees with this observation, an unavoidable conclusion will be reached. It is one of the *pertinent ideas* presented in the AA’s basic text for recovery.

“That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.” (pg 60(b))

It follows that the answers must come from some power greater than human power. The three-letter word “God” expresses that idea.

Omniscience and omnipotence are both terms with broad application to any concept of that word “God”. They suggest the existence of intelligence possessing knowledge and power which lies beyond the finite and limited range of all human understanding. (see pg 68).

The lack of the power of *all knowledge* by professionals does not detract from the value of *some knowledge* they have acquired concerning *the Great Reality*. (syn: “God” - see pg 45). What they now understand once was *new knowledge* for them. The first person to understand it got the knowledge from the source of all knowledge. (syn: “God”). Nonetheless, what they know now still remains finite and limited. Accordingly, there are always some limits as to how far that conscious understanding by anyone can be trusted. (pg 68). In a word, “*they are not God*”.

From this perspective, the word “God” becomes a reasonable definition of a power required to relieve alcoholism. (review pg 53). As the source of *all new knowledge and power*, it allows for universal acceptance without injecting the controversial elements connected with most traditional religions.

Disputes over which concept is “*the only true belief system*” do not belong in the fellowship of AA. Arguments over which definition of God is superior are meaningless for the AA recovery process. Those conflicts belong with the religions which dispute what is meant and which definition is superior when they use that three letter word “God”.

Religions attempt to explain “the Infinite Unknown” to those who have chosen their particular *belief system*. AA merely recognizes that “*the Great Reality*” exists. Then, suggests accepting it by seeking to improve conscious understanding of reality as individual alcoholics. (see pgs 53, 60, 68, 164 Steps 10 & 11). This non-controversial use of the word “God” by AA has intelligent application. It recognizes that alcoholism cuts across all of the barriers which otherwise separate and divide human beings from each other.

By notable contrast, *religious belief systems* separate themselves from “*those others*” who have chosen a different concept. With continued emphasis upon “*the differences*” alcoholics eventually become increasingly isolated. However, the non-

controversial AA approach, allows for a personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism which has manifested itself in many different forms. (see Appendix II)

“We have no desire to convince anyone that there is only one way by which faith can be acquired.”

“Those having religious affiliations will find nothing disturbing to their beliefs or ceremonies”.

(pg 28)

The *fundamental idea of God* is uniquely individual. (pg 55). No two alcoholics possess the exact same set of *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which are guiding forces in their lives. (see pg 27). If they are intelligent concepts, there is no conflict with reality, nor with any intelligent religious beliefs or ceremonies.

If those *beliefs* are not intelligent, then any conflict which does exist is within the mind of the alcoholic. (see pg 23). The conflict is not with faith in a religious *belief system*, but rather with the inherent intelligence which exists within the mind of the individual alcoholic. The intelligence within the alcoholic (syn: “*the God within*” - see pg 55) is unable to reconcile a conscious understanding of *the Great Reality* with their chosen “*second-hand religious belief system*”. (syn: “God” - see pg 62, Steps 10 & 11)

The battle is between reality and some *old ideas* about how life is supposed to be. To the extent the alcoholic lacks a conscious understanding of life, on life’s terms, those conflicting “*concepts of God*” are not in agreement. (see pgs 12, 23, 27, 45 & review Step 11).

In AA, the resolution of the conflict concerning “*a power greater than ourselves*” is determined by how well the differing approaches produce relief from alcoholism and fulfill a dominant desire to recover. (syn: “*dominant prayer*”). Any other desire is a personal priority choice made by the alcoholic. A closed-minded attitude about the power blocks enlarging the spiritual life in those alcoholics who are not teachable. (see pgs 14-15, 35 & Appendix II).

As the infinite power of more *new knowledge* is understood, there is relief from a once seemingly hopeless state of mind and body.

RELIEF IS NOT “A CURE”

Relief from alcoholism is an on-going action constantly dealing with an endless flow of new conditions. A cure is the final resolution presumed to be “*the last word*” on the subject. To date, no one has that conscious understanding of alcoholism or “*the Great Reality*”. (i.e.: “God” see pg 55).

The author of this Study Guide *believes* there is no conflict between the AA program and any religious *belief system* an alcoholic may choose as a guiding force in their life. (pg 27). However, if the alcoholic has chosen a *belief system* which claims to be “*the only true belief system*” then they have created a conflict with reality and their own intelligence. (syn: “*the God within*” see pg 55). That internal conflict becomes consciously apparent when they observe “*those others*” getting successful results by using a different approach.

To deny that others have recovered is self-will run riot. It is a conscious choice to refuse accepting *the Great Reality* of life, on life's terms. (i.e.: "God"). This occurs only because reality does not agree with some limited *old idea about God* which exists within their own mind of how reality is supposed to be. (see pgs 12, 14-15, 23, 27, 42, 62, 86, 164 & Appendix II).

No conflict with any *religious belief system* can exist until the mind of the alcoholic has recognized reality. (see pg 23).

An admission of a character defect involves a *belief about the nature of the power* required for correction. The inherent intelligence of the alcoholic (i.e.: "*the God within*") is obliged to accommodate any improved awareness of *the Great Reality*. (syn: "God" see pg 68 & Step 11). For some alcoholics this can produce disturbing revelations about the inadequacy of their *old ideas* about God. (see pg 164 & review Step 10).

"IF IGNORANCE IS BLISS, 'TIS FOLLY TO BE WISE"

Because *the Great Reality* is infinite (syn: "God" - see pgs 53, 55, 68) any conscious understanding of it involves *spiritual growth* which must continue during an entire lifetime. **No individual will ever understand it all**. There is always improvement available to enlarge any spiritual life and produce more spiritual progress. (review pgs 14-15, 60 and Step 11).

In Step Six, the reader has chosen to be entirely ready to have some concept of a power remove any defects in their character. (see pg 23). These are defects the alcoholic *believes* are objectionable to their chosen concept of God.

In Step Seven that same alcoholic requests (syn: "prays") for that idea of a power to remove something they have decided is objectionable. Some alcoholics experience mental confusion and emotional turmoil when someone suggests that:

"GOD" MAY BE DIFFERENT THAN "YOUR IDEA OF GOD"

A *belief* is not the same as *knowing*. (see pg 53). Wishful thinking makes it easy to confuse one with the other. Personal ignorance often becomes a problem for the alcoholic who does not consciously understand enough about reality to recognize this significant difference. (i.e.: "*the wisdom to know the difference*")

Understanding universal principles, is a power greater than any *ethnocentric emotional desire to fit infinite reality fit into a limited religious definition of "God"*. (see pgs 42, 53 & 68). **Any *spiritual progress* requires some understanding of what needs to be improved. (see pgs 23, 27 & Step 11)**

Therefore, it is important to place *principles of life* before any *personal belief system*. (review Tradition 12). Those alcoholics who have already been successful acknowledge:

“Many of us exclaimed “What an order! I can’t go through with it.” Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is, that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.” (pg 60).

The author of this Study Guide readily acknowledges that the above “*fundamental idea of God*” may be flawed, inadequate, and subject to change as *more new knowledge* is revealed. **There is no intent here to offer the last word on anything.** The inherent intelligence of the reader will determine what they do or do not choose to *believe* can produce the results they want. (see Step 10).

“Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us. Ask Him in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the man who is still sick. The answers will come, if your own house is in order. But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven’t got. See to it that your relationship with Him is right, and great events will come to pass for you and countless others. This is the Great Fact for us.” (pg 164)

Seeking the power of *new knowledge* from the source of all knowledge (syn: “God”) is an intelligent approach to correcting defects of character which stand in the way of being *happy, joyous and free*. (syn: “*God’s will*” - see pg 133). The *frothy emotional appeals*” presented by many traditional religions seldom produce significant results with alcoholism. (see “The Doctor’s Opinion”).

It will become self-evident that when human awareness is limited or flawed, then any request made by that same mind (syn: “prayer”) has a potential to be similarly limited or flawed. (see pgs 23, 27, 38, 41, 44-45, 49, 54, 62, 68, 85-87, 133, 157, & 164).

EMOTIONALLY WANTING SOMETHING TO BE TRUE DOES NOT MAKE IT TRUE.

At it’s core, Step Seven is personal acceptance of *the Great Reality*. (syn: “God”). It is seeking recognition and acceptance of limitations or flaws to any *beliefs* about the Ultimate Reality of life, on life’s terms. (syn: God).

Step Seven reflects a desire (syn: prayer) **to shed ignorance and seek “*spiritual progress*”**.

The fulfillment of that desire (syn: “prayer”) occurs by continually improving conscious contact with reality. (syn: “*seeking God*” - see Step #11). This action requires the alcoholic to **push back the horizons of their own mind**. (see pgs 23 & 27). It is

mental action to enlarge awareness of reality, (syn: "God"), and extends beyond defined limits for thinking of those *belief systems* offered by most traditional religions.

The author of this Study Guide suggests that such enlarged awareness of reality is available to any alcoholic. Their own intelligence either is or is not able to recognize that *seeking new knowledge* (i.e.: "*seeking God's wisdom*") produces results. (pg 60(c)).

Any enlarged awareness of reality constitutes *spiritual growth* for the individual alcoholic. There is a potential for enlarged awareness of reality that goes beyond all that humanity has ever known or understood. In life, on life's terms, there is still more to be revealed. (pg 164).

When a problem with alcohol becomes life-threatening, the desire for self-preservation demands answers from any and all available resources. **This dominant desire for survival becomes an intense prayer which utilizes all resources available to the threatened alcoholic**. This author *believes* a demand of that magnitude amplifies and strengthens whatever connects the alcoholic with the source of their answer. (i.e.: "God" - "*the source of all power*" - see pg 59). *New knowledge which is available on life's terms*, is revealed because it is being desperately sought without any reservations. (see pgs 60(c), 85 & 164).

What is sought is *new knowledge*, which has always been available from the source. (syn: "God"). Any alcoholic can tap that source of power which they find deep down within themselves. (pgs 55, 86-87, 163 & Appendix II). **The power gets it's direction from the desire** (syn: "prayer") **of the alcoholic desperately seeking recovery**. This author *believes* that power for "*self-preservation*" is equally available, on life's terms, to any alcoholic who consciously seeks it.

"We found that God does not make too hard terms with those who seek Him. To us, the Realm of Spirit is broad, roomy, all inclusive; never exclusive or forbidding to those who earnestly seek. It is open, we believe to all men."
(pg 46)

For the alcoholic unable to *honestly* recognize a threat to their survival, their situation may truly be hopeless. However, with *open-mindedness* to accepting *new knowledge* for continued survival, there is an accompanying attitude of *willingness* to investigate it. (see Appendix II).

"Willingness, honesty and open-mindedness are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable."
(Appendix II).

These are ideas, emotions and attitudes, related to a *vital spiritual experience*.

?? **Willingness to "*trade-up*" to something that produces desired results.**

?? **Honesty in accepting that "*old ideas*" are ineffective.**

?? **Open-mindedness to understanding “new knowledge” about what does work.** (Appendix II)

This author *believes* such a mental approach to conflicting ideas about the power required for recovery from alcoholism is both intelligent and sane. Other opinions obviously exist. It is only the results which really matter.

This is where the choice by the alcoholic of their concept of God becomes critical. Wishful thinking that the solution offered in the book “*Alcoholics Anonymous*” will somehow fit into their *old idea* or a defined *belief system* is not unusual. The reader may recognize such a mental approach places boundaries on any concept of God. (see pg 23)

Difficulty in understanding a concept which extends beyond the limits of the familiar is not unusual.

“To you, some of the ideas which it contains are novel. Perhaps you are not quite in sympathy with the approach we suggest. By no means do we offer it as the last word on this subject, but so far as we are concerned, it has worked for us. After all, are you not looking for results rather than methods?” (pg 144).

This may be an overly simplistic approach to the source of all creation. (see pgs 25, 42, 46, 52 & 62). **However, any concept of God that works is more intelligent and sane than one which does not.** (see Step 2). **Before asking any “fundamental idea of God” to produce significant changes in life, it is recommended to first acquire a concept that does work.** (see pgs 12 & 55).

Obviously, an alcoholic is free to complicate their own *fundamental idea of God* with calamity, by pomp, or by worship of other things. (see pg 55). That choice is always available, and belongs to the *belief system* of the alcoholic who has chosen it. In AA, it is **not necessarily a requirement** for recovery from alcoholism.

An honest attitude of willingness to be open-minded is essential. It implies being teachable, which is one of the qualities of being “*humble*”. That concept of “*humility*” can be used to advantage when approaching Step Seven.

Taking Step Seven reflects *willingness* to abandon old ideas which have been guiding forces in the life of the alcoholic. (“*Let Go and Let God*”). This requires *honesty* in accepting personal inability to understand all of what produces happiness, joy and freedom on a continuing basis. As such, Step Seven calls for *open-mindedness* to **learn more** of how to be “*happy, joyous and free*” now, **in this lifetime**. (syn: “God’s will - pg 133).

Where the alcoholic is seeking something else, **for this or some other lifetime**, many other and different *belief systems* are available. Each has their own special set of values offered by those who will interpret them for you. Any interest in those available *belief systems* is best directed to those “*religious experts*” who claim to know what produces results. **If you choose to use it, your own inherent intelligence will recognize if that is what you want.** (see pg 85).

The alcoholic is always free to accept any *religious belief system* as a guiding force in their life, (see pg 27), and there are many from which to choose. The relative value of any one particular *belief system* is found in how well it produces recovery from alcoholism when those results are desired. (i.e.: “*prayed for*”). Any other concerns of *religious belief systems* are outside issues which are not addressed by AA. (See Traditions 3, 5, 6, & 10).

The fellowship of AA takes an open-minded approach to the word “God” which the reader may wish to consider when approaching Step Seven. This author suggests that *open-mindedness* will be useful when the reader is ready to intelligently say something like this:

“My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me, every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding.
Amen” (pg 76)

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SECTION B06j:

Chapter 6

INTO ACTION

STEP SEVEN:

“Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.”

RE-READ:

Page 76, the second paragraph beginning with “*When ready, we say.....*” and ending with “*We have then completed Step Seven*”.

COMMENTS:

The next consideration is to examine the meaning of Step Seven **to your own mind**. Observe that “*the prayer*” presented in the basic text is not restricted to any specific “religious concept of God”. It simply reflects an attitude about a personal relationship to a creative and guiding force. (review pgs 27, 42, 46 & 55) The significant element is *the fundamental idea* of the words when saying something like:

“My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen.” (pg 76)

Contemplate, in your own mind any differences between an approach to *the Great Reality* as “*a creative force found deep within yourself*”, (see pgs 46 & 55), and any *old ideas* you may have about “*a power greater than yourself*”.

Many *old ideas* of God, have portrayed “*the Creator*” as a stern male father figure. One with an emotional personality of a whimsically sadistic Santa Claus who rewards blind obedience and punishes transgressions. The rules for behavior get presented to you by someone who claims to know, and then tells you what they are.

The rule-maker is usually some other human being (“*equal in the eyes of God*”) who tells you what is naughty and nice. Compliance is expected, but any personal voice about what the rules will be is denied. The “*official spokesman for the power*” already has “*all the answers*”. Any of your own individual intelligence is neither required nor desired. You get presented “a complete and packaged deal”. Take it, and be acceptable, or reject it and be rejected.

With many traditional religions, independent thinking is not allowed to challenge their *second-hand belief system*. Blind unthinking acceptance on faith is usually expected. Any suggestion of personal equality with their religious authorities (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”) is frequently unwelcomed.

Human equality (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”) is denied by many *religious belief systems* on the basis of personal unworthiness and human imperfections. Any shortcomings are measured by departure from whatever behavioral standards have been provided as a requirement for their approval.

Authorities and spokesmen make rules, set standards, and then measure your shortcomings for you. As an additional service, they may also provide instruction in what you need to do to be forgiven. This is a very convenient arrangement for alcoholics who cannot or will not think for themselves.

“THINK, THINK, THINK”

Human imperfections of “*God’s will*” are readily recognizable. Alcoholics who are capable of being *rigorously honest with themselves* already understand their inability to be *happy, joyous and free* by adhering to standards set by others. (pg 133). There is a natural tendency to search out how to correct what they *believe* to be imperfections. In essence, they are “*seeking God*”. (pg 60(c)).

When someone claims with assurance that they have “the answer”, any gullible unthinking alcoholic may easily *believe* they do. By contrast, a thinking alcoholic may recognize it as being only “a answer”. Just one of many from which to choose.

When seeking answers, any answer becomes one of many possible “*answers to a prayer*”. Intelligence is required to choose well from all the available options. When answers come from a person who is accepted as an authority because they *claim to know*, then that person automatically become “*a higher power*”. The unthinking alcoholic may never question their credentials. By contrast, a thinking alcoholic will ask for results.

DON’T TELL ME, - SHOW ME

Spokesmen for traditional religions are human beings with human imperfections. What they know and what they believe can be quite different from the reality of life, on life’s terms. (pg 23). This will produce mental confusion and emotional turmoil within an alcoholic who lacks sufficient knowledge to determine what is real and what is fantasy. (see pgs 23, 45, 164, Steps 2, 10, & 11). More *new knowledge* is required to make an intelligent determination.

The alcoholic already *knows* drinking alcohol provides temporary relief from emotional turmoil. What they may not know is that the AA program can provide something better during this lifetime. It can and will if they are willing to go to any length to get it. (see pgs 83-84). Without that *new knowledge*, they continue to suffer the consequences of their ignorance of reality. (i.e.: “*ignoring God*” - see pg 45).

What is believed (i.e.: “*the old idea of God*”) and what is known from practical experience (i.e.: “*conscious understanding of the Great Reality*” - see pg 55 & Step 11)

may have differences. A conflict between those two guiding forces appears when AA suggests “*that no human power could have relieved our alcoholism*”. (pg 60(b)).

At that point, inherent intelligence in the thinking alcoholic recognizes reality. (syn: “God”).

Dependency is the inevitable consequence for any alcoholic who allows others to interpret reality (syn: “God”) for them. By their own permission they have abdicated their own intelligence and designated an equal human being (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”) as a *superior power*. Any superiority which exists is only within their own mind and is not part of *the Great Reality*. (see pgs 23 & 55).

When exercising control over a gullible alcoholic is a primary objective for the one “*with the answers*”, then that alcoholic has simplified and facilitated their opportunity to run their life for them. This is not recommended as being intelligently consistent with “*God’s will*” to be *happy, joyous and free*. (see pg 133).

When such a *belief system* is firmly established as a guiding force, that “*old idea of God*” becomes difficult to reconcile with life, on life’s terms. Any concept of personal defects will be based upon what another human being (“*equal in the eyes of God*”) has decided constitutes a defect. The inherent intelligence of the alcoholic being judged, (“*the God within*”), was not part of the process. (see pg 86).

When *intelligence confronts a belief* both mental confusion and emotional turmoil are the consequences. There is strong emotional resistance to anything which challenges *an established belief system*. Because the alcoholic knows they lack answers, (see pg 45), the foundation of their relationship to life (syn: “God”) is threatened. This produces *fear of the unknown*. There is then a natural tendency to return to whatever authority the alcoholic *believes* is qualified to provide answers. This, can start the entire cycle of control over again, with endless implications. Their mind then becomes trapped within the “*closed-loop of their old belief system*”. (see pg 23).

Alcoholics who *believe everything* they are told by others have already accepted some human power as the guiding force in their life. (see pg 60(b)). Those who only *believe some things* others tell them, have, within their own mind, a system for sorting what they will or will not *believe*. (pg 23). That *belief system* is used to make the choices guiding their lives. (pg 27).

Whenever someone else has been *designated an authority on right and wrong*, the alcoholic usually *knows* if significant transgressions from those rules are occurring. That *belief system* may also include some sort of punishment which has also been designated by the authority which exists in their own mind.

If so, the alcoholic has chosen a concept of God based upon **rewards and punishment**. Their chosen authority also establishes relative merits and demerits, and then interprets whatever the appropriate punishment is for the alcoholic. When that happens, the alcoholic has just handed over considerable power to someone who is really their equal. (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”).

The reader will note that whenever someone establishes acceptable rules of behavior for an alcoholic, they invariably place

themselves in the favored and desirable group. Those claiming authority surprisingly are always part of that *ethnocentric group* which claims "their way is the right way".

Whenever conscious understanding of reality (i.e.: "*with God*" - see Step 11) has been delegated to others, there is a decision to place dependence upon the authority of others. The alcoholic has denied themselves any equal opportunity to be acceptable to God without first gaining the approval of whomever that authority may be in their own mind. When this is done on *blind faith*, the alcoholic has mentally rejected their own capacity for intelligent awareness of *the Great Reality*. (syn: "God" - see pgs 23 & 55).

Attempting the impossible and failing does not produce personal happiness, joy and freedom. (i.e.: "*God's will*" - see pg 133). Any "**punishment**" occurring in this lifetime, is the natural consequence of trying to "**force-fit**" human nature into an unrealistic restrictive *belief system*. That "**one size fits all belief system**" was created by others. It may fit "**some others**", but not fit them. This demands a decision to continue being guided by the *belief* or not.

Any discomfort is the result of attempting to live up to impossibly good standards for human behavior. Those standards were created by others (i.e.: "*equals in the eyes of God*"), and were **part of a package deal** when the alcoholic accepted "**a second-hand concept of God**" without using their own "*God-given intelligence*". (pg 86). In so doing, the alcoholic is abandoning their own equality. (i.e.: "*in the eyes of their Creator*"). Any **belief in punishment** is part of an old idea which is being allowed to direct their own mind. (pgs 12, 23, 27, 42, 58, 62, 86-89).

Continued failure to be impossibly good destroys motivation to seek improved understanding of *the Great Reality* (syn: "God" -see Step 11). The AA program provides a way for the alcoholic to mentally reclaim their personal access to *a power greater than themselves*. (see pgs 10-13, 23-28, 35, 40, 42-49, 55, 68, 77, 85-87, 93-95, 100, 129, 133, 158, 164 & Appendix II).

This author *believes* an alcoholic is a failure whenever they allow someone else to be a spokesman and their authority for God in their life.

DO YOU REALLY NEED SOMEONE TO TELL YOU WHEN YOU ARE HAPPY, JOYOUS AND FREE?

(see pg 133)

Instead of speculative promises and wishful thinking, what those early members of AA had to offer the still suffering alcoholic was their practical experience along with some practical results.

"The practical answer is that since these things have happened among us, they can happen with you. Should you wish them above all else, and be willing to make use of our experience, we are sure they will come. The age of miracles is still with us. Our own recovery proves that!" (pg 153)

Any conflict between established beliefs and inherent intelligence is brought to a head by demonstrations of recovery in alcoholics who do not claim superior moral values. They have demonstrated their equal access to a power that fulfills their dominant desire to stop drinking. They are those same alcoholics who “*have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body*” (see “Forward to First Edition & Frontispiece”).

There is no desire to discredit those intelligent values which are to be found in traditional religious *belief systems*. The emphasis here is upon results for alcoholics. The intelligence within the alcoholic is capable of recognizing the differences. (i.e.: “*the God within*” see pg 55)

The ability of an alcoholic to recognize reality (syn: “God”) allows for *spiritual progress*. This capacity can become an acceptable concept of a power and can be tapped, when it is desired. (see pgs 86 & 163). Doing so is something only the alcoholic can choose for themselves if they wish to improve their personal understanding of *the Great Reality*. (syn: “God”- see pgs 55, 60(c) & Steps 3 & 11).

Seeking intelligent spiritual progress can be a “*dominant prayer*”.

In AA, there are answers constantly being provided, in the form of an endless parade of *new knowledge* and the demonstrated results of other alcoholics who have already recovered. Under those conditions, this author suggests the chances for an alcoholic to improve their conscious understanding of reality are close to 100%. (review Step 11).

“Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path”

“If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it -- then you are ready to take certain steps.” (pg 58)

The “*miracle of recovery*” is something the mind of the alcoholic did not previously *believe* was possible. (see pg 23). A miracle is something they know did happen which their own mind did not believe could happen.

Believing something is one thing, *knowing and understanding* it is another. To illustrate that point, this author recommends observing the illusions presented by a competent magician.

Practical experience with reality indicates some sort of intelligence exists beyond what is now understood. Planets orbit, new galaxies are discovered, and some inherent intelligence makes a child grow into an adult. The natural process may be helped or hampered by well-meaning adults with a desire to mold the child in their own image. In the process, the equality of the child (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”) will often get overlooked.

Traditional religions use the three-letter word “God” to define some concept of that intelligent power. (i.e.: “God”). Their *belief systems* may have value, but nonetheless they have limitations. Human minds have only a limited understanding of *the Great Reality* and they also have the capacity to *believe* things which are no so. This is not necessarily bad, it is just that a *belief* is not always in line with reality. (syn: God” -see pgs 23, 42 & 55).

The *belief systems* of traditional religions attempt to explain *the Great Reality* (syn: “God”) for those who can not or will not think for themselves. (i.e.: “*as equals in the eyes of God*”). This can be a mutually enriching arrangement for alcoholics who prefer a *second-hand concept of God*. Their chosen authority will provide them with a packaged set of ideas, emotions and attitudes to interpret the reality of life and that three-letter word “God”. No independent thinking is required.

The alcoholic reader will note that even with the best of intentions, those chosen authorities will sometimes attempt to force their *beliefs* upon others. This may even include the expectation that, if successful, they will be rewarded in some next life.

“If his arrangements would only stay put, if only people would do as he wished, the show would be great. Everybody, including himself, would be pleased. Life would be wonderful.” (pg 61)

Those values may contain some elements which are both accurate and others which are incorrect. Without complete understanding of *the Great Reality* no one can be really certain. However, for the alcoholic who abdicates responsibility for their own life they can usually find something or someone else to blame for their difficulties. Having already chosen someone else as an authority for life:

“Why don’t you choose your own conception of God?” (pg 12)

Acknowledging that “*I don’t know everything about anything*” becomes a key to *spiritual progress*. (review pg 53). There is more *new knowledge* available than any human mind could ever encompass within a single lifetime. This is a humble recognition of personal inadequacy and lack of power. (pg 45).

Such an attitude opens the mind of an alcoholic to endless opportunities for personal improvement. (see pgs 14-15, 23, 164 & Appendix II). Those who like improvements in being *happy, joyous and free* tend to seek more of “*God’s will for them*” (see pg 133). For many this is more desirable than futile efforts to force-fit themselves and reality into some old idea of God as the final word on life on life’s terms. For the alcoholic who honestly desires to recover, abandoning *old ideas* can be a crucial turning point to improving their conscious understanding of *the Great Reality*. (see pgs 55, 58, 59 & Step 11).

YOU DON’T KNOW UNLESS YOU KNOW!

By now, the alcoholic reader of this Study Guide has probably resolved any indecision about their desire to stay sober. It is also presumed they desire to be happy, joyous and free in the process. Life offers innumerable religious approaches which are ready to cater to that desire. The intelligence within an alcoholic will recognize how well those religious approaches produce results now. The early members of AA offered **their answer** in the basic text for recovery. They are results which are available during this lifetime. The alcoholic reader is free to accept or reject what they find in the basic text of AA. However:

IT IS HARD TO ARGUE WITH SUCCESS

Nowhere does the basic text of AA imply their way is the only way. This is in notable contrast to other ideas and attitudes about recovery from alcoholism.

With the AA approach, there is only a claim to having demonstrated successful results. Those results occurred when certain steps were taken by anyone with a desire to stop drinking. The claim made is not having *the answer*, but rather one of having *an approach to God which works*. (see pg 95).

“Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us.”
(pg 164)

This author now suggests re-reading the “*Seventh Step Prayer*” (pg 76) from the perspective of an alcoholic with a dominant desire for more new knowledge of reality.

New knowledge will enable an alcoholic to make *spiritual progress* by improving their conscious understanding of how to cooperate with life, on life’s terms. Where the desire for more *new knowledge* is genuine, the intent of the prayer is more important than the words.

For the agnostic or atheist, this will open the door of their mind to consider *new ideas* about reality. Complete understanding of an infinite reality is recognizably beyond their capabilities. However, any resistance to reality, is also a block to personal happiness during this lifetime. Any of those “*self-inflicted wounds*” caused by resisting reality can cease right here and right now by choosing to seek *new knowledge*. For many alcoholics, this option is an improvement which produces desirable results during this lifetime.

Evaluations and judgments of “*good and bad*” are labels placed upon reality which are made by individuals. They are *moral value* terms that are personal judgments based upon some claim to understanding the reality of life. Those *moral belief systems* are acquired ideas which are personal and are incomplete without adding the claim to having *the last word on the subject*. Such an attitude may well qualify as “*self-will run riot*”.

Many alcoholics continue to be guided by the *ideas, emotions and attitudes* they learned as little children. Often those guiding forces were the *beliefs* of adults who controlled their lives. Many of those *beliefs* produce pangs of *fear, anger and guilt* because of an inability to conform to a “*second-hand sin list*” they were not allowed to question. As children, their own thinking was not considered sufficiently intelligent, and it

is readily understandable that it may not have been, at that time. Only the individual alcoholic can judge how well they have improved their conscious contact with reality since that time. (see Step 11).

When that same set of “*old ideas*” continues as the standard for measuring right and wrong, good and evil, or naughty and nice, any intelligent thought by the alcoholic is usually lacking. (see pg 45). Often the behavioral standards being used came from someone whom the alcoholic *believed* to be an “*expert spokesman for God*”. Blind unthinking acceptance, without ever questioning credentials is frequently a factor. Unless that old and still operative “*sin list*” was ever given some intelligent thought, it is apt to continue as a habit pattern of thinking which remains as a guiding force in the life of the alcoholic. (see pg 27). To be really *happy, joyous and free*, at a minimum the alcoholic may need to consider “*letting go of those old ideas*”. (see pgs 59 & 133).

There is nothing in the basic text of AA to block that choice, when that is what the alcoholic really desires. (i.e.: “*their prayer*”). Religious approaches to personal happiness produce different results. The alcoholic is free to decide which one of them is more desirable. (i.e.: “*a dominant prayer*”).

Whenever an alcoholic *believes* someone without using their own intelligence, any personal equality gets abandoned. Their own mind intuitively knows they have an equal opportunity to seek *new knowledge*. Because of that fact of life, it is small wonder many alcoholics have problems accepting any authority in their life. Their own inherent intelligence is protesting the inequality.

This author suggests something, deep down within the alcoholic, already *knows* that allowing someone else to be an authority for their own life is in conflict with reality. (review pg 55). In AA however, those same rebellious alcoholics are offered an opportunity to consider a different approach based upon their equality. One which has produced desirable recoveries for others. Many choose it. Nonetheless, some AA members try to hold onto their *old ideas* about God to avoid the possibility they might be mistaken. (review pg 58 & Step 10).

Practical results are available for those sufficiently open-minded to consider a new and different concept of God. They use the power of their own intelligence, which they find *deep down within themselves*, to seek *new knowledge of the Great Reality*. (pg 55). However, this approach may require them to intelligently re-examine old labels about what is “*good and bad*”. Some may even question how and why they ever allowed others to become an authority on their own happiness in this lifetime.

When some chosen authority is correct, there will be no conflict with reality. (syn: God). The individual who follows their path will only experience conflict when what is believed is no longer adequate or in harmony with life, on life’s terms. Under those conditions it would be an intelligent choice to “*trade up*” to something better than what they have.

When an alcoholic is experiencing conflict with reality, it may be related to their *old idea of God*. (review pg 62). If so, they may wish

to intelligently apply Step Ten to their fundamental idea of God. (see pg 55).

“Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.” (pg 59)

Therefore, consider what is the meaning to your own mind when someone states emphatically that to have a *vital spiritual experience* and be acceptable to God you must first:

?? **Veil your face and trust Allah,**
?? **Shave your head and find Buddha in your liver, - or even**
?? **Be dipped in water and find Jesus in your heart.**

What is the meaning of those words to your mind? Is there intelligence involved? A thinking alcoholic must first make some sort of intelligent sense out of the words, and determine what they mean to their own mind. (i.e.: “*trust the God within themselves*” - see pgs 55 & 68). Inherent intelligence will confirm that your own mind is the only mind capable of making such choices.

This is precisely the point. The inherent intelligence within the mind of the alcoholic is their only valid access to “a power greater than themselves”. Access to that intelligence is not dependent upon some other human authority on “God”. (see pgs 55 & 60(a-c)).

When continuing with “*the Seventh Step Prayer*”, there is another idea expressed when “we say something like this”

“I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows.” (pg 76)

Before there can be intelligent understanding, once again consider what meaning those words convey to your mind. That meaning may not be the same as when another alcoholic uses those same words. Not even when they sincerely *believe* you should.

This author *believes* that at it’s core, “*any prayer*” is a desire to “*trade up*” to something better. Alcoholics with no interest in personal improvement may be the exception. A “*prayer*” for the removal of “*defects of character*” presupposes two significant ingredients.

- 1. Knowledge of what is a defect.**
- 2. Ignorance of how to make a correction now.**

When “*the Seventh Step Prayer*” assumes “*the will of God*” is for the alcoholic to be “*happy, joyous and free*” (pg 133), they are no longer dependent upon an interpreter. Others have demonstrated recovery is possible for any alcoholic who wants it. Furthermore, those benefits are attainable during this lifetime by seeking *new knowledge* of what works. (pg 60(c)). This provides the alcoholic with an easily acceptable approach to being useful to God and his fellow man by improving conscious understanding of the Great Reality. (see pgs 55, 77, Steps 10 & 11).

“We found that God does not make too hard terms with those who seek Him. To us, the Realm of Spirit is broad and roomy, all inclusive; never exclusive or forbidding to those who earnestly seek. It is open, we believe, to all men” (pg 46).

The reader using their *present best knowledge* of how to cooperate with life now, is experiencing their *present best happiness, joy and freedom* now. If, the alcoholic reader desires and demands more from life, (i.e.: “*prays for more*”), as does this author, then *more new knowledge* will be required. Fortunately, there is an infinite supply available from the source. (syn: “God” - see pg 164).

HOW MUCH HAPPINESS DO YOU WANT?

This author has reached the personal conclusion that, where recovery from alcoholism is concerned, “*my will is the same as God’s will*” because “*if I knew how to do better I would be doing better*”. There is a lack of power of whatever *new knowledge* is required to “*trade up*”. (pg 45).

“We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous and free.” (pg 133)

To the precise extent any *ideas, emotions and attitudes* conflict with or block being *happy, joyous and free* (syn: “*God’s will*” - pg 133) they become “*a defect of character*”. Any *character defects* for an alcoholic stand in the way of their maximum usefulness to God and their fellow man. (pgs 76-77). Once again, it is recognized that other views exist.

The alcoholic reader is asked to consider that some creative intelligence produced each unique human expression of life. Regardless of other considerations, their Creator intended them to be happy, joyous and free. (see pgs 62 & 133). **It follows that, any alcoholic would be defective if they failed to be what they were designed to be.**

In the AA basic text, the three-letter word “God” incorporates “everything” and is “infinite”. (review pgs 53 & 68). Accordingly, any “*usefulness to God*” as far as AA is concerned, would include those aspects. This is different from old ideas and concepts about *character defects* which are offered by most traditional “*god-clubs*”.

Understanding there are differences in primary purposes and objectives between AA and religion may be critical to some alcoholics in their recovery process. *New knowledge of reality* may be required to enlarge their spiritual awareness and produce a personality change sufficient for recovery from alcoholism. (see pgs 14-15, 35, 129, 164 & Appendix II).

**THOSE WHO CANNOT HAVE A *SPIRITUAL AWAKENING*
CAN HAVE *MOMENTS OF MENTAL CLARITY.***

The authorities and spokesmen for traditional religions may dispute this by claiming they have superior awareness of “*the will of God*” for the alcoholic. The reader is cautioned to carefully consider any of those claims, specifically including any observations offered by this author. Do so, in the light of your own “*God-given intelligence*” which you find within yourself. (see pgs 55 & 86). Do so by accepting personal equality as an expression of human life. The final portion of the Seventh Step Prayer is:

“Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do
your bidding. Amen.”
(pg 76).

For the alcoholic who can intelligently acknowledge that “*knowledge is power*” then that part of “*the prayer*” is essentially asking for *more new knowledge*. To acquire more and “*trade up*”, requires *willingness, honesty and open mindedness*. They must first displace and rearrange old *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which have been *guiding forces* in life. (syn: “God” see pg 27 & Appendix II).

Those changes are indispensable to enlarging a spiritual life and becoming “*spearheads of God’s ever advancing Creation*”. (see pgs 12, 14-15, 27, 35, 49, 58, & Appendix II)

There is power and strength in *new knowledge* which comes from the source of all knowledge and all power. (syn “God” - see pg 59).

With this new set of conceptions and motives as *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which are now guiding forces, (see pg 27), the alcoholic discovers:

“We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but
now we begin to have a spiritual experience. The feeling
that the drink problem has disappeared will often come
strongly. We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking
hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe” (pg 75)

Only the reader can decide if this mental attitude about a Creative Intelligence, a Spirit of the Universe underlying the totality of things is most desirable. (i.e.: “*their dominant prayer*” - review pgs 46-52).

This author *believes* that any alcoholic is free to choose some other equal human intelligence (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”) to make that decision for them. If they do, they

truly deserve to get whatever they have asked for. (syn: “*prayed for*”). On life’s terms, this will include everything that goes with “*the answer to their prayer*”.

This concludes comments on Step Seven and “*the prayer*” related to it.

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SECTION B06k:

Chapter 6

INTO ACTION

STEP EIGHT:

“Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.”

READ:

Page 76, beginning with “Now we need more action,.....” and ending with “we would go to any length for victory over alcohol”.

COMMENTS:

Thus far, actions taken toward recovery from alcoholism have had no direct impact upon the lives of others. Instead, the focus has been more upon examining *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which have been guiding forces in the life of the alcoholic seeking recovery. (see pg 27). This included accepting that some power, greater than was understood in the past, was required for recovery.

The “*three-letter word God*” describes such a power and implies a new set of values capable of producing a *vital spiritual experience*. However, just being “*a good church member*”, even where “*religious convictions were very good*”, is not enough. Although some value can be found in some religious *belief systems*, something more is required for recovery from alcoholism. (see pg 27).

The AA program suggests there is One Source of all power, and, by definition, that One is God. (see pg 59). **As far as AA is concerned, it is everything,** (pg 53), **it is infinite,** (pg 68), **and is found within the alcoholic.** (pg 55). **To the extent that power gets any direction or has concern for the alcoholic, the AA concept of God wants the alcoholic to be happy, joyous and free.** (pg 133). **Is that what you want for yourself?**

This author *believes knowledge is power*. There is an infinite supply of *more new knowledge* always available, from whatever the source might be. The dominant desire of the alcoholic to seek *more new knowledge* gives direction to that power in their life. Whatever improved understanding they want the most they seek and find in life. (i.e.: “*their prayer*”-pg 60(c) & Step 11). **Any problem with fulfillment from *the Great Reality* is because it occurs on life’s terms not their own.** (i.e.: “*the answer to their prayers*”) Recognizably, other opinions exist about seeking answers to life using something called “a prayer”.

Before AA, the alcoholic who was seeking sobriety lacked sufficient *knowledge* to do so. They were unable to manage their lives and be *happy, joyous and free* in the best

and most intelligent manner possible. (i.e.: “*God’s will*” - see pgs 38-39, 40, 45 & 133). Something new and different was required.

A need existed then to improve a conscious understanding of that infinite power. This required more new knowledge and understanding of life, on life’s terms. (see pgs 14-15, 35, 60(a), 68 129, 164 & Step 11). That same need continues to exist for the alcoholic who wants to make “*the elegant choice*” in all their affairs. (see pgs 23, 27, 39, & Step 12).

Alcoholics who had recovered claimed to have found a concept of “*a power greater than ourselves*”, deep down within themselves. (pg 55). It produced results, regardless of any *beliefs* or religious convictions by those who were good church members. (pgs 12, 27, 42, 46, 93, 95).

As recovered alcoholics, their practical experience was that “*God could and would if He were sought*”. (60(c)). It is self-evident they utilized an intelligent concept of God because it did produce the desired results. (syn: “*the answer to their prayer*”). It is extremely difficult to argue with their success. Alcoholics who did not tap into the “*power of that know-how*”, were unable to claim comparable results. (see pg 163).

“Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a *Power greater than ourselves*. Obviously. But where and how were we to find this Power? (pg 45)

When seeking power, for recovery from alcoholism, it is recommended doing so in the light of intelligence (i.e.: “*the God within*”). This is in distinct contrast to any emotional belief system. (i.e.: “*self-will run riot*”), which conflicts with reality. To recognize the difference (Step 2) requires a conscious decision to seek improved understanding of reality. (see pgs 55, 164 & Steps 3 & 11).

Regardless of how it is defined, any *new knowledge* of reality comes from the source of all reality, whatever that source might be. (review pgs 46-47). It comes from some sort of a Creative Intelligence which, by definition is called “God”. Traditional religions, the fellowship of AA, and specifically the author of this Study Guide all lack a complete understanding of whatever that is. (pgs 12, 42-43, 58 & 164).

THERE IS MORE TO GOD THAN IS “BELIEVED ABOUT GOD”

As far as the AA program is concerned, the power of *new knowledge of reality* must come from within. (review pgs 55 & 95). This requires a decision to seek that power, and be willing to go to any length to get it. (i.e.: “pray for it” - pgs 27, 58 & 60(c)).

“Well, that’s exactly what this book is about. Its main object is to enable you to find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem.” (pg 45)

Innumerable “*religious god-clubs*” cater to that desire, but prior to AA few produced any substantial numbers of recoveries from alcoholism. Certainly nothing when compared to the demonstrated results of Alcoholics Anonymous. That significant difference may be summarized by one simple statement in the AA basic text for recovery:

“We have no monopoly on God; we merely have an approach that worked with us.” (pg 95)

In the AA process, those who recovered, (see Frontispiece) were *willing, honest and open minded* enough to let go of their old ideas and allow their *spiritual life* to be enlarged. (see pgs 14-15, 35, 68, 129, 164, & Appendix II).

Most *traditional religious belief systems* take a close-minded approach of supporting ignorance by rejecting any *new knowledge* which is outside of their belief system. Any enlarged spiritual life is restricted to what they *believe*, thereby limiting alcoholic members to only that which they have defined as acceptable.

Without dispute, those various *belief systems* usually contain some knowledge of value. However, where they claim to have the answer, AA only claims to have a answer, by recognizing there is always more. (pgs 95 & 164).

Be aware that *new knowledge*, which has value to one alcoholic, may not have identical value to another alcoholic. Therefore, this author encourages utilizing anything which is helpful in personal recovery. Members of religious groups will prefer to utilize what is available within their chosen *belief system*.

“Be quick to see where religious people are right”
(pg 87)

“Ministers and doctors are competent and you can learn much from them if you wish,.....”
(pg 89)

Just remember that for survival, the alcoholic requires recovery from alcoholism to be their dominant desire. (i.e.: “prayer”).

For some simple reasons, this can produce mental confusion and emotional turmoil in the alcoholic who does not understand everything about life, on life’s terms. (i.e.: “God” see pgs 39, 45, 53, 60(b), 164, & Appendix II). Like it or not, the alcoholic seeking recovery must be discriminating about what *new knowledge* they choose to learn.

- 1. The alcoholic lacks sufficient knowledge.** (Steps 1-3).
- 2. *New knowledge* is required for survival.** (pg 45).
- 3. Trust is required in some infinite power.** (pg 68).
- 4. To survive “*the certain trials and low spots ahead*” the alcoholic must enlarge their spiritual life.** (pgs 14-15 & 35).

5. To use, *new knowledge* requires improved understanding. (Step 11).
6. The alcoholic **cannot understand everything in this lifetime.** (pgs 53 & 164).

SO LIKE IT OR NOT:

7. They must **choose** what *new knowledge* they seek. (Appendix II).

The only options are to use the best knowledge available at the time, or else make a decision by default, by choosing not to choose. Without sufficient understanding, any requirement to make an intelligent choice creates fear of the unknown because it involves survival.

An alcoholic unwilling to use “*the brains God gave them*” (see pg 86), is vulnerable to blindly accepting a “*second-hand concept of God*” as a packaged deal.

They already know they lack sufficient knowledge to solve their alcohol problem. (see pg 45). In their desperation, it is easy to want to believe their chosen experts have “*all the answers*”. Deep down within themselves, this becomes their version of a prayer. On life’s terms, oftentimes what others may know is not something better, just something different.

THE GOOD IS SOMETIMES THE ENEMY OF THE BEST.

Step Eight can be helpful in resolving this dilemma. When *spiritual progress* is desired, (i.e.: “prayed for” - see pg 60), it makes intelligent good sense to seek whatever *new knowledge* will produce the most benefit as it is understood. (Steps 3 & 11).

“At the moment we are trying to put our lives in order. But this is not an end in itself. Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us.” (pg 77)

Despite their good intentions, many alcoholics have acquired firmly entrenched and emotionally powered *beliefs* which are not particularly intelligent. These old ideas place them in conflict with others. (review pgs 60-63). As a consequence of adhering to their belief system, they step on the toes of others who retaliate.

When being guided by an unintelligent *belief system*, the alcoholic can make decisions based upon self which later place them in a position to be hurt. (pg 62). In this manner, they create their own misery. (pg 133). This manner of living certainly is **not** compatible with any concept of God that wants the alcoholic to be happy, joyous and free. (see pg 133).

Step Eight provides a “short-cut path” to corrective action.

1. **Most alcoholics want to be happy, joyous and free.**
2. **Harming others recognizably gets in the way.**
3. **Not harming others is *spiritual progress*.**
4. **To improve requires *new knowledge*.** (see Step 11).
5. **Any progress reduces fear, anger and guilt.**
6. **The by-product is increased happiness, joy and freedom.**

For alcoholics who claim freedom to participate in their own life some decisive action is required. One intelligent discriminating choice is to seek *spiritual progress* where it is most certain to produce results. The list of “persons harmed” is an excellent place to begin making those improvements. Especially when followed by a “willingness to make amends to them all”. (Step 9).

By accepting responsibility for past mistakes, the alcoholic can stop being a victim of their own ignorance. (i.e.: “*ignoring God’s will*” - pg 133).

The same list can also be used to reduce *fear, anger and guilt*. The old ideas block a *vital spiritual experience* because they are not compatible with being *happy, joyous and free*. (see pgs 27 & 133).

Additional *new knowledge* of reality enables the alcoholic to enlarge their *spiritual life* (pgs 14-15) and improve their cooperation with life on life’s terms. (syn: “God” - Step 11). **That new set of moral values determines what the alcoholic now believes is acceptable or unacceptable to God.** That new *belief system* can be the result of intelligent thinking or continue being a trained automatic emotional reaction based upon the “*second-hand values of others*”.

Making the *elegant choice* is choosing the best of all available options. This will be the most intelligent choice available and that is a fair equivalent of God’s will. Those who know something better choose and get something better.

NOTHING IS BETTER THAN THE BEST

Some religious *beliefs* are that an alcoholic has no freedom of choice to improve personal cooperation with reality. Is that what you choose to *believe*?

It is self-evident that some intelligence, referred to as “God”, has produced a universe which runs in perfect order without human assistance. Any unacceptable portion reflects a lack of understanding of where some piece of reality fits. It carries an implication that the

individual rejecting reality already understands something better. That *belief* may be correct, or there may be more to life than is understood by the individual.

Those who want to learn more of *the Great Reality* will seek *new knowledge* from the source which is beyond the limits of religious ideas. (pg 55). Many alcoholics in AA choose to let go of limited old ideas about God (pg 58) to accept an infinite concept greater than any human intelligence. (i.e.: “*Let Go & Let God*” see pgs 42, 46 & 68).

Whenever some person, place or thing in reality is unacceptable, that is a matter of judgment. That judgment reflects a personal and individual value system just as any concept of God is a matter of choice. Anything labeled as “*unacceptable*” means the mind of the individual does not understand where some person, place or thing fits into all of life, on life’s terms. (i.e.: “*God’s will vs. self will run riot*”).

Due to that ignorance of the unknown, all human concepts of God are inherently flawed because no individual nor group completely understands everything there is to be known about *the Great Reality*. (pgs 55, 68 & 164).

From this perspective, one *belief system* is just as valid as any other. None can be trusted completely, because all are flawed by some degree of ignorance of *the Great Reality*. (pg 55). The only valid and intelligent method for choosing one rather than another is found in how well the *belief system* works. This will be determined by the primary purpose and objectives of that *belief system*. (i.e.: “*what is prayed for*”).

An intelligent “*prayer*” for an alcoholic, will be how well it produces happiness, joy and freedom in recovery from alcoholism during this lifetime. (i.e.: “*God’s will*”- pg 133).

This may require accepting that “*we made our own misery*” and consider changing the *belief system* that produced it. (see pgs 12, 23, 27, 62, 133 & Step 10). Anything less than the best (i.e.: “*God’s will*” - pg 133) is worth considering for change in order to “*trade up*”. (Step 10). This suggests that:

THERE ARE NO VICTIMS, - ONLY VOLUNTEERS.

The choice of actions has an impact upon what happens to an alcoholic. If results are to be different, the way decisions get made must change. This may include the *belief system* that determines which actions are acceptable.

Such drastic mental action can produce a highly charged emotional upheaval in an alcoholic when their *ideas, emotions and attitudes*, which have been guiding forces, need to be uprooted. (pg 27). Intelligent choices are not always comfortable or preferred over the familiar automatic unthinking reactions of emotions which are based upon old ideas.

A vital spiritual experience requires a personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism. (see Appendix II). For most recovered alcoholics, such

transformations develop slowly, over a period of time. It is a change of *ideas, emotions and attitudes* and extends beyond the realm of religious convictions, (see pg 27),

There is a lengthy history of beneficial influence produced by traditional religions. (see pgs 87 & 89). **However, their results have not been particularly impressive for alcoholics when compared to recoveries with the AA program.**

Regardless of approach, the indispensable ingredients for a *vital spiritual experience* are “*willingness, honesty and open-mindedness*”. (Appendix II). This requires an intelligent review of those *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which guide the way decisions and choices get made. “**Religious specialists**” may offer to make them for you, but require your cooperation to do so.

A “**fearless moral inventory**” of personal values produces an improved understanding of how to cooperate with reality. (Steps 4, 10 & 11). When it is understood that, as far as AA is concerned, “*we are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous and free*”, then **there is less fear of God.** (Step 11 & pg 133).

“Therefore, the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than his body.” (pg 23)

A *vital spiritual experience* involves some conscious awareness of the principles by which the power operates. (see Step 11). To eliminate conflict with reality, there is a need to align chosen actions with those principles. This will require some intelligent thought to improve conscious understanding of those principles which govern life, on life’s terms. (i.e.: “*Think, Think, Think*” - Step 11).

By definition, a principle is impersonal, non-selective, and will work the same for anyone, anyplace, at any time. (see Step 12 & Tradition 12).

A thinking alcoholic will recognize that many religious *belief systems* contain some disagreement with the universal principles governing reality. The earth is neither flat nor is it held up on the back of an elephant despite how sincerely someone may *want to believe* that *what they believe* is true.

What is lacking is intelligent understanding of life, on life’s terms. (see pg 45). Rather than seek “*truth, good and reality*”, (all synonyms for “God”), many alcoholics prefer to rely upon strong emotions rather than their “*god given intelligence*” to make improvements to their lack of understanding. (see pg 86 & Step 11). It is of no consequence why they may disagree with *the Great Reality*, the results remain the same.

Any alcoholic is free to cooperate with the principles of life (syn: “*God’s Laws*”) **as they understand what they are** (see Step 11). **Those who lack the power of that knowledge are ignorant of those principles, and experience conflict with *the Great Reality*.** (syn: “God” - pg 55). **Those who seek more understanding will improve their**

capacity to cooperate with life on life's terms. (see pgs 60(c), 84-85, 164 & Appendix II)

In order to survive the certain trials and low spots of life on life's terms, it is necessary for an alcoholic to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life. (pgs 14-15). Instead of being cured of alcoholism there is, instead, a daily reprieve, which is contingent upon the maintenance of a spiritual condition. Seeking a vision of how to better do "God's will" (i.e.: "to be happy, joyous and free" - see pg 133) is a constant mental requirement. (pg 85).

From this perspective, there is no intelligent basis to resist any idea of God which has no conflict with life on life's terms. (pgs 12, 53, 55, 68, & 164). **For an alcoholic to "enlarge their spiritual life"** (pgs 14-15) **requires only seeking new knowledge of how to cooperate with the Great Reality and be "happy, joyous and free".** (i.e.: "principles before personalities" - see pg 133).

"We can exercise our will power along this line all we wish." (pg 85).

Seeking *new knowledge* (i.e.: "seeking God" - see pg 60(c)), unavoidably includes some examination of the *belief system* used in making choices. (see Step #4). Whatever values are included in that *belief system* is a fair definition of "a moral inventory".

When making a moral inventory, it is less a question of if an alcoholic will do something all human beings are capable of doing, and becomes more a matter of when will they do it. The reader is reminded that every alcoholic was first created as a human being. Regardless of their *beliefs*, they cannot do nor be anything which is "inhuman". However, they can use their "daily gift of life" in an **unintelligent manner. (see pg 85).**

This author *believes*, under the right set of conditions, every alcoholic is capable of doing anything which is humanly possible This despite the *moral values* of some *belief systems*. **No one is above their humanity.**

A noteworthy difference exists between this approach found in AA, and the "immoral inventorying of specific transgressions" (i.e.: "the official sin list") which is a focal point of more restrictive religious *belief systems*.

When making choices about what to do, every alcoholic has access to the power of *new knowledge* which is available in life to fulfill their dominant desire. (i.e.: "answer their prayer"). However, it is essential to recognize that any results they experience will be on life's terms rather than those of their own chosen *belief system*.

The desires of an alcoholic are their own. So is the price they pay for getting what they ask for. The desire (syn: "prayer") may be an intelligent choice, or reflect unthinking emotions. How do you choose what you want the most?

Every human being has their own unique and individual physiological differences. Those with a *phenomenon of craving* will pay a different price when they drink than does the non-alcoholic. (see "The Doctor's Opinion"). Except for physical restraints, the alcoholic is always free to drink if they choose to do so. What they get when they do drink is paid for on life's terms, not their own.

Only the alcoholic can decide if the price of drinking is too high. If they want it enough they can have it on life's terms. Unless physically restrained, they seek and find what they have asked for. (i.e.: "their prayer gets answered"). Life then presents them the bill for their selection. The price they pay is with "*the coin of the realm*" which is measured by their own *happiness, joy and freedom*. (see pg 133).

This principle applies, even when the mind of the alcoholic is distorted by their own drinking. That principle can be frustrating to those attempting to shield the alcoholic **from their equal freedom to choose**. (pg 101). Frequently their frustration will turn to anger and be directed at the alcoholic for demonstrating a **principle of reality** of life, on life's terms.

"WHY DON'T YOU WANT WHAT I WANT YOU TO WANT?"

If an alcoholic wants to stay sober, they are free to seek *new knowledge* of how to do so. They can do this by relying upon the successful knowledge of others who have already learned how. Or, they can go to the same source of *new knowledge* (i.e.: "God") those alcoholics got their information.

This is where any valid knowledge acquired by traditional religions can be extremely helpful. (see pg 87). It is especially useful if they are able to demonstrate successful results. However, eventually this will not be enough. (pg 43, 60(a-c), 95, 129, & 1064). Many unthinking alcoholics will still prefer *habitual parroting* of what someone else *believes* is God's will for them. If so, the life they experience will not be their own.

Every alcoholic is always free to go to the same source of knowledge and understanding from which any chosen expert on God got their guidance. **The idea of personal equality with those they believe are authorities on God, may be a difficult principle to accept.** For the alcoholic who is seeking recovery, their main objective and primary purpose will be to find a power which produces desired results they can trust to work **during this lifetime**. (pg 68).

Extreme caution is advised when deciding what is desired (i.e.: "prayed for") **and choosing whatever power is believed will provide it.**

The alcoholic can always turn their will and their life over to the care of God, **as someone else understands Him**. Accepting that source of *new knowledge* may provide

some improvement. It may also include mistakes unless their chosen expert has all the answers which the alcoholic is seeking.

**WHAT DIFFERENCE IS IT HOW MUCH OTHERS KNOW
IF WHAT THEY KNOW IS NOT SO?**

When an alcoholic allows others to think for them, they will often develop a resentment when it does not produce *happiness, joy and freedom*. (see pgs 62 & 133). **Their resentment is the direct result of rejecting responsibility for their own intelligence and equality. (i.e.: “in the eyes of God”).**

This thought may open up previously unexplored avenues of thinking. Because liquor is but a symptom, it becomes necessary to get down to causes and conditions producing resentments. (see pg 64). This author submits that, a lack of understanding of reality, is at the root cause of the drinking problem. (see pg 45 & Step 11). Seeking *new knowledge* of life on life’s terms provides relief from conflicts with reality.

Abdicating personal responsibility for thinking, by turning it over to another human being, may be helpful at times but doing so does not produce lasting recovery. (pg 60(b)). Many alcoholics willingly relinquish their own intelligence in order to have someone or something to blame for their own mistakes. They then develop resentments when the results are on life’s terms, instead of according to their own *beliefs* and expectations. (pgs 62, 67, & 86).

Rejecting responsibility for the consequences of your own actions borders on clinical definitions of insanity. (see pgs 38, 42 & Step 2).

“If we were to live, we had to be free of anger. The grouch and the brainstorm were not for us. They may be the dubious luxury of normal men, but for alcoholics these things are poison” (pg 66)

Having “*made a list of all persons harmed*” (Step 8), consider that resentments are the “number one” offender. Those resentments came from a *belief system* which placed the alcoholic in a position to be hurt. (see pgs 27, 62, 64, & 133). The underlying problem is ignorance of how to be *happy, joyous and free* because the answers lie beyond the limited framework of that *belief system*.

The good news is, there is an infinite amount of happiness beyond the limits of old ideas and *second-hand belief systems*. It comes in the form of *new knowledge* of reality which is available to anyone willing to seek it. (pgs 58, 60(c), 164, and Appendix II). **The bad news is that an alcoholic cannot abdicate their own thinking without becoming a potential victim of some human authority of their own choosing.** (pgs 62, 86-87, 98, 133, 164).

VICTIMS DEVELOP RESENTMENTS ABOUT AUTHORITIES.

This author strongly recommends the alcoholic reader avoid creating resentments caused by failing to claim their human equality. (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”). This can occur by abdicated intelligence in favor of a *second-hand concept of God* thereby placing yourself in a position to be hurt. (pg 62, 86 & 133).

Making a list of people harmed (Step 8) will be useful in identifying those causes and conditions which block accepting personal equality. (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”). Many persons can get harmed from acting upon resentments that stem from erroneous *second-hand beliefs and moral values* which guide actions. (pgs 27 & 64-67). With an improved understanding of reality, relief from the consequences of those mistakes in judgment will follow. (pgs 58, 60(c), Steps 10 & 11).

How well a *belief system* produces results (see pg 133) is the only valid and intelligent yardstick for survival. The desire (i.e.: “prayer”) for recovery from alcoholism is the primary essential ingredient. To be of value and usefulness will first require survival. After that may come the conscious recognition of human equality. (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”, pg 77 & Step 11). Any conflict with *the Great Reality* suggests a flaw exists in the old *fundamental idea of God* and needs re-examination. (pg 55 & Step 10).

Personal recovery gets experienced in the form of a daily reprieve, based upon the maintenance of a spiritual condition. (pg 85). In a constantly changing universe, new and unknown conditions appear on a daily basis. (see pgs 14-15, & 164). This requires a constant flow of *new knowledge* with which to confront *new conditions in the most intelligent manner possible*. Fortunately, more can and will be revealed to those who seek it. (see pgs 60(c) & 164)

Steps Six and Seven dealt with a willingness to allow *new knowledge* to provide improved awareness of reality. They have value in learning to improve cooperation with reality. (see pgs 60(c), 133 & Step 11). They will directly involve the “*people, institutions and principles with whom we were angry*”. (pg 64). Any anger or resentment exists because some fact of life is personally unacceptable.

Any label of rejection comes from the alcoholic, not from life, on life's terms. (review pgs 12, 23, 27, 53, 55, 68, 129, 164, & Appendix II).

IF GOD IS EVERYTHING, THERE IS NOTHING TO RESENT EXCEPT GOD!

Nothing about reality (syn “God”) is going to change simply because an alcoholic *believes* it is unacceptable. The only intelligent option available is for the alcoholic to align their *ideas, emotions and attitudes* with *the Great Reality* (syn: “God”) as it is understood. (pgs 12, 23, 27, Steps 3 & 11). For most alcoholics that improved understanding is a gradual process. (see Appendix II & Step 11).

Seeking and applying valid *new knowledge* to resentments deals with a main problem of any alcoholic. (pgs 23 & 64). It helps them identify why they harmed some people as the result of old ideas. Any harmful actions resulted in feelings of fear, anger

and guilt which blocked their personal happiness, joy and freedom. Additional mental causes can be found by intelligently examining the *belief system* which they had chosen as a guiding force in their life. (see pg 27).

It should be obvious that no person, place or thing will ever be completely the way any alcoholic *believes* or wants reality to be. (see pgs 60-62). This can produce a resentment in an unthinking alcoholic. Old ideas about how reality is supposed to be were usually acquired from some *second hand belief system*. This was allowed to occur because the alcoholic either chose to be irresponsible or else they were unwilling to go to any length “*to use the brains god gave them*”. (see pgs 58 & 86).

Willingness, honesty and open mindedness are indispensable to a *vital spiritual experience*. (Appendix II). Continually enlarging a spiritual life produces improved understanding and cooperation with life, on life’s terms. (pgs 14-15, 35, 129 & 164). This is obviously a more intelligent approach than dropping a mental anchor and emotionally seeking to force-fit reality into old ideas of a *second hand belief system* which does not work well for alcoholics seeking recovery. (see pg 60(a-c)).

If those old ideas actually are providing happiness, joy and freedom, and nothing more is desired, then the alcoholic reader will naturally prefer to disregard any comments provided here, and accept that version of “*God’s will*”. The only mind that can make that determination is their own. (pg 23).

The inherent intelligence (i.e.: “the God within” see pgs 55 & 86), of any alcoholic has the capacity to recognize their own mistakes. (Step 10). They also have the freedom not to use that power. (pg 86). By exercising their own freedom of choice, any alcoholic can seek *new knowledge* of how to cooperate with life, on life’s terms and stop harming others due to an *erroneous belief system*. (pgs 60(c), 62, & 133). This requires “*thinking about their thinking*” (i.e.: “*meditating*” see Step 11).

“THINK, - THINK, - THINK”

When their dominant desire (i.e.: “prayer”) is to reduce personal ignorance of reality and improve a conscious contact with God (Step 11) the alcoholic will know a new kind of freedom and a new kind of happiness. (see pgs 83-84). What is even more desirable is that there is always more. (pg 68).

The alcoholic who accepts their human equality,(i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”) and exercises their freedom of choice to be *happy, joyous and free* will make that choice if and when they understand what it is, on life’s terms. This requires that they do some thinking and use the inherent intelligence with which they were endowed by their Creator. The answers will come, if their own house is in order. (see pgs 12, 23 27, 53, 55 & 164).

Conscious awareness of this fact of life will eventually raise the question within their own mind:

IF GOD IS EVERYTHING, THEN WHO IS THE ENEMY?

* * * * *

SECTION B06l:

Chapter 6

INTO ACTION

STEP EIGHT:

“Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.”

RE-READ:

Page 76, beginning with “*Now we need more action,.....*” and ending with “*we would go to any length for victory over alcohol*”.

COMMENTS:

Now the reader is asked to review the list of persons they have harmed from a different perspective. One concerning who or what has been responsible for some of the problems which often led to drinking. (see pgs 62-64). There is no argument that alcohol provided relief. Any relief was temporary, and did nothing to correct the real cause of any resentments or conflicts.

The dominant desire (i.e.: “prayer”) of the alcoholic establishes their primary purpose. They have a choice of priorities, which is either to:

1. Continue to be a victim?

or

2. Seek more knowledge?

Either approach is an available option. However, blaming mistakes upon “*God’s Will*” is not consistent with the idea that “*We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous and free.*” (pg 133). Not unless being a victim is the personally desired version of happiness. If it is, then that “*prayer*” is being answered.

Seeking improved knowledge of how to cooperate with reality (Step 11) is essential unless the alcoholic has decided they already understand enough. Otherwise, *new knowledge* will be required for *new conditions*. (see pgs 14-15). That enviable condition of being happy, joyous and free under all conditions, is an admirable goal. However, when conditions in life are new, they require *new knowledge*. The author of this Study Guide suggests that you cannot have it both ways.

Before trying to change an undesirable condition, it is intelligent to thoughtfully consider what really needs correction. This is in distinct contrast to using some “*automatic sin list*” based upon blind unthinking emotional training.

Principles of life govern the functioning of an infinite universe, and are “*The Laws of Life*”. (syn: “*God’s Laws*”). It would be both unintelligent and presumptuous for an alcoholic to attempt to change a principle.

Principles are unyielding to any emotional pleadings or the forceful demands of individuals who *believe* that life should be different than the way it really is. With improved understanding, improved cooperation is possible with *The Great Reality*. (review pg 55 & Step 11)..

To achieve *spiritual progress*, (pg 60), it would be an intelligent approach for an alcoholic to develop *an attitude of willingness* to correct personal ignorance. (pgs 23, 27 & Appendix II). A desire (syn: “prayer”) to reduce ignorance of principles which govern everything in life would be both a reasonable and possible course of action. With this approach, there are no limits to how much actual improvement any alcoholic might make in their life. Improved understanding is always available if it is sought. (ie: “*prayed for*”-pg 60(c) & Step 11).

In Step Eight, the alcoholic chooses the path they are *willing* to take when making amends. But first, there is a need to resolve any conflict between two possible *beliefs* which may exist within the mind of the alcoholic. (pg 23).

1. Was it “God’s fault”?

or

2. Was it “my own ignorance” of life, on life’s terms?

The suggestion some manipulative power is directing and controlling all the choices of actions of an alcoholic is highly questionable. When getting drunk and doing harm to others, either God would be forcing them to do it against their will, or else they would be demonstrating they were more powerful than any concept of God that wanted them to be *happy, joyous and free*. (review pg 133).

Most alcoholics will use the best knowledge available and choose the most intelligent response. Making *the elegant choice* requires an undistorted mind. (see pg 23).

“Now we need more action, without which we find that “Faith without works is dead.” Let’s look at Steps Eight and Nine. We have a list of all persons we have harmed and to whom we are willing to make amends. We made it when we took inventory. We subjected ourselves to a drastic self-appraisal. Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past. We attempt to sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will and run the show ourselves. If we haven’t the will to do this, we ask until it comes.

Remember it was agreed at the beginning *we would go to any lengths for victory over alcohol.* (pg 76)

When seeking the best choice of action, trust and reliance does not need to be placed upon an old and limited concept of God which whimsically guides lives and causes problems. Instead, an intelligent approach of seeking the best new knowledge available can be taken. This is an “*educational variety of a spiritual experience*” because it develops slowly over a period of time. This approach produces the necessary and *vital spiritual experience* which is required for recovery from alcoholism. (see Appendix II).

In comparing results of AA with the *belief systems* of most traditional religions, this author has reached an inescapable conclusion which the alcoholic reader is obviously free to accept or reject.

“The heretofore unmanageable aspects of our lives as alcoholics have been the direct result of personal ignorance of how to live life on life’s terms. Regardless of where we got them, our old ideas simply did not work.”

IF WE KNEW BETTER - WE WOULD DO BETTER

As the true nature of our malady is understood, those old *ideas, emotions and attitudes* get displaced and rearranged. (pg 27). The foremost change comes with the awareness that “*we made our own miseryGod didn’t do it*”. (see pg 133). There is a problem with any *belief system* that fails to produce a life of happiness, joy and freedom. (see pgs 12, 62 & 133). Any correction must be made at the source of the error. There is *new freedom and a new happiness* when an alcoholic discovers they are not a victim of some capricious power which cannot be pleased because it cannot be understood. (review pgs 83-84).

With improved understanding of reality, as it is understood, (syn: “God” - see Step 11) there comes the freedom to discard *old beliefs* which do not produce results. (see pgs 42, 62, & 84). This requires a *new attitude* which recognizes that personal ignorance has been the mental cause of problems. (see pgs 23, 27 & 55).

Lack of knowledge produces conflict with reality and the result is personal misery. (pg 45). The culprit is an *old fundamental idea of God* which is faulty. (review pg 55 & Step 10) For many alcoholics to recover, they had to change their *belief system* and their old idea about God. (see pg 58 & Step 10).

For the atheist who *believed* there was no such thing as “God” came the question:

“Who are you to say there is no God? (pg 56)

For many others, who recognized they did not know everything came a similar question.

“Who are you to say that God is what you happen to believe about God?”

Any strong emotional insistence a *belief system* is correct is not intelligent if it implies understanding “everything” (review pgs 53, 68, 164 & Steps 10 & 11). This author assumes and *believes* that if any alcoholic had such complete understanding they would have made better choices.

One common cause for past mistakes is the personal arrogance of a *close-minded attitude* which insists upon being right.. (pgs 23 & 27). This can become obvious with the insistence upon maintaining “*a concept of God*” which does not produce effective results in recovery from alcoholism. (pgs 12, 133, Steps 10 & 11, and Appendix II). Conditions change constantly and *new knowledge* is required on a daily basis. (see pgs 14-15, & 85). The old idea is defective when it lacks “*willingness, honesty and open mindedness*” to accept *new knowledge* of new conditions required for *spiritual growth*.

When a mistake is made, the most intelligent action is to promptly admit it. (Step 10). **Refusal to do so simply perpetuates the error as a personal choice to ignore the truth.** (syn: “God”). **Any decision to ignore reality also rejects *spiritual growth*.**

When this happens, by their own choice, the alcoholic has trapped themselves within the **closed-loop** of their own *belief system*. Any enlarged spiritual life is no longer acceptable to them and they are rejecting “God”. (see pgs 14-15, 23, 35, 53, 68, 129 & 164).

Rectifying past mistakes and their continuing impact, first requires accepting personal responsibility for making those mistakes. This involves a **cause and effect** attitude toward reality (syn: God). This attitude is significantly different from the familiar concept of **rewards and punishments** which “*blames everything on God*”.

That old idea is the mainstay of many traditional religions which sometimes switch between “blaming others who *believe* differently” to being the victim of something they cannot change. Some alcoholics do nicely in sobriety with such traditional religious *belief systems*. They will prefer to keep on doing what they are doing in order to continue getting what they have. (pgs 47-49). Those alcoholics will have no mental conflict with abdicating any responsibility for their own lives with that approach and are obviously not the alcoholics for whom this Study Guide was written

Because personal happiness involves relationships with the “*people, institutions and principles with whom we were angry*” (pg 64), the elimination of the anger requires a changed attitude about the source of the anger. **Recovered alcoholics can no longer blame God for their problems.** (pgs 62 & 133).

There may be strong emotion but little intelligence in a *belief system* which suggests that the power required for recovery is also out to get us. It carries implications of personal importance that go beyond any reasonable facts of life. However, a different mental approach (see pg 23) to those same problems does make sense when we consider that:

**WE ARE VICTIMS OF OUR OWN IGNORANCE
AND FREE TO IMPROVE.**

Unless there is expectation that the universal principles of life (syn: God) are going to change, there is little likelihood of a solution without action being taken by the alcoholic. A need exists for the alcoholic to accept responsibility for past mistakes, and clean up any part they have created out of their own personal ignorance of reality. (syn: "God"). This action is necessary before the alcoholic will be able to accept the personal happiness, joy and freedom which follows as a result of cooperation with *the Great Reality*. Part of that action is embodied in Step Eight.

"Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all." (Step 8)

Before considering any action to make amends to persons harmed, there is a preliminary requirement. One of identifying who did what to whom, and what was our part in it. Where serious consideration was given to taking a personal moral inventory, the alcoholic has already set down resentments, their cause, and what it has been affecting in their life.(pg 65). This is followed by the ego-smashing suggestion to identify the mental cause within the alcoholic taking the inventory. (pg 23).

"Where were we to blame?" (pg 67)

There is no longer denial of the existence of a problem. There is no longer ignorance that a solution is available. There is no longer intelligent ability to claim that "*God is out to get us*" while others are demonstrating that a solution is available if they have decided they want it. (pg 58).

Standing at the turning point between using alcohol to escape reality, or seeking *new knowledge* to survive, there arises a fundamental question.

With apologies to William Shakespeare:

"TO DRINK OR NOT TO DRINK? THAT IS THE QUESTION!"

Does the alcoholic seek a path of oblivion which relies upon old ideas, emotions and attitudes? Or, do they choose to seek whatever *new knowledge* is required for personal survival from any source whatsoever? (see pgs 59 & 60(c)).

Recovered alcoholics make knowledge available about a method to rearrange and displace the *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which have been guiding forces for the alcoholic. (see pgs 27 & 95). Alcoholics who have acquired awareness of that portion of life, are no longer ignorant of that option. What others have done, can be done by anyone who is an equal, (i.e.: "*in the eyes of God*"), if that is what they want the most. (i.e.: "*their prayer*").

IT IS HARD TO ARGUE WITH SUCCESS.

As far as recovery from alcoholism is concerned, those who already have recovered said:

“Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path.....and that.....some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas, and the result was nil until we let go absolutely”
(pg 58)

Those who want recovery have almost a 100% guarantee. (pgs 83-84). Only the alcoholic can decide which way they want to go. For some this produced a serious dilemma.

- ?? **The alcoholic needs “*a power greater than themselves*” for recovery.**
- ?? **The three-letter word “God” is used to identify that power.**
- ?? **Many *believed* their religion held a monopoly on “God”.**
- ?? **Many also *believed* religious interpretations would be adequate for recovery.** (review pg 95)
- ?? **Many then discovered their religious approach did not produce intelligent results.** (see pgs 27 & 42).

For those alcoholics, it became obvious that a different and more practical *vital spiritual experience* would be required for their recovery. Only the intelligence within the individual can recognize and evaluate what works for them. (review pg 55).

Any guiding force in the life of an alcoholic qualifies as a concept of a power greater than themselves. For some alcoholics, their *old ideas, emotions and attitudes* (pg 27) will continue to be their concept of God, if they so choose. (see pg 12). For others, there will be the ego-smashing recognition that their old ideas simply did not produce an acceptable form of recovery. (see Step 10).

“We could wish to be moral, we could wish to be philosophically comforted, in fact, we could will these things with all our might, but the needed power wasn’t there. Our human resources, as marshaled by the will, were not sufficient; they failed utterly.” (pg 45)

Traditional religions are a human resource created by human beings. Some of them assign super-human qualities to selected other humans. While there is little to confirm such claims, blind unthinking emotional desires of many unthinking alcoholics want to believe what they have been told.

Any such religion has the formidable task and primary objective of explaining and assigning meaning to *the Great Reality*. (pg 55). It is the same reality which the alcoholic already recognizes, and by using their own inherent intelligence already knows they do not understand. (see pgs 46 & 55). Most will quite naturally seek to improve their conscious understanding of life, on life's terms because they intuitively *know* it is required for continued survival. (see pg 60(c), 84 & Step 11).

There have always been those willing to provide interpretive service by doing the thinking for others whenever they will allow it. This provides them opportunity to exercise personal power in the lives of those who have abdicated their own intelligence. This author rejects that approach and recommends individual alcoholics do their own thinking. That is what this Study Guide is attempting to encourage.

Regardless of how well any spiritual *belief system* gets translated into understandable language, it still remains finite human awareness. There is always more, and the value of any knowledge from any source is found in how well it works. The only arena for testing a *belief system* is in life, on life's terms. The intelligent reader will recognize that mistakes and misunderstanding are possible. For an alcoholic, any mistake can have serious consequences.

When there is a conflict between a *belief system* which does not produce recovery, and a radically different approach that does work, the mind of the alcoholic is forced to consider: (pg 23):

1. Is the problem with the power?

or

2. Only having a limited understanding of the power?

It is up to the alcoholic to choose their own priorities. Therefore, be clear what they are. (see pg 23).

IS YOUR PRIMARY PURPOSE:

1. To conform to a religious *belief system*?

or

2. To stay sober and help other alcoholics achieve sobriety?

Sometimes, the two are compatible. When they conflict, a decision of primary purpose is required by the alcoholic.

This author wishes to remind the alcoholic reader that, without recovery from alcoholism, little if anything else which follows is worth having in this lifetime.

Spiritual concepts found within the book “*Alcoholics Anonymous*” are neither new nor the exclusive province of any group. Because they have universal application, they appear to embody spiritual laws. (pg 95).

Principles have been discovered and rediscovered by thinking individuals since the earliest days of human history. Some of that awareness was incorporated into various and sometimes quite different religious explanations. Despite spokesmen for religions claiming the last word on what they *believe* about spiritual laws, no group holds a monopoly on assigning meaning to reality. (syn: “God” - review pgs 93-95). **Reality has continually been revealed to human consciousness since the days of the caveman. This process has not ended in recent times.**

Any alcoholic may seek and find some meaning of spiritual principles from religious experts. This author suggests that any promises made are speculative without their ability to demonstrate results. (see pg 68). Alcoholics are also free to independently seek that same knowledge and more *new knowledge*. As equals, (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”), they can go directly to the same source (syn: God) any “**religious specialist**” got their information. For the alcoholic seeking recovery, the only thing that matters are the results.

Those who stay within the confines of their religious *belief system* to seek “God” may be disappointed when they recognize that what their chosen experts understand about reality (syn: “God”) is incomplete. Though some portions may have great value, **any specifically defined *belief system* has limits**. This author suggests there is more to “God” than is now understood by any *belief system* created by human beings. Any improved understanding of *the Great Reality* must come from whatever is the source of all knowledge. (syn: “God” - see pgs 59, 60(c) & Step 11.

“Once more: The alcoholic at certain times has no effective mental defense against the first drink. Except in a few rare cases neither he nor any other human being can provide such a defense. His defense must come from a Higher Power.”
(pg 43)

The fullest range of human knowledge is inadequate to cover every new situation. Individual alcoholics shall always encounter new or unanticipated conditions when dealing with life, on life’s terms. (see pgs 14-15, 35, 68, 129, 164 & Step 11). For example, no one reading this material has ever been this old before.

It should be self-evident that any established *belief system* is restricted by the sum total of all accumulated human knowledge. It is also seriously impacted by how accurately the original information was understood and then got translated and

communicated to others. Even the best intentioned individuals are capable of making mistakes when accumulating and dispensing their own understanding of reality, (syn: "God"). This author is specifically included.

The alcoholic seeking a power for recovery may stay within their established *belief system* or go beyond those boundaries to seek answers directly from the source.. (pg 25). Any alcoholic seeking recovery in AA is presented with this unorthodox suggestion:

"Why don't you choose your own conception of God?"
(pg 12)

There is nothing in the basic text of *Alcoholics Anonymous* which endorses the limited claims of any religious *belief system*. (review Tradition 10). By notable contrast, there is every indication that the approach, suggested by AA, to "*a power greater than ourselves*" is not limited. Moreover, the practical approach of AA works for any alcoholic, regardless of any religious affiliations. (see pg 95). There is no second requirement for recovery. (Tradition 3).

"To us, the Realm of Spirit is broad, roomy, all inclusive; never exclusive or forbidding to those who earnestly seek. It is open, we believe, to all men."
(pg 46)

Whatever any alcoholic now knows was once *new knowledge*, which came from some source. That source may have been other people, or the same place the experts got their knowledge. Recognizably, many alcoholics learn beneficial things from other equal human beings. However, *new knowledge of reality* (i.e.: "*improved conscious understanding of God*" -see Step 11), is not restricted to only that which other people have learned.

"WHERE DID THE FIRST PERSON TO KNOW GET THEIR INFORMATION?"

The search for *new knowledge* will eventually lead any alcoholic to the source of all knowledge and power. (see pg 59). Ultimately, they will become aware they have equal access to that source. Their own inherent intelligence will recognize this as being their *fundamental idea of God*, and it exists deep down within themselves. (pg 55).

The path taken to get *new knowledge* is a personal choice. Any reliance upon old ideas which do not produce results, may be considered as "self-will run riot". It is insistence upon placing reliance upon *self-knowledge* instead of enlarging a *spiritual life* by seeking and accepting power from the source. (see pgs 14-15, 23, 39, 42-43, 45-49, 53, 55, 60(c), 62 & 68).

"Perhaps there is a better way--we think so. For we are now on a different basis; the basis of trusting and relying upon God. We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves."
(pg 68)

The trust and reliance is no longer upon a limited concept of God. Instead, the necessary *vital spiritual experience* for recovery becomes “*the educational variety*” because it develops slowly over a period of time. (see Appendix II).

The practical result of making amends to all persons harmed is that it produces a new kind of freedom. The alcoholic is then free from the emotional turmoil of fear, anger and guilt which is associated with harm done to others. This means they can now walk down the streets of life without fear of confronting someone out of their past. (review pgs 83-84).

An invaluable by-product is a “quiet mind”. (see pg 23). It develops as the alcoholic builds a life where anything that is true can be revealed without destructive impact. That mental condition is a reasonably close definition of being *happy, joyous and free*. (pg 133).

With this attitude, the reader is now ready to consider the next step. It involves making direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when it would injure them or others. (Step 9).

* * * * *

SECTION B06m:

Chapter 6

INTO ACTION

STEP NINE:

“Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.”

READ:

Page 76, beginning with *“Probably there are still some misgivings.”*.....and ending on page 83 with *“As God’s people we stand on our feet; we don’t crawl before anyone.”*

COMMENTS:

The key element of this step is to be found in the alcoholic taking personal responsibility for any of the consequences of their own choice of actions. This critical shift in attitude is where the alcoholic stops being a victim of a *belief* that some power, with an irrational and unpredictable personality, is capriciously meddling in the petty details of their personal life.

Being a victim reflects a *belief system* which exists in the mind of the alcoholic. (see pg 23 & 55). It is a set of *ideas, emotions and attitudes*, which have become guiding forces in their life. Those *old ideas* can be displaced and rearranged by *new knowledge* of reality. (syn: “God” -see pg 27). Usually, it is the *“educational variety”* of a spiritual awakening (see Appendix II) which occurs when there is conscious recognition that:

**WE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO CHANGE OTHERS,
BUT WE CAN CHANGE OURSELVES.**

This is a point where the alcoholic becomes freed from *old ideas*, (i.e.: *“the bondage of self”*-pg. 63) and begins to experience a new kind of freedom and a new kind of happiness. (pg 83). It occurs as the alcoholic discovers more ***Truth, Good and Reality*** (all syn: “God”) about their personal relationship to life, on life’s terms. The capacity for personal awareness of *the Great Reality* (i.e.: “God”) is something they find deep down within themselves. (see pgs 23 & 55).

The alcoholic who seeks a better understanding of ***“Truth, Good, and Reality”*** is seeking universally accepted definitions for ***“that three-letter word- God”***. Improved understanding enlarges their conscious awareness of life, on life’s terms. (see Step 11). With that *new knowledge* they commence to get relief from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. As the alcoholic improves their understanding of reality, (syn: “God”), they *enlarge their spiritual life*. (see pgs 14-15, 35 & 164).

The alcoholic now has a change in attitude and outlook upon life. (see pgs 12, 23, 27,55, 68, 164 & Appendix II). The source of that *new knowledge* has become *“a power greater than themselves”*. (see pg 60(c), Steps 3 & 11 & Appendix II). Instead of turning

their will and life over to a concept of “God” which produces *fear, anger and guilt*, (Step 3) the alcoholic has chosen a different set of *ideas, emotions and attitudes*. (pgs 12, 23 & 27). **As** the alcoholic replaces their *old idea of God* with one aligned with reality, they experience improved *happiness, joy and freedom*. (pg 133).

For many alcoholics making this decision reflects a significant mental change. (pgs 12, 23, & 27). Instead of using an *old idea*, based upon some *second-hand belief system*, they are now using their own inherent intelligence (see pg 86) to develop a concept which provides results which can be relied upon. (see pg 68). For them, Step 3 means adopting a simple desire (syn: “prayer” - see pg 23) to utilize some synonyms for “God”. Their dominant desire (i.e.: “prayer”) is:

1. **I would rather be told the truth than something I want to hear.**
2. **I would rather get what is good for me than have my own way.**
3. **I would rather live in reality than in my own fantasyland.**

This simple attitude of seeking **Truth, Good and Reality** is sufficient for many alcoholics to experience recovery. (review pgs, 46- 47, 49, 52, 57, & 60(c)). It also relieves them of conflicts of accepting religious concepts on “*blind faith*” when their inherent intelligence has difficulty reconciling *beliefs* with reality.

“TO THINE OWN SELF BE TRUE”.

Due to the “*educational value*” of once painful experiences, the alcoholic acquires “*the wisdom to know the difference*” between things which can and cannot be changed. A feeling of *self-worth* develops **as** the alcoholic makes *spiritual progress* and improves understanding of how their own experience can benefit others.

With this new mental attitude, many still painful memories are changed into memories of pain. There is a significant difference.

We are now dealing with some principles of recovery. Those principles are available to the alcoholic reader, right here and right now. The **only** requirement is the desire (syn: “prayer”) to have them in your life. (review pgs 42, 46, 55, 58, 93-95, & 164).

The desire (syn: “prayer”) to change from being a hopeless, helpless alcoholic victim to one who is able to walk “*in the sunlight of the spirit*” calls for letting go of old *ideas, emotions and attitudes*. (see pg 27). Those *guiding forces* need to be displaced and rearranged by seeking improved conscious understanding of that which is **Truth, Good and Reality**, **on life’s terms**. (review Steps 2, 3, 10 & 11). If the alcoholic so chooses, those terms can be considered to reflect “the will of God”. (see page 12 & 133).

With this new personal relationship to some “*Creative Intelligence*” (syn: “God”) comes a new sense of power and direction in life. (see pg 46). This author suggests it is the power of the alcoholic to recognize a capacity to intelligently improve cooperation with life, on life’s terms. They begin to trust an infinite concept of God which their own inherent intelligence is increasingly able to recognize. **This is *spiritual progress***. (pg 60). They then prefer those results over what gets produced by trying to hold on to their *old ideas*. (review pgs 12, 23, 27, 58, & 68).

More will be revealed to those who are *willing, honest and open-minded* enough to learn what others have already learned. (Appendix II). When seeking “God”, (syn: “Truth, Good & Reality”), it is difficult to argue with success.

“See to it that your relationship with Him is right,
and great events will come to you, and countless others.
We realize we know only a little.” (pg 164)

Some alcoholics have sudden revolutionary changes where an immediate and overwhelming “*God consciousness*” produces a vast change in feeling and outlook. However:

“Most of our experiences are what the
psychologist William James calls the ‘educational variety’
because they develop slowly over a period of time”
(Appendix II)

The author suggests that as principles of life are understood the alcoholic acquires the freedom of choice to cooperate with them or not. (Step 11).

A practical view of those principles and a personal relationship with “*a power greater than ourselves*” was offered by a member of a motorcycle gang at an AA meeting:

**“*When it is a nice day, I get out my ‘Harley’
and “GOD” rides with me! But, the moment I tilt
that bike over 45 degrees, “GOD” gets the hell off!*”**

(with special thanks to “Forklift Charlie”)

From this practical view of the principles of life, there are some practical observations the reader may wish to consider. Due to prolonged use of alcohol, many “AA newcomers” lack any practical intelligent awareness of reality.

Being emotionally eager to recover, some alcoholic newcomers to AA make tragic blunders with emotional choices which are not intelligent decisions. Sometimes their actions result in irreparable damage to their own lives as well as harming others.

Be reminded that the only requirement for membership in AA is a desire to stop drinking. That means “*you may find almost anyone in*

an AA meeting". Intelligent judgment is required when deciding that someone in AA will be "*a close-mouthed, understanding friend*". (see pg 74). **Extreme caution is advised.**

There is a difference between *experience* and *wishful thinking*. A person speaking at an AA meeting is attempting to share the secret of their success. It is up to you to decide if you want any part of what they have.

"Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it--then you are ready to take certain steps." (pg 58)

It will very quickly become self-evident to a "*newcomer*" that not everyone participating in AA has developed the same inner peace acquired by others who have worked for it. (see pg 84). Nonetheless, "*our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism*". (Appendix II). In their countless vain attempts to prove they can drink like other people, some AA members have made incredible and tragic mistakes. (see pgs 30-32).

This author believes one serious mistake is trying to hold onto a concept of "God" that denies human equality. It is characterized by a *belief system* which claims preferred status for some over those outside their group. There is a word which accurately defines that attitude which is common among many religious *belief systems*. That *belief* is conspicuously absent from the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, but not from some members.

The word worth adding to your vocabulary is:

"ETHNOCENTRIC"

and refers to a *belief* that "our group is superior to all other groups". By foregoing that attitude of superiority to others, the AA program has cut across any and all of the barriers that separate human beings from each other.

How much does an *ethnocentric belief* play a role in your *fundamental idea of God* and the power being used for recovery? (see pgs 12, 23 & 55). It may be one of the *ideas, emotions or attitudes* which require change in order to recover from alcoholism. (pg 27).

Gullible emotional dependence upon others who want to tell an alcoholic what to think does not appear to have recognizable limits. Any alcoholic may chooses to abdicate their own intelligent thinking and allow others to do it for them. This author suggests that any alcoholic making that

choice truly deserves whatever they get. In the words of some early members of AA:

“IN ORDER TO GET THE SHAFT, YOU HAVE TO GET IN POSITION.”

Here is a dilemma. There is a self-evident need for help and no human power has all the answers required. There is, within the alcoholic, **the power of decision** and the inescapable responsibility for the consequences of choices made. Their own inherent intelligence decides how much *new knowledge* is sufficient before taking any action. This includes the inherent intelligence to recognize that events may have overtaken any further options to continue seeking more new knowledge.

Any action taken by an alcoholic has some effect upon what happens to them next. Some religious *belief systems* “take them off the hook” by denying the existence of this freedom of choice. The assumption is that “*their concept of God*” whimsically overrides any power of choice by the alcoholic. This *belief system* conveniently frees the alcoholic from any responsibility for the mistakes of their own actions because, in their own mind, “*God did it!*”. (see pgs 23 & 133).

Tragically for some, the alcoholic still remains accountable for their actions during this lifetime. The consequences of mistakes are paid on life’s terms during the only life they can know now. Accordingly, when sufficient *new knowledge* is acquired to believe a mistake was made, it is a practical decision to promptly admit it and make intelligent corrections during this lifetime. (Step 10).

An alcoholic is also free to **choose not to choose**. This default decision is a sneaky unintelligent attempt to abandon personal responsibility for the consequences, and leaves the life of the alcoholic up to anyone willing or able to make necessary choices for them. When others are managing the affairs of an alcoholic, it has required their mutual consent. (review pgs 42 & 62).

One way an alcoholic becomes a victim is by choosing a *belief system* which allows them to blame others for the conditions of their life. With such a *belief system* the alcoholic is assured a “*scape-goat*” for their personal misery. When all else fails, their “*scape-goat*” is their “*fundamental idea of God*”. (pg 55).

“GOD” IS THEIR “ULTIMATE PATSY” FOR PERSONAL FAILURE.

It is disconcerting for an alcoholic who is using that excuse for personal failure, to be presented with a different set of *ideas, emotions and attitudes* (see pgs 12, 23, 27, 42, 62, & 133) which are available to them, and work better than their old ideas. Especially when that new *belief system* can demonstrate results which include successful recovery from alcoholism.

When recovered alcoholics can demonstrate they have discovered results and make promises that “*will always materialize - if we work for them*”, they have discovered some *new knowledge* which is more powerful than their “*old idea of God*”. (see pgs 58, 83-84, & Step 10). The demonstrated results, and that different conception of God is available to any alcoholic during this lifetime if they decide to thoroughly follow that path. (see pgs 12, 42 & 58).

With recognition of this principle, the alcoholic can no longer hide behind their old idea that someone or something is manipulating their life, and causing their problems. (pg 133).

Obviously, what an alcoholic chooses to do has something to do with what happens to them. With recognition of responsibility for the consequences of personal actions comes a sometimes frightening new awareness. There is an infinite supply of *new knowledge* available for personal improvement. (Step 11). The power of that *new knowledge* is available from the source, (i.e.: "God") and it is up to the alcoholic to learn how to use it intelligently. (pg 60(c)).

"We finally saw that faith in some kind of God was a part of our make-up, just as much as the feeling we have for a friend. Sometimes we had to search fearlessly, but He was there. He was as much a fact as we were. We found the Great Reality deep down within us. In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found. It was so with us." (pg 55)

By defining "God" as "*the source of all knowledge*", (i.e.: "omniscience"), it is possible for the alcoholic to constantly seek personal improvement. An alcoholic can decide to stop seeking their own *spiritual progress* toward continued recovery any time they choose. However, there are consequences of ignorance of reality. (see pgs 14-15, 35, 62, 85 & 129).

BY GOING TO AA MEETINGS YOU LEARN WHAT HAPPENS TO ALCOHOLICS WHO DO NOT

As the alcoholic enlarges their spiritual life they gain a new freedom to consciously choose to cooperate with life. They are free to make progress toward the fulfillment of their own desires (i.e.: "prayers") and whatever it is they *believe* to be their own best interests. As equals, ("*in the eyes of God*") they are also free to seek their own version of being *happy, joyous and free*. With this as their dominant desire (i.e.: "prayer") the alcoholic gives direction to the power in their own life.

This can be akin to placing a cross-country high powered electrical cable in the hands of a child. He has tapped a source of power but does not understand how to use it intelligently. The power is indifferent because it operates according to certain principles. Giving the power direction is an inescapable personal responsibility which requires intelligent use of knowledge to avoid destruction.

This author *believes* that whatever the power is, it responds to direction. Whatever gives the power direction is a reasonable definition of that which is called "*a prayer*". Any response to a desire (i.e.: "answer to a prayer") is in accordance with those principles which govern all of life, on life's terms. For the alcoholic, it is their dominant desire (i.e.: "*dominant prayer*") which gives the power direction in their life. Any

alcoholic, who has wanted another drink and got it, will recognize the validity of this observation.

The alcoholic may choose to give direction to the power based upon intelligent thought and decision, or by automatic unthinking emotional reactions to circumstances.

The experience of this author is that when emotional attempts are made to clear away wreckage of the past without using intelligence those efforts do not produce lasting results in recovery from alcoholism.

Nonetheless, this author *believes*

**THERE IS A POWER FOR GOOD,
AND YOU CAN USE IT IN YOUR LIFE.**

Because of limited understanding of reality, every alcoholic has the capacity to make mistakes. However, with *new knowledge* constantly available to anyone, there is no requirement to continue repeating the same mistakes over and over.

**IF YOU KEEP DOING WHAT YOU ARE DOING,
YOU WILL KEEP GETTING WHAT YOU'VE GOT!**

This has particular application to participants in **ethnocentric belief systems** who believe they receive preferential treatment from “God” which “those others” do not enjoy. That attitude produces separation from others and loneliness because it denies basic human equality. (“*in the eyes of God*”). While their special group may provide some acceptable answers to an alcoholic, no human power can provide them with all the right answers. (pgs 14-15, 60(b), 164 & Appendix II).

When asking for help from a “*power greater than ourselves*” there are two implications involved.

- 1. A *belief* improvement is possible.**
- 2. Admission of ignorance of how to produce it.**

Alcoholics seeking improvement choose their “*source of supply*” (i.e.: “God”) for any *new knowledge* required to produce results. Few would reject “*the elegant choice*” if they knew with certainty which choice was superior to all available choices.

Based upon limited understanding of reality, any choice made by an alcoholic will be using “*the best knowledge available at the time the choice needs making*”.

This author suggests that any *fear, anger or guilt* would not develop if the alcoholic *knew better at the time they made their decisions*. When there is an enlarged spiritual awareness of reality, (syn: "God") more intelligent changes occur in the way decisions get made. They occur within the mind of the alcoholic (see pg 23) and involve their relationship with life, on life's terms.

Those changes are best summarized by "*the promises*".

"If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us---sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them."
(pgs 83-84)

There is relief available from those mental conditions which have prompted alcoholics to seek oblivion in the bottle. That relief is provided by seeking *new knowledge* from the source, (i.e.: "God" - see pgs 23, 27, 60(c)). Making direct amends to persons harmed reduces the mental causes of fear, anger and guilt which lie behind destructive drinking. (pg 23).

"Usually, however, other people are involved. Therefore, we are not to be the hasty and foolish martyr who would needlessly sacrifice others to save himself from the alcoholic pit."
(pg 79)

As equals, (i.e.: "*in the eyes of God*"), an alcoholic cannot intelligently consider themselves as either superior or inferior to any other human being. Not without first claiming to possess some special awareness of reality (i.e.: "God") which is not available to "*those others*". Such an attitude may be emotionally gratifying, but their inherent intelligence will eventually recognize equality, and that:

MY LIFE IS AS IMPORTANT TO ME - AS YOURS IS TO YOU

Accordingly, when making direct amends to persons harmed, it is recommended that:

“We should be sensible, tactful, considerate and humble without being servile or scraping. As God’s people we stand on our feet; we don’t crawl before anyone.”
(pg 83)

The reader may remember that, as an alcoholic, their primary purpose for making any amends to persons harmed is for the express purpose of achieving **their own recovery** from alcoholism. Anything else is secondary to personal survival.

**IN AA, IT DOESN’T MATTER WHO IS RIGHT,
ONLY WHO IS LEFT!**

* * * * *

SECTION B06n:

Chapter 6

INTO ACTION

STEP NINE:

“Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.”

READ:

Page 83, beginning with *“If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, ” ----and ending on page 84 with “They will always materialize if we work for them.”*

COMMENTS:

When writing the basic text for recovery, the earliest members of *“Alcoholics Anonymous”* clearly stated:

“To show other alcoholics precisely how we have recovered is the main purpose of this book.”
(see Foreword to First Edition)

They then present a specific conclusion concerning this once seemingly hopeless state of mind and body:

“Therefore, the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind rather than in his body.” (pg 23)

The suggested program of recovery calls for significant changes to the thought processes of alcoholics. Comments from a world-famous psychiatrist are provided. His best professional experience indicated that, recoveries had only been accomplished with alcoholics who had a *“vital spiritual experience”*.

“They appear to be in the nature of huge emotional displacements and rearrangements. Ideas, emotions, and attitudes which were once the guiding forces of the lives of these men are suddenly cast to one side, and a completely new set of conceptions and motives begin to dominate them.” (pg 27)

An alcoholic patient demanded to be told the truth. It was directly related to his personal survival. He had an obvious interest in the *“vital spiritual experience”* but his acquired *“self-knowledge”* had limitations. He thought a *vital spiritual experience* was equated with his religious activities. His *belief system* erroneously assumed his religion provided what he required for recovery, and:

“....was somewhat relieve, for he reflected that, after all, he was a good church member. This hope, however, was destroyed by the doctor’s telling him that while his religious convictions were very good, in his case they did not spell the necessary vital spiritual experience.” (pg 27)

The important point to be made here is recognition of the limitations of human knowledge and understanding. There still remains an infinite supply of *new knowledge* to be recognized, understood and utilized. Neither science nor religion can claim “*the last word*” on anything. There is always more. (pgs 53 & 68).

In this particular example, there was more about reality (i.e.: “God”) than either the doctor or his patient understood at the time. Here was an alcoholic, who was *believed* to be hopeless by one of the best professional experts of the time. The excellent religious convictions of the patient were professionally recognized as being inadequate. (pg 27). To this day neither science nor religion have demonstrated any great success in producing recovery from alcoholism, when compared to the program of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Nonetheless, as the result of *new knowledge* large numbers of alcoholics, previously *believed* to be hopeless, have recovered. (see Frontispiece). The basic text of AA outlines the mental process for the enlarged spiritual life which consistently has produced successful results. (see pgs 14,-15, & 35).

Out of their own desperation, early members of AA sought *more new knowledge of reality*. (i.e.: “God”). What they found was an endless opportunity for improved understanding of the Great Reality. (i.e.: “God” - see pg 53, 68 & Step 11). They came to believe they had discovered some valid *new knowledge* that worked, where all else had failed in the past. This led them to make the statement:

“Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path.” (pg 58)

To date, the AA program remains unmatched in producing recoveries from alcoholism. (pg 31). So much so that the **principles** involved have been copied and applied to innumerable problems other than alcoholism.

There were differences between what the professional mental health expert experienced and what the alcoholic believed about a “*vital spiritual experience*”. (pg 27). **Now note that neither approach was complete.**

Effective *new knowledge* was revealed to other alcoholics who later produced results neither the doctor nor his patient had considered at the time. The important point is that the power of *new knowledge* subsequently allowed that same alcoholic patient to get sober and be *happy, joyous and free*. (review pgs 23, 26-27, & 133). *New knowledge*, came from other alcoholics, who in desperation, sought the source of all knowledge to improve their conscious understanding of reality. (i.e.: “God” - see Step 11).

“Science may one day accomplish this, but it hasn’t done so yet.” (pg 31)

There are those who will disagree and claim that church membership is sufficient for recovery from alcoholism simply by adhering to their belief system.

If so, any decision to produce recovery will be made by their version of “a power greater than themselves”. This will automatically exclude any individual choice plus anything and everything outside of that clearly defined *belief system*, and puts a fence around their concept of “God”. (review pgs 53 & 68). Practical experience and the inherent intelligence of the reader indicates there is always *more* to be understood. (pg 164 & Step 11).

Fortunately the individual alcoholic has nearly a 100% chance for recovery in AA. (pg 58). All that is required is their desire to stop drinking (i.e.: “their prayer”), accompanied by *willingness, honesty and open-mindedness*. (see Appendix II). This author maintains that each alcoholic does their own “wanting”, and is inescapably responsible for their own mental attitude about that infinite power referred to as being “God”. (see pgs 12, 23 42, 53, 55, 58-60, 68, 86, 95, 163-164, & Appendix II).

As a conscious understanding of reality is improved, the *spiritual life* of the alcoholic becomes enlarged, and they experience relief. (see pgs 58 & Steps 3 & 11). The same principles used by AA have validity elsewhere and have been re-discovered, copied and applied to other problems.

AA was never intended to be a “cure-all” for other problems.

Note that the AA program works better than any other approach to recovery from alcoholism. Diluting “strong medicine” with other problems reduces the effectiveness of what AA does best.

Many alcoholics have considered themselves “*too intelligent, too wealthy, or too morally good*” to go to AA. No one has been “*too dumb, too poor or too morally bad*” to recover from alcoholism in the AA program.

Once again, “*the only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking*”. (Tradition 3). There is no requirement to conform with the *ideas, emotions or attitudes* established by any particular religious *belief system* concerning “a power greater than themselves”. (i.e.: “God”- see pgs 27, 42 & 46).

THERE IS NO SECOND REQUIREMENT FOR MEMBERSHIP IN AA

Alcoholics who enlarge their *spiritual life* also improve their conscious understanding and knowledge of *the Great Reality* which is “God”. As they acquire that understanding, they become increasingly free to cooperate with “*what is and what is not*” life, on life’s terms.
(Step 11).

This simple principle works both within and beyond religious *belief systems*. Improved cooperation with reality (syn: “God”) improves personal *happiness, joy and*

freedom. (pg 133). This principle provides a reasonably understandable basis for **choosing intelligent action** in preference to **unthinking emotional reactions** based upon “*blind faith*”.

The alcoholic seeking recovery is not dependent upon any “*second-hand belief system*” which they are unable to reconcile with their own intelligence or a limited understanding of reality. (syn: “God”-see pgs 83-84). With universal principles there is human equality. Where a principle is involved, the response from life is the same. Like it or not, any action taken in life is governed by universal principles. (i.e.: “*the Laws of Life &/or God’s Laws*”). What you do with them has something to do with what happens to you.

FOR EVERY ACTION THERE IS A REACTION

It is of no consequence that a principle may not be fully understood. To the degree an alcoholic understands the implications of their actions, they become free to cooperate with inescapable laws of life, on life’s terms. (review Step 11).

The alcoholic reader is encouraged to examine the principles of their *fundamental idea of God* (pg 55). Especially those applicable to any “*second-hand belief system*” acquired from authorities of any “*religious concept of God*”. (see pg 12). Consider if your chosen *belief system* offers human equality or gives *special status* to those belonging to that group. Give thoughtful consideration to what is being promised by that *belief system* during this lifetime. It either is or is not producing personal *happiness, joy and freedom* now. (syn: “*God’s will*” -see pg 133).

Now, compare any differences with results offered to those who choose to *thoroughly follow the path* provided by the AA program. In doing so, the reader will clarify their own primary purpose and readily recognize what best fulfills their dominant desire. (i.e.: “*answers their prayer*”).

Any reprieve from alcoholism is received on a daily basis with “*the gift of life*” being received from the source. (i.e.: “God” - see pg 53). What the alcoholic gets is a daily reprieve from the destructive consequences of their own ignorance of reality. (i.e.: “God”). That *new freedom* is contingent upon constantly improving conscious understanding of how to cooperate with life, on life’s terms. (pgs 83-83 & Step 11).

Recognize an infinite universe is constantly undergoing changes. There is no “*arrival point for happiness, joy and freedom*”. Instead, it is a journey with a constant need to seek a vision of how to cooperate with life, on life’s terms. The alcoholic who wants to continue recovery must continue to grow spiritually. (review Frontispiece, pgs 12, 14-15, 23, 27, 53, 60(c), 68, 85, 129, 164, & Appendix II).

The intelligent reader will recognize differences in how alcoholics have tapped an unsuspected inner resource. (see pg 163 & Appendix II). Because of their own success in recovery, some alcoholics jump to an erroneous conclusion:

YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN GOD IF YOU DON'T

BELIEVE IN MY IDEA OF GOD!

This is an **ethnocentric belief**, with egotistical overtones of “*mind-reading*” thrown in. The attitude carries an offensive basic assumption of having arrived at the “*stopping point for spiritual growth*” (i.e.: “*their idea of God*”). Happily, for most other alcoholics there are no such limitations and the experience of AA does not support exclusive claims to the power required for recovery. (see pg 95).

There is no necessity for any alcoholic to conform to a concept of “*the power*” other than one which is intelligent because it produces results. (see pgs 12, 27, 46-47, 53, 55, 93-95, 163-164 & Appendix II).

“The distinguished American psychologist, William James, in his book “Varieties of Religious Experience,” indicates a multitude of ways in which men have discovered God. We have no desire to convince anyone that there is only one way by which faith can be acquired. If what we have learned and felt and seen means anything at all, it means that all of us, whatever our race, creed, or color are the children of a living Creator with whom we may form a relationship upon simple and understandable terms as soon as we are willing and honest enough to try. Those having religious affiliations will find here nothing disturbing to their beliefs or ceremonies. There is no friction among us over such matters.

We think it no concern of ours what religious bodies our members identify themselves with as individuals. This should be an entirely personal affair which each one decides for himself in the light of past associations, or his present choice. Not all of us join religious bodies, but most of us favor such memberships.” (pg 28)

Some religious *belief systems* discourage independent thinking by claiming they have the only correct approach to living life. Their literature and writings imply that their *belief system* provides the only valid approach. To be a member often requires disregarding individual intelligence. This author does not agree with those claims.

Alcoholics, who accept responsibility for using intelligence, must reconcile their *beliefs* and *religious ceremonies* with life, on life's terms. (see pgs 55 & 86). **Others should not read material which may disturb their “*blind faith*”, or else think well before exposing their mind to suggestions that *new knowledge* exists beyond the boundaries of their chosen *belief system*.**

Remember that your dominant desire for recovery from alcoholism is personal. (i.e.: “your prayer”). This author points out that, *if you do dare to think for yourself*, it will intelligently confirm *your personal freedom to make choices*.

Any personal desire (syn: “prayer”) to hold onto an old idea of God, can be a strong emotional force. Epecially, when it includes an ethnocentric belief of personal superiority. Retaining that “*second-hand belief system*” will hold special appeal to alcoholics who avoid or reject responsibility for their own decisions.

Recognize that whenever intelligent thinking is being excluded, that decision opens up the risk of deception. The alcoholic who **abdicates their own intelligence**, voluntarily opens the door for someone else to provide them “*a version of sane behavior*” without including their own supervision or choice. (review Step 2). By doing so, they deserve getting whatever they asked for. (i.e.: “*the answer to their prayer*”).

Any such decision has monumental implications. It is the basis for an alcoholic to establish a set of moral values as a guiding force in their life **which are not intelligent**. While this choice may inescapably be one of personal preference, (i.e.: “personal prayer”), a different option is available.

Ultimately, the choice of the alcoholic will be between:

IS IT MORALLY GOOD?

OR

DOES IT WORK?

1. **Moral values, with an ethnocentric belief of superiority, based upon a “*second-hand belief system*”.**

OR

2. **Practical and intelligent decisions, made as an equal, based upon principles governing life, on life’s terms.**

Consider the promises made by either approach. Decide which one best fulfills your own dominant desire, (i.e.: “answers your prayer”), and produces your own best version of being happy, joyous and free. (i.e.: “*God’s will*” - see pg 133).

“The answers will come, if your own house is in order. But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven’t got”. (pg 164)

Many alcoholics are unaccustomed to doing any thinking for themselves. As equal human beings, (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”), they seldom give thought to unfamiliar *ideas, emotions and attitudes*. (see pg 27). Choosing a *belief system* which rejects *new knowledge of the Great Reality* in not particularly a sane choice.

Alcoholics who reject any *fundamental idea of God* (pg 55) other than their own are suggesting:

“MY INSANITY IS SUPERIOR TO YOUR INSANITY”.

(see Step 2).

To make *the elegant choice* (i.e.: “the most intelligent of all possible choices”) requires the alcoholic to become *willing, honest and open-minded* enough to seek *new knowledge* beyond the boundaries of their old *beliefs*. This author suggests “*the elegant choice*” is the one which will produce the most *happiness, joy and freedom during this lifetime*. (i.e.: “*God’s will*” - see pg 133)

Recovery from alcoholism can only be experienced during this lifetime. Anything else is unsubstantiated speculation. When considering some subsequent lifetime, any alcoholic is as much an expert authority as anyone else. No one really knows. (see pg 53).

Alcoholics who have placed recovery from alcoholism *as their primary purpose during this lifetime*, will want to make the most intelligent choices available *during this lifetime*. (i.e.: “*First Things First*”). This author does not endorse any *belief system* which encourages their members to “*suffer now to be rewarded later*” as expressed by the ditty:

**“Work and pray
and live on hay!
There’s “pie in the sky”
by and by, when you die!”**

This is not *believed* to be either intelligent nor acceptable as a guiding set of *ideas, emotions and attitudes for this lifetime*. (see pg 27). Instead, this author recommends giving priority attention to:

“ONE LIFE AT A TIME”.

This strictly personal viewpoint should not be allowed to impact anyone who prefers to *believe* something different.

As equals, (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”), other alcoholics have other ideas, other *beliefs*, and other *primary purposes* of their own. The comments provided in this Study Guide are an attempt to share what this author has found in the basic AA text for recovery from alcoholism. They are intended only for alcoholics with a *primary purpose* (syn: “prayer”) to be *happy, joyous and free during this lifetime*. (i.e.: “*God’s will*” - see pg 133).

It is recommended the alcoholic reader intelligently evaluate any differences in their own moral values and decide for themselves what is most important. Recognize that one set of *ideas, emotions and attitudes* (pg 27) does little to confirm promises of any benefits to be provided in some future life. The value system found in the AA basic text,

promises and demonstrates relief from alcoholism right here and right now. (see pgs 83-84) When rigorously honest, which approach do you really prefer?

The religiously moral and the intelligently practical approach each claim cooperation with “*a concept of God*”. (see pg 12). One approach is rigid and defined, while the other open to change and improvement. Constantly seeking *new knowledge* to enlarge a *spiritual life* is the key element to *spiritual progress*. (pgs 14-15, 27, 42, 60(c), 53, 55, 68, 86, 95, 129, 164 & Appendix II).

There is a basic premise that an alcoholic would not be seeking relief from alcoholism if they already understood how to get it. The desire for recovery indicates personal ignorance of how to achieve that goal. (Step 11). The *ideas, emotions and attitudes* of most traditional religious *belief systems* have been available for considerable periods of time, without producing any significant recoveries from alcoholism in this lifetime.

AA offers results now for any alcoholic without regard to a particular religious *belief system*. (pgs 12 & 58). Most religious approaches promise results later. The results promised by AA in this lifetime, are:

“If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us--sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.”
(pgs 83-84)

Only the individual alcoholic can establish, in their own mind, if seeking those results will be their own *primary purpose during this lifetime*. (see pgs 23 & 77). **Accepting promises from some equal human mind (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”) **about a life they have not yet experienced is an option of some questionable intelligence and sanity.** (Step 2).**

Thus far, we have been dealing with developing a *vital spiritual experience* essential for recovery. The reader will note it has manifested itself through many different *belief systems* in the lives of many alcoholics. At the core of their success has been a painstaking pursuit of mental action to rearrange and displace ineffective *old ideas* guiding their life. (pgs 23 & 27). As a result of being *willing, honest and open-minded*, their

intelligent choices were allowed to take priority importance over any emotional gratification offered by some “*second-hand belief system*”. (i.e.: “*self-will run riot*”).

In making that choice, the alcoholic reduces *emotional and irrational* choices when dealing with life, on life’s terms. (Step 2). Any “*self-will run riot*” will gradually get replaced with a new set of conceptions and motives.(pg 27).

The result of following this intelligent and understandable path of action is that the alcoholic will cease fighting anything or anyone--even alcohol. They will willingly surrender their old ideas to a superior force, which is *the Great Reality* of life, on life’s terms. (syn: “God”).

The natural consequence of this decision is improved conscious contact with reality, for by this time sanity will have returned. (see pgs 38, 84 & Step 11).

“This thought brings us to *Step Ten*, which suggests we continue to take personal inventory and continue to set right any new mistakes as we go along.”
(pg 84)

* * * * *

SECTION B06o:

Chapter 6

INTO ACTION

STEP TEN:

“Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.”

READ:

Page 84, beginning with *“This thought brings us to Step Ten, which suggests we continue to take personal inventory.....”* and ending on page 85 with *“But we must go further and that means more action.”*

COMMENTS:

The matter of personal choice is a key issue in the recovery process. For the reader who has given thoughtful consideration to the first nine steps of the AA program, personal choice in Step Ten once again involves some basic issues guiding the life of an alcoholic.

Those issues require a decision whether **intelligence or emotion** will be the dominate force guiding the alcoholic when admitting a mistake. (pg 27). That decision will directly impact their actions and the consequences. It will help the alcoholic clarify the *primary purpose* of the set of *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which are guiding their life.

For any unthinking alcoholic, this can produce an **all or nothing** attitude about any mistakes in judging themselves. To *believe* you are **right or wrong** requires mental understanding and assumes *understanding* some established set of rigid rules which clearly define what is **“wrong”**.

Those rigid and inflexible rules only exist, on life’s terms as principles governing all life and no one is excluded. Those “*Laws of Life*” (i.e.: “*God’s Laws*”) **apply equally to everyone in the way they work. Neither science nor religion has all the answers. (pg 46).**

Within the infinite range of *the Great Reality* (i.e.: “God’s Universe”) there is only that limited understanding which has been acquired by human minds since the beginning of time. With this inadequate understanding, society has attempted to clarify and define what is **right** and what is **wrong** for individuals. This effort is the basis for the “*man-made laws*” to which alcoholics are held accountable. They may have been dictated by “*the Divine Right of Kings*” or democratically legislated by the “*beliefs of the majority*”.

Regardless of their origin, “*man-made rules*” are part of present time reality for every alcoholic. They may reflect wisdom or irrationality, and to make matters worse, those rules are constantly changing. By notable contrast, the principles which govern all

life are not subject to change. Improved cooperation with them is always possible, as they are understood.

For most alcoholics, society is a mix between some wisdom and some irrationality when determining right from wrong. The “moral values” governing the rules of society are neither total intelligence nor completely irrational emotion. Any conflicts the alcoholic has with society are usually a combination of both intelligent and emotional choices made by both society and the alcoholic. Improved understanding is required. (Step 11).

When continued survival is what the alcoholic most desires, (i.e.: “*their prayer*”), it is self-evident that “*moral values*” which produce “*intelligent results*”, are preferable to “*emotional choices*”. Irrational life-threatening decisions, when sufficiently severe, will qualify as insanity. (see Step 2). Any alcoholic who is completely governed by irrational emotional choices is usually placed under the control of others willing to assume intelligent responsibility for their life. When the same thing occurs with society, it usually takes longer.

Social leaders have historically relied upon various *belief systems* of different religions for guidance when making rules for behavior. (i.e.: “what is right and what is wrong”). Experience indicates this has usually been a mix between **intelligent understanding** and **emotional wishful thinking**. Then social conflict arises when individuals, do their own thinking and arrive at different conclusions or develop different conceptions of “*what is right and what is wrong*” (see pg 12).

The reader will note that social attitudes will change according to political or popular pressures. New rules do not necessarily reflect either intelligence, nor a sane society. However, as an individual, the alcoholic is obliged to deal with them as part of their reality. Improved understanding of *the Great Reality* is helpful when aligning unstable wishful thinking with stable principles which govern all of life, on life’s terms. (i.e.: “God & God’s Laws”).

Seeking personal improvement in this manner is *believed* to be more intelligent than “*blind conformance*” to any irrational rules created by “*unchecked authority*” or “*emotional mob rule*”. However, being held accountable in any society of questionable sanity remains a fact of life. The decisions of an alcoholic must take this into account regardless of how much intelligence or emotion is involved in their own choices.

When dealing with “*the rules*”, be they “*universal laws of life*”, or “*the best rules society could come up with at the time*”, eventually every alcoholic is obliged to make decisions and take actions either by choice or default. How much intelligence or emotion is involved has significant impact upon the outcome. This author *believes* that the use of intelligence is preferable when determining where it is appropriate to admit being “*wrong*”. (Step 10). Often an alcoholic can avoid being held accountable to society. However, as an equal (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”) the principles of all life have inescapable consequences.

Understanding all of them is not required, but any improved conscious understanding permits increased freedom to cooperate with them. (Step 11). This in turn

allows for increased personal *happiness, joy and freedom* as a natural consequence of being in cooperation instead of conflict with reality. (i.e.: “God”).

Those principles are “*the Laws of Life*” and are indifferent to the approval or disapproval of humanity. By contrast, the rules of society require human power for enforcement. (see pg 60(b)). Without the free and willing cooperation of the governed, this becomes a major difficulty in attempting to legislate morality because it seldom works effectively.

There is no requirement to enforce principles which are “*the Laws of Life*”. (i.e.: “*God’s Laws*”). **Life just is what it is, and works the way it works. Neither agreement nor conformity is an issue.**

This author suggests that the “*eternal conflict between good and evil*” occurs within the mind of the alcoholic. (pg 23). It involves their *fundamental idea of God* and the extent by which actual behavior is in agreement. (Step 10). The alcoholic is subject to both universal principles and man-made laws. There are consequences from both for decisions made and actions taken during this lifetime.

In AA, there is a very basic premise that “*what the alcoholic wants and what God wants are the same*”. This author *believes* this assumption is at the foundation of all desires, (syn: “prayers”), and motivates all decisions and actions.

“We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous and free.” (pg 133)

Most alcoholics do not require someone else (i.e.: “*equal in the eyes of God*”) to tell them if they are happy, joyous and free. What they frequently encounter instead is being told what they should want according to some “second-hand belief system”. Here is where use of their own inherent intelligence is required.

Principles are stable and reliable. Personalities are unstable and unreliable. Personalities change unpredictably and are often irrational. (Step 2). This includes those humans who are “*experts on God*”. Therefore, both intelligence and AA suggest the alcoholic choose a set of moral values which places *principles before personalities*. (see Tradition 12).

Establishing moral values for others as an authority on God’s will is a mental action which involves some irrational speculation and “*mind reading*”.

1. **I know what I think.**
2. **I believe I know what you think.**
3. **I believe I understand what you think I think.**

It occurs within the mind of alcoholics as well as other equal human beings, and is a reflection of their personality. (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*” - review pgs 12, 23, 27, & 55). However, improved understanding of the principles governing all life is available to anyone. (i.e.: “*God’s Laws*” - see pgs 53, 68, Steps 10 & 11). Understanding the mental

activities of another personality requires having all knowledge about that individual and what is best and right for them.

There is something fundamentally offensive about presuming the right to establish moral values for others. It is an assumption that “*those others*” lack the power to know if they are right “*like you do*”. It is irrational speculation to indulge in that kind of “*mind reading*”.

The only “*reality*” any individual can be certain “*they know*” is what exists within their own mind. Everything else is “*speculation and guesswork*” with a potential for error. Meanwhile, they can *believe* almost anything they want to believe. (review pg 23).

Spiritual progress occurs as the principles of life are understood. (see pg 55 & Step 11). Because those “*Laws of Life*” (i.e.: “*God’s Laws*”) are infinite, everyone lacks complete understanding. (pg 68). Every alcoholic stands at the threshold between infinite knowledge and infinite ignorance. What portion of reality is understood makes up the *personality* of an individual. When what is understood is not a *principle*, any dispute over “*right and wrong*” is equivalent to claiming

“*MY INSANITY IS SUPERIOR TO YOUR INSANITY*”.

This frequently happens with a society which itself is of questionable sanity. There is often **more emotion than intelligence** motivating the rules which society uses to establish “*what is good and what is evil*”. Many of those social rules get powered by speculation and claims of understanding how things should be. This results in wars being fought, and lives being lost over *strong emotional beliefs* of who is right and who is wrong.

To survive, the alcoholic has a need to assign *priority importance* to intelligence because many of the social rules get enforced with human power.

“*THIS IS HAPPINESS, AND THAT’S AND ORDER!*”

The use of intelligence is of *primary importance* when evaluating the consequences of conflicts between man-made rules for society and principles of life, on life’s terms. When making decisions which may violate either the “*Laws of Life*” or “*the laws of man*”, any alcoholic would do well to give intelligent thought to the question:

“*WHAT IS THE PENALTY FOR NON-COMPLIANCE?*”

A mind free of distortion from alcohol, is better equipped to enlarge a spiritual life and better deal with the certain trials and low spots ahead. (pgs 14-15). **It allows the alcoholic to intelligently choose how to cooperate with both *principles* and *personalities***. They both exist. They both require some understanding for the alcoholic to be *happy, joyous and free*.

This author *believes* a core issue in the recovery process is a need for the alcoholic to examine their fundamental *belief system*. Is their *primary purpose in life* being guided by intelligence or emotion? (see pg 23).

Every alcoholic has their own unique set of *ideas, emotions and attitudes* guiding their lives. (see pg 27). They include and become their *fundamental idea of God*. (pg 55). It is impossible for anyone to fully define or comprehend that Power. (pg 46). As a consequence, any *fundamental idea of God* is subject to both growth and error in how well it is understood. (pgs 42, 58, Steps 10 & 11).

The AA program suggests the alcoholic examine the *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which are the guiding forces in their lives. *Willingness, honesty and open mindedness* are indispensable for the *vital spiritual experience* required for their recovery. (see Appendix II).

The alcoholic who does examine their own thinking (i.e.: "*meditation*" see pg 23) decides if any portion is excluded from consideration. This points out any "*sacred cows*" in their *belief system* which they *believe* are not subject to change. Unfortunately, holding on to some of those *old ideas* may present an obstacle to recovery. (see pg 58).

Nowhere is that core issue more relevant than when applied to a "*fundamental idea of God*". A mistake in judgment can be critical to recovery and survival. It will also have a direct impact upon personal happiness, joy, and freedom. (see pgs 62 & 133). Therefore, observe what happens to your own mind, and nervous system when you give yourself permission to intelligently examine your emotionally established fundamental *beliefs* about God. (pg 55).

Observe the impact upon your mind and nervous system when you honestly pursue the possibility that what you *believe* about God could be mistaken. (review pgs 42, 58 & Step 10). Ask yourself what conditions would need to exist for you to really be mistaken?

If your *belief system* does not allow others equality for their different *beliefs*, (i.e.: "*in the eyes of God*"), what is the basis for claiming your version is superior? Now observe the mental confusion and emotional turmoil that arises when you try justify your belief with someone who disagrees and is your equal. This author suggests any conflict will be created by the intelligence in your own mind when it is confronting the emotional content of your *belief system*. (see pgs 23 & 55).

Consider what the meaning is to your own mind of the comment:

"We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous and
free." (pg 133)

and if it has been restricted to only those alcoholics who agree with your idea of God. (see pg 49). Other versions do exist. Any exclusion is not reality, but an illusion of *wishful thinking* which exists within your own mind. (pg 23).

The alcoholic reader, with an exclusive concept of God, cannot intelligently claim it to be either an open minded attitude or a principle with universal application. Instead, it must be branded as an unfounded, self-centered *belief* producing the erroneous conclusion that the only way of being *happy, joyous and free* is your way, and the way that *belief* exists in your own mind is “*the only right way to believe in God*”.(pg 62).

“Therefore, the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than in his body.” (pg 23)

“Much has already been said about receiving strength, inspiration, and direction from Him who has all knowledge and power.” (pg 85)

A *fundamental idea of God* is part of the *belief system* guiding the alcoholic (see pgs 27 & 55). When there is *willingness, honesty and open-mindedness*, the alcoholic will consciously apply that *belief system* to their relationships with life, on life’s terms. (see Steps 10 & 11). That *belief system* will either open up or limit any spiritual progress. (see pgs 14-15, 60, & Appendix II).

Therefore it is recommended that the alcoholic reader decide:

- 1. What the word “God” means to your mind.**
- 2. Do you *believe* your idea is the only valid version?**
- 3. What it would take for you to be mistaken.**
- 4. What will change if there is more?**

The above questions have direct bearing upon recognizing and admitting when you are wrong. (Step 10). **Should there be more to “God” than what you *believe*, then *new knowledge* may be required to improve understanding of a different and more intelligent set of *moral values*.** (review pg 27 & Step11).

Honest answers open up avenues of new thought. (“*Think, -Think, -Think*”). Some may lead directly to an enlarged and improved understanding of reality.

The result of discovering *new knowledge* is a new freedom to cooperate with “*what is and what is not*” life on life’s terms. Sanity is more likely to return if the power of *new knowledge* is sought with intelligence rather than wishful thinking. (pgs 83-84, 133 & Step 2). Of course this assumes that “*the power of God*” is both intelligent and sane.

“We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves.”
(pg 68)

Step Ten calls for *spiritual progress* by correcting errors in judgment about how to cooperate with life, on life’s terms. (i.e.: “God”). Steps One through Nine provided a foundation. If the alcoholic has really been painstaking about this phase of their development, they will have observed results. The “*promises*” (pgs 83-84) are likely to have materialized to some extent by now. Especially if there have been no limitations placed upon a search for “*truth, good and reality*”. (all syn: “God”).

With *willingness, honesty and open mindedness*, the alcoholic finds improved understanding of “*the Great Reality*” deep down within themselves. (see pgs 42, 55, 129, 161, 163, Step 11 & Appendix II).

“SOMETHING” RECOGNIZES “TRUTH, GOOD AND REALITY”.

That “*something*” is inherent intelligence. (review pg 55). It is the same part of the mind which allows an alcoholic to intuitively recognize the truth when told “*if you don’t take the first drink, you can’t get drunk*”. (see pgs 23 & 84). Understanding it is already “*a part of their make-up*”. (see pg 55). When an alcoholic uses that capacity for intelligent thought to improve their conscious contact with God, (i.e.: “*meditation*” - Step 11), then:

**THE THING THEY ARE LOOKING FOR IS
THE THING THEY ARE LOOKING WITH.**

Step Ten suggests continuing to take personal inventory and set right any new mistakes as we go along. (pg 84). *Spiritual progress* (pg 60) occurs because:

“We vigorously commenced this way of living as we
cleaned up the past. We have entered the world of the Spirit.”
(pg 84).

This new way of life contains a basic assumption that the alcoholic:

- 1. Has a problem with alcohol.**
- 2. Wants to do something about it.**
- 3. Wants to do something about it now.**

This author is assuming the alcoholic reader has already made those choices. Now there is more *new knowledge* which is being sought and it is always available from an endless supply. (see pgs 14-15, 35, 53, 60(c), 164, & Appendix II).

Acknowledging a problem exists involves the use of intelligence. (pgs 23 & 27). The strong desire to do something about it qualifies as a “*prayer*”. (Steps 3 & 11). Whatever power is able to fulfill that desire (i.e.: “*answer a prayer*”) is recognized by that

three-letter word “God”. The attributes assigned to that “*power of God*” include “*all knowledge and all power*”. (i.e.: “omniscience and omnipotence” - see pg 59).

To intelligently seek the power of fulfillment involves *willingness to consider something beyond the finite limits of what is now known. This requires honesty about accepting limitations in any existing belief system. In addition, open mindedness is necessary where a possibility exists that new knowledge might improve spiritual progress.* (see Appendix II, Steps 10 & 11).

Nowhere is this more mentally difficult than with “*an old idea of God*”. Strong emotional attachment often places this as being “*off-limits*” for intelligent examination. (pg 23). To avoid this mental block to recovery, it is strongly recommended any “*sacred cows*” be clearly identified and then re-evaluated in the light of intelligence.

WHAT THINKING DO YOU REFUSE TO INVESTIGATE?

Willingness to grow along spiritual lines is considered essential for continued recovery. (see pgs 14-15, 35, 60, 129, 164 & Appendix II). That desire (i.e.: “prayer”) must come from the alcoholic. No one else can decide what they want. (i.e.: “do their praying for them” - pg 58). As a result of their emotional refusal to intelligently examine old ideas, many alcoholics pursue their drinking into the gates of insanity of death. (pg 31).

However, those *moral values* have been known to change when continued survival is recognized to be at risk. (see pgs 12, 23, 27, & 42). Those alcoholics who completely give themselves to the simple program of recovery in AA, then have their work cut out for them. (pgs 58-60). They simply must:

“THINK - THINK - THINK”

“Our next function is to grow in understanding and effectiveness. This is not an overnight matter. It should continue for our lifetime.” (pg 84)

The necessary *spiritual growth* requires continual conscious contact with *the Great Reality* which is now identified as “God”. This author points out that involvement with “other alcoholics” is effective.

“Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when other activities fail.” (pg 89)

The desire to continually grow along spiritual lines is a personal *moral value*. It involves honestly answering the simple question:

“HOW SAFE DO YOU WANT TO BE?”

The power to make that choice is within every alcoholic, (pg 55), and will be made on the basis of whatever *belief system* is guiding their life. (pg 27). That *belief system* can be based upon intelligent experience or emotional wishful thinking. It can be based upon “*reality*” or some “*second-hand concept*” which is more fantasy than fact.

The alcoholic decides what they want to accept “as a daily gift from God”. (pgs 58 & 85). That choice determines both their actions and the results. What is your choice to be? (pg 53).

This author *believes* the most intelligent choice produces the best results. Any consequences are provided by life, on life’s terms. This happens to include human enforcement of “*man-made rules*” by a society of questionable sanity.

If results of “*man-made rules*” and a “*second-hand belief system*” do not provide personal *happiness, joy and freedom*, (i.e.: “God’s will - see pg 133) then the alcoholic has options. Either to change what they want (i.e.: “*what is prayed for*”), or consider a more basic recommendation of:

“*Why don’t you choose your conception of God?*”.
(pg 12).

There are many *fundamental ideas of God* available. The alcoholic really is free to choose any concept which “*answers their prayers*” to be “*happy, joyous and free*”. (i.e.: “*God’s will*” - see pgs 55 & 133). But, first they have to choose “*a concept of God*” which is acceptable within their own mind. (pgs 12, 23 & Step 11). What really matters about the choice are the results.

Principles do not show emotional favoritism to one group over another. To cooperate with those “Laws of Life”, (syn: “God’s Laws”), there is a continuing need for improved understanding of reality. (see Step 11). The AA basic text for recovery from alcoholism contains intelligent principles which work for anyone with a desire to stop drinking. (see pgs 46 & 58).

“Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us.”
(pg 164)

Those who accept that the only place they will find “*God*” is deep within themselves (pg 55) may recognize it is their own inherent intelligence which is their connection to “the power of all new knowledge”. (see pg 86).

Inherent intelligence within the alcoholic is able to recognize what is “*truth, good or reality*”. (syn: “God”). It is that capacity which allows an alcoholic to admit when they are wrong. (Step 10). Without knowing everything about everything, there is an

intelligently recognizable need to improve a conscious understanding of God.(Step 11). For any alcoholic who fears their faith in a “*second-hand belief system*” is being threatened, consider that:

**IF YOU LOSE SOMETHING TO THE TRUTH,
YOU HAVEN'T REALLY LOST ANYTHING!**

All of your “*old ideas*” will still be available anytime you choose to use them. Only you can decide what produces your version of being “*happy, joyous and free*” **now**. (pg 133). Those alcoholics who **are** experiencing “*the best available version of Gods will*” **now**, will have no conflict with *the Great Reality* of life, on life’s terms, **at this point in time**. There will be no unresolved problems with reality **for you**, and no intelligent basis for seeking any *new knowledge* to make any improvements. This will be “*your version of the best*”.

If this is true, then you already know how to be to be *happy, joyous and free*. However, other alcoholics may not yet enjoy that same level of *conscious contact* with “God” and may continue to experience problems in living *life on life’s terms*. Those with a desire (i.e.: “*prayer*”) to “*trade up*” to something better than they have now, may wish to seek *new knowledge* from the source to provide them with relief from their problems. (pg. 60 a-c).

“When we saw others solve their problems by a simple reliance upon the Spirit of the Universe, we had to stop doubting the power of God. Our ideas did not work. But the God idea did.” (pg 52)

This brings those readers to the next step, which enlarges the search for knowledge and understanding of *the Great Reality*.

“Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.” (Step 11)

* * * * *

SECTION B06p:

Chapter 6

INTO ACTION

STEP ELEVEN:

“Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.”

READ:

Page 85, beginning with “*Step Eleven suggests prayer and meditation.*” through Page 86 ending with “*After making our review we ask God’s forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken.*”

COMMENTS:

With Step Ten, the alcoholic has considered *willingness, honesty and open-mindedness* to examine any “*sacred cows*” in their *belief system*. By now, they have either chosen to use, or not use their own inherent intelligence. They either do or do not *believe* some areas of their thinking are exempt from any possibility of error.

Some alcoholics consider using intelligence is preferable to blind emotional dependence upon *beliefs* created in other human minds.

This choice very specifically encompasses their fundamental idea of the word “*God*” and what that “*three-letter word*” means to their own mind. (review Appendix II, pgs 42, 49, 55, & 164).

The concept that *new knowledge*, obtained from the source of all knowledge, (i.e.: “*God*”), can improve anything now known is a basic element of Step Eleven. It includes a willingness to seek more ways to be *happy, joyous and free*. (see pg 133). Those who are not willing to seek *spiritual progress* have already read too much. (review Appendix II quote of Herbert Spencer). Exposure to *the Great Reality* of life, (syn: “*God*”) will have already sown seeds of doubt. (pg 164). Conscious awareness of “*truth, good and reality*” will probably have undermined any erroneous or closed minded *belief system*.

This author has made a more than reasonable effort to alert alcoholic readers to the potential for emotional conflicts for those who restrict their thinking to their traditional religious faith. Those who have decided to read on, despite warnings, are still perfectly free to hold on to their *old ideas* if they choose. Any alcoholic can *believe* anything they “*want to believe*”. It is not even necessary their *belief system* make intelligent sense to their own mind.

**IT IS YOUR MIND, AND YOU CAN DO ANYTHING
WITH IT YOU WANT, - CANT YOU?**

This author has attempted to point out what has been found within the AA basic text for recovery from alcoholism. The interpretation is individual, and anyone is free to disagree. After all, improving your own conscious understanding is the key issue. In the final analysis, it is results which are important..

“Those having religious affiliations will find here nothing disturbing to their beliefs or ceremonies. There is no friction among us over such matters.” (pg 28)

It is the sincere desire of this author that the alcoholic reader will find their own version of *happiness, joy and freedom* in whatever manner works best for them.

In the AA program, **words** are used to express thoughts and ideas. Every alcoholic needs to clearly define the meaning, to their own mind, of whatever terms are used. Be aware that the popular common meaning of many words will change from the “*official meaning provided by authorities*” such as “Webster”. What do the words related to recovery mean to your mind? Other minds find other meanings which may differ from your own. After all, it is your own understanding that you will use in your own life.

“THINK THINK THINK”

Here are **key words** used in Step Eleven. The following thoughts may be useful in arriving at your own definition.

- ?? **“Sought”** - implies open-mindedness to something you want and have not yet found.
- ?? **“through”** - a path that takes you from where you are to where you want to go.
- ?? **“prayer”** - a mental request for fulfillment of a desire.
- ?? **“and”** - to include something else.
- ?? **“meditation”** - thinking about thinking.
- ?? **“to improve”** - action to make something better than it already is.
- ?? **“conscious”** - mental capacity for awareness and recognition.
- ?? **“contact with”**- joining to eliminate separation.
- ?? **“God”** - all knowledge and all power. (pgs 53, 68, & 85)

- ?? “as we understood Him” - conscious knowledge of the infinite.
- ?? “praying only” - desiring something specific.
- ?? “knowledge of” - consciously understanding something.
- ?? “His will for us” - to be happy, joyous and free.
(NOTE: pg 133 in the basic text)
- ?? “the power to carry that out” - the “know-how” to do something.

With the above definitions, Step Eleven is acceptable to many alcoholics who previously experienced difficulties with traditional religious approaches to their sobriety. The reader may find them useful. This author recommends an open mind if the reader has a desire (syn: “prayer”) for a new way of thinking. If so, then “**do some thinking about your thinking**”. (syn: “meditation”). Improved thinking allows the alcoholic to better understand life, on life’s terms and make better choices. (i.e.: “seeking God”).

The personal interests of an alcoholic are best served by improved understanding of “the will of God”. (i.e.: “to be happy, joyous and free - see pg 133). **Thinking about thinking** (syn: “meditation”) **implies open mindedly seeking new knowledge from the source of all knowledge.** (syn: “God”).

This requires *willingness, honesty and open mindedness* to accept an “*educational variety*” of a *vital spiritual experience* required for recovery from alcoholism. Those having sudden and spectacular upheavals, in the nature of “*religious experiences*” may be exempted from these observations. (review Appendix II). It is also possible they may be the victims of their own wishful thinking. Only observing results will permit making that determination.

When approaching Step Eleven, consider what the basic text “*Alcoholics Anonymous*” has to say on this part of the program for recovery.

“Step Eleven suggests prayer and meditation. We shouldn’t be shy on this matter of prayer. Better men than we are using it constantly. It works, if we have the proper attitude and work at it. Yet, we believe we can make some definite and valuable suggestions.”
(pgs 85 & 86)

Here is where the *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which have been utilized during the day are examined by the inherent intelligence within the alcoholic.

“When we retire at night, we constructively review our day.....What could we have done better?” (pg 86)

This is based upon an assumption the alcoholic wants intelligent rather than emotional direction in their life. If our choices were not intelligent, we consider what we might have done to produce improved results. Once again, that desire is an individual choice. (i.e.: “prayer”).

These are all mental actions which require **thinking about thinking** and is part of a process of **meditation**. It can become a practical technique when seeking to draw upon intelligence **not previously utilized at a conscious level**. (see pgs 60(c) & 85-87). This requires practice to enlarge effectiveness when making *spiritual progress* toward self-improvement. (review pgs 14-15, 23 & Step 12).

THOSE WHO KNOW BETTER DO BETTER

But, to what end does an AA member make an effort to enlarge their spiritual life? In addition to personal survival, the basic text for recovery contains the following:

“Our real purpose is to be of maximum service to
God and the people about us.” (pg 77)

“Therefore, we do not do anything which would
diminish our usefulness to others.” (pg 86)

This admonition **not** to diminish usefulness is worthy of special consideration. It contains the very basic and self-evident recommendation of:

NO SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS!

This includes choosing *ideas, emotions and attitudes* about a personal relationship to “God”.(see pgs 12 & 59).

Here are some of the implications this author has noted:

- 1. A real purpose of service, assumes something we can do has value to God and the people about us.**
- 2. If “*God is everything*”, that is “*life on life’s terms*”. (pg 53)**
- 3. The people about us are all “*those others*” with whom we have contact.**
- 4. We have a choice to reject what would diminish our usefulness.**

5. Any choice is limited by what we know. There is more.
6. *Ideas, emotions and attitudes make up our belief system.*
7. Our personal *belief system* exists within our own mind.
8. To “ask God’s forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken” is thinking about our own thinking. (pg 86).
9. What we seek, find and understand, is mental action which all occurs within our own mind. (pg 23 & Step 11).

The inherent intelligence to recognize “*truth, good, and reality*”, (all syn: “God”) is a fundamental quality of every man, woman and child. (pg 55). The choice to ignore it (i.e.: “*remain ignorant*”) instead of seeking *new knowledge* from the source, (pg 60(c)) is a decision made by the mind of the individual alcoholic.

“We found the Great Reality deep down within us.”
(pg 55)

It is self-evident that “*obviously you cannot transmit something you haven’t got.*” (pg 164). This applies to your own consciousness contact with “God, as you understand Him.”

“Deep down in every man, woman and child is the idea of God.In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found.” (pg 55)

“We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us. Ask Him in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the man who is still sick. The answers will come, if your own house is in order. But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven’t got.” (pg 164)

“Much has already been said about receiving strength, inspiration, and direction from Him who has all knowledge and power.” (pg 85)

With recognized repetition, this author once again suggests that:

**THE THING YOU ARE LOOKING FOR IS
THE THING YOU ARE LOOKING WITH**

Consider this in the light of your own intelligence. (review pgs 12, 55 & 60(c)). This author is suggesting every alcoholic, regardless of

their belief system, has a direct and personal relationship to “a power greater than themselves”.

The alcoholic has the capacity to recognize something as being **true**. (i.e.: “*God is Truth*”). They also have the ability to acquire *new knowledge* about something not previously understood. (pg 23). When this capacity is developed, it allows for improved understanding of infinite intelligence (syn: “God”) and the power of that *new knowledge*. (see pgs 53, 68, & 86).

As an example:

An alcoholic is puzzled by the problem of getting drunk when they had not intended to do so. Then “*the light comes on*” when an AA member suggests to them:

***“IF YOU DON’T TAKE THE FIRST DRINK,
YOU CAN’T GET DRUNK”***

and their own mind says “*now I see - now I understand*”

Some alcoholics refer to this action of the mind as a “**spiritual experience**”. Others may simply consider it as being “**a moment of clarity**”. Religious people may refer to the revelation of *new knowledge* as “*the light of God*”. Cartoons frequently show “*a light bulb*” over the head of their enlightened character.

At the core is *new knowledge* and improved conscious understanding of *the Great Reality*. (syn: “God” - see pg 55 & Step 11).

Regardless of the approach, the mental action occurs within the mind of the alcoholic seeking recovery. It is conscious awareness and understanding of some new element of *the Great Reality* which was previously not available to be used by their own conscious mind. (see pgs 23, 53, 55, 59, 60(c), 164 & Appendix II).

NEW KNOWLEDGE IS NEW POWER

When viewed from that perspective, this author has reached certain conclusions:

- 1. The idea of “God” exists in your mind.**
- 2. Your mind has the capacity to learn *new knowledge*.**
- 3. *New knowledge* is new power.**
- 4. “God” is the source of all knowledge and all power.**

5. *New knowledge of reality improves understanding “God”.*
6. **Mistakes produce conflict with reality.** (i.e.: “God”).
7. **Seeking reality provides relief from mistakes.**

This author recognizes the foregoing conclusions depart drastically from the teachings of many traditional religions. Some “*expert authorities*” claim the knowledge and the power of God exists somewhere else. The book “*Alcoholics Anonymous*” suggests that the only place to find *the Great Reality* is deep down within yourself. (see pgs 12, 23, 55 & 164). **What is your choice to be? (pg 53).**

There is no desire to dissuade anyone from following their chosen faith if that is what they want to believe. There is specific intent to point out that other and different viewpoints exist. The alcoholic has the inherent intelligence to recognize what works, and is always free to accept or reject any concept of God they choose. (see pg 12).

It should be noted that an erroneous *belief system* does not change the Ultimate Reality of life, on life’s terms.

“I NEVER MADE A MISTAKE BEFORE, BUT THIS MIGHT BE ONE!”

When accepting or rejecting a *fundamental idea of God*, using your own intelligence, will be limited to how much of reality (i.e.: “God”) is part of your conscious understanding. (see Step 11). This principle has equal application to any of the *authoritative spokesmen* for traditional religions. More will be revealed. (pg 164).

In choosing what to accept or reject, consider if your **primary purpose**, is “*to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety*”. If so, the success rate of AA is unsurpassed. Any alcoholic who places priority on seeking that result during this lifetime is recommended to:

LIVE ONE LIFE AT A TIME

* * * * *

SECTION B06q:

Chapter 6

INTO ACTION

STEP ELEVEN:

“Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.”

READ:

Page 86, beginning with “*On awakening let us think about the twenty four hours ahead.*” Step Eleven suggests prayer and meditation.” through Page 88 and the end of Chapter 6.

COMMENTS:

The alcoholic reader has been asked to keep an open-mind about their relationship to a power greater than themselves and consider new ideas. Some old ideas have been around for a very long time, without producing significant results for alcoholics. (pg 42).

By contrast, the approach outlined in AA’s basic text for recovery, has cut across all barriers separating a wide variety of human *belief systems*. In a word, AA has had universal application and universal success.

The word “*God*” is used to define the source of “*all power*”. (pg 58). That same *three-letter word* is also used to describe an endless supply of *new knowledge*. This includes all and everything which is *the Great Reality* of life on life’s terms. (syn: “God” - see pgs 55, 60(c) & Step 11).

Innumerable interpretations have already been made concerning the nature and the characteristics of that power which is called “*God*”. Strong emotional prejudices surround many traditional approaches, with some claiming they have the only correct interpretation.

By notable contrast, the AA approach to recovery from alcoholism began with the novel idea:

“Why don’t you choose your own conception of God?” (pg 12)

This was followed by a moment of mental clarity and recognition that:

“It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a Power greater than myself. Nothing more was required of me to make my beginning.” (pg 12)

As an equal human being in relation to that creative power, nothing more is required. Any alcoholic can make a beginning in their recovery process. (see pg 46). When an alcoholic receives “*the gift of life*” as a daily reprieve from oblivion, (see pg 85), they acquire equal access to infinite new knowledge of reality. (i.e.: “*God’s power*”). What they do with it is what they choose to do with it.

This concept is of special importance to alcoholics who have difficulties conforming with many traditional religious versions. It provides a new freedom and a new happiness. (pgs 83 & 133). Alignment of their life with “*the will of God*” is not limited to what is put forth by spokesmen for any religious *belief system*. (see Tradition 3, “the Long Form”).

One purpose of this Study Guide is to point out to the alcoholic reader that other, and equally valid concepts, are producing successful results. This simple truth produces relief for many alcoholics who have conflicts with some of the more traditional ideas about “*God*”. (see pgs 23, 60(b) & 95).

It is suggested the alcoholic reader consider that:

- 1. The word “God” is defined as the source of all knowledge and all power.**
- 2. Knowledge is power.**
- 3. Both “God” and “Knowledge” are infinite and are interchangeable terms as a source of power.**
- 4. If knowledge is infinite, then ignorance is also infinite.**
- 5. “Self-knowledge” is finite and limited.**
- 6. Seeking “more knowledge” is equivalent to seeking “more God”.**
- 7. “Improving conscious understanding of God” by seeking “more knowledge of reality” enlarges a spiritual life.**
- 8. Enlarging a spiritual life is essential to recovery.**

When viewed from this perspective Step Eleven acquires new meaning. Enlarging a spiritual life is an essential part of the process for continued recovery from alcoholism. (see pgs 14-15, 35, 42, (60(c), 129, 164, & Appendix II).

Part of the process is that a new attitude develops of being grateful for what is already understood about reality. (i.e.: “*God*” - see pg 27 & Step 11). This becomes coupled with a desire (i.e.: “*prayer*”) to constantly seek more improvement. (review Appendix I, & Tradition Twelve - “the Long Form”).

For many alcoholics, Step Eleven opens their mind to new thinking about the power they call “*God*”. The AA program, works for just about any alcoholic who is

willing to thoroughly follow a specified path. (pg 58). The only requirement is their desire (syn: "prayer") to stop drinking. Universal application is the principle element of AA which differentiates it from traditional approaches.

THERE IS NO SECOND REQUIREMENT FOR MEMBERSHIP IN AA.

Some alcoholics *believe* they must be something, other than who or what they are, in order to get sober in AA. This is not necessary, and any alcoholic who is capable of being honest with himself can recover. (pg 58). It is well to remember that by taking certain steps, there are results promised for anyone, and they occur during this lifetime. (see pgs 83-84).

In AA, there are no creeds, nor *statements of belief* such as define many traditional religious *belief systems*. Instead, AA provides access to "*a concept of God*" that produces recovery, and is open to anyone who wants it. On the premise that the inherent intelligence of the alcoholic is capable of recognizing results, anything else *believed* about the power is left to the individual.

The idea that infinite knowledge and power (syn: "God") can be successfully sought and found within the mind of an alcoholic, represents a drastic change in thinking for many. It represents a *new idea* concerning their mental processes. (pg 23 & Appendix II). Many alcoholics have avoided or never considered this freedom and the responsibility which accompanies it. (pgs 83, 129 & Appendix II).

"THINK, THINK, THINK"

Many alcoholics automatically reject any concept which requires them to accept personal responsibility for erroneous decisions. Especially if their old *belief system* allows them to "*blame God*" when anything is not to their liking. Those alcoholics have chosen a set of *ideas, emotions and attitudes* by which to guide them in "*their blameless life*". (see pg 27).

Fortunately other approaches exist for alcoholics who seek reality. (i.e.: "God"). In fact, there are an abundance of different *belief systems* available from which to choose. What really matters for the alcoholic are the results.

Using their different views of life, on life's terms, the *primary purpose* of both religion and science, when dealing with alcoholism, is to produce results. One approach focuses primarily upon "*the answer*" and offers a "*reward*" in some next experience. The other searches for "*the final answer*" which can be defined and understood during this lifetime. Somewhere between science and religion, AA has been able to provide "*a answer*" that produces results now, but leaves the final word on alcoholism open for change and improvement by the introduction of *new knowledge*.

"We have no monopoly on God; we merely have an approach that worked with us." (pg 95)

"Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us." (pg 164)

“Most of our experiences are what the psychologist William James calls the “educational variety” because they develop slowly over a period of time.” (Appendix II)

“There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance--- that principle is contempt prior to investigation.”

---Herbert Spencer
(Appendix II)

Neither science nor religion can claim to have created the principles which govern all life, on life’s terms. They merely examine them and arrive at conclusions, based upon their limited knowledge and understanding. (Step 11).

When recovery is the *primary purpose* of an alcoholic in this lifetime, there is no intelligent purpose served by arguments over some future experience. There is no intent here to debate the issue of what happens to any alcoholic after this lifetime. The AA program enables alcoholics to retain any *belief system* which is acceptable to their own mind. (see pg 23).

“Those having religious affiliations will find here nothing disturbing to their beliefs or ceremonies. There is no friction among us over such matters. (pg 28).

If what an alcoholic *believes* really is true, (syn: “God”), then what they now *believe* will not be changed by the AA program. If, however, it is a *mistaken belief* then it will still not agree with *the Great Reality* (syn: “God”) no matter how much they want it to. Seeking *new knowledge of reality* (i.e.: “*improved conscious contact with God*” - Step 11), often exposes mistakes to the alcoholic by use of their own intelligence. (pg 55 & 86).

The point being made here is that there is always more.

**WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE WHAT YOU KNOW,
IF WHAT YOU KNOW IS NOT SO?**

When there is a conflict with reality, (i.e.: “*with God’s laws*”) , the best of “*good intentions*”, do not change the facts of life, on life’s terms. The alcoholic either has sufficient knowledge or else they do not. A mistake remains a mistake regardless of how sincerely the alcoholic intended to cooperate with reality. (syn: “God”).

**WHAT DIFFERENCE IS IT HOW SINCERE YOU ARE
WHEN YOU MAKE THE WRONG DECISION?**

Actions which follow an erroneous decision impact the happiness, joy and freedom of the alcoholic. Mistakes in a *belief system* about a personal relationship to *the Great Reality*, (syn: “God”), are directly related to the results produced in their life.

Principles for living in the basic text of AA, provide the alcoholic who is not happy, joyous and free (i.e.: “God’s will for them” see pg 133) with a practical way to correct personal errors in judgment. (review pgs 83-84, & 133). **Once again, the reader is alerted to the fundamental difference between “a way that works” and dubious claims of “the only way to do something”. The significant difference is open-mindedness.**

This Study Guide attempts to point out that *new knowledge* is revealed to the mind of the alcoholic seeking it. (see pgs 23, 55 & 60(c)). **Regardless of what is now known, there is more to be revealed. (pg 164).**

Early members of AA discovered a need to continually *enlarge their spiritual life*. (see pgs 14-15, 35, 60(c), 95, 98, 129, 133, 153, 158-159, 161, 163-164, & Appendix II). . The way they think determines what they do and what happens to them. They had to work on their own thinking by *meditating* on what had an impact upon their own choices. (pgs 23, 84, 86-87 & Step 11). This author *believes* any alcoholic must eventually accept responsibility for their own decisions.

It is recognized that other opinions exist, but nonetheless, reality for the alcoholic is that although:

**YOU ARE NOT THE INFINITE POWER OF GOD,
YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR GIVING IT DIRECTION.**

In AA, there is no suggestion that alcoholics are victims who are being manipulated without any freedom of choice about what happens in their own life. Any alcoholic reader with such a *belief system* may find it worthwhile to consider where they got that idea.

This author *believes* the reader has endless opportunities to cooperate with *the Great Reality*, (syn: “God” see Step 11) and make improvements in their life. (see pg 133). The use of *intelligence* is important for those who prefer their personal *belief system* to be compatible with *the Great Reality*. (i.e.: “God”- pg 55). Swallowing, “*hook, line and sinker*” the “*second-hand beliefs*” of others is not considered a particularly intelligent choice.

Any alcoholic is free to retain any *belief system* they choose. Some may try to avoid responsibility for mistakes by trying to hold on to old ideas. (see pg 58). That option exists, even when that *belief system* does not produce results.

Remember, however, that compared to “*Alcoholics Anonymous*”, no other approach has yet produced any equivalent number of recoveries.

If recovery is what they desire the most, the alcoholic is advised to use *intelligence* when selecting “*a concept of God*” that will produce results during this lifetime. (i.e.: “*the answer to their prayer*”).

Any “*concept of God*” used in recovery is a personal choice. (pg 12). It involves mental action expected to be in harmony, balance and compatibility with life, on life’s terms.(pg 23). *The Great Reality* of life is not going to change to fit any finite human “*concept of God*”. That is the **truth**. That is **reality**, and it is a **good** idea to cooperate with “*the will of God*” whenever possible. (see pg 133).

WHAT IS, IS; - WHAT IS NOT, IS NOT!

There is nothing known to improve upon an experience of complete harmony, balance and cooperation with *the Great Reality* **now**. (syn: “God”). That would be the preferred choice of most alcoholics, with only lack of knowledge standing in the way of claiming it. (pgs 45, 85 & 133).

There is always personal freedom to reject what is life, on life’s terms. The discord and imbalance may occur from stubborn resistance, or because of ignorance. **Why** any alcoholic might choose to resist reality has no bearing upon the consequences. An intelligent alcoholic will recognize a mistake as a mistake. With principles it does not matter why, because the results will be the same.

This author contends that personal happiness, joy and freedom (i.e.: “*God’s will*” - see pg 133) is measured by the amount of conflict with reality. With greater understanding the alcoholic improves the alignment of their life with “*the Will of God*”. (see pg 133). Improved results are experienced as better choices get made.

“We can exercise our will power along this line all we wish. It is the proper use of the will” (pg 85)

To continue being happy, joyous and free, the alcoholic needs continually to seek *new knowledge* they do not yet understand. (pgs 14-15, 35, 60(c), 85, 129, 164 & Appendix II). This requires them to constantly improve upon their conscious awareness of *the Great Reality* which is life, on life’s terms. (Steps 10 & 11). During that process, some of their old *ideas, emotions and attitudes* may need to be displaced and rearranged for this *vital spiritual experience*. (pgs 27 & 42).

The power to make intelligent decisions and choose actions of cooperation with “*the Great Reality*” (i.e.: “God”), is something the alcoholic has deep within themselves. (pgs 55 & 85). **In an ever-changing universe, it is necessary to constantly *enlarge that spiritual life to maintain* recovery from alcoholism.** (pgs 14-15, 35, 129, 164, & Appendix II).

This author suggests that seeking improved understanding of an infinite universe and the infinite supply of *new knowledge* available in it is a valid concept of seeking ‘God’. (pgs 12 & 55, 60(c) & Step 11). Furthermore, that as conscious understanding is improved, there is relief from conflicts which occur in the mind of the alcoholic. (pgs 23, 53, 55, & 68).

“When we saw others solve their problems by a simple reliance upon the Spirit of the Universe, we had to stop doubting the power of God. Our ideas did not work. But the God idea did. (pg 52)

A simple approach to the “*idea of God*” can be found in the basic text of AA, which works where traditional religious efforts have failed in the past. The early members offered their experience to any alcoholic who was interested in what they had done to recover.

“When we became alcoholics, crushed by a self-imposed crisis we could not postpone or evade, we had to fearlessly face the proposition the either God is everything or else He is nothing. God either is, or He isn’t. What was our choice to be?” (pg 53)

This becomes a turning point where each alcoholic makes their own decision. It is “*the essence of surrender*”, and involves a desire (syn: “prayer”) for protection and care with complete abandon. (see pg 59).

Consider that self-protection is sought (i.e.: “prayed for”) by seeking *new knowledge* and a better understanding of reality. This allows for improved cooperation instead of resistance to *the Great Reality*.

With “*a caring concept of God*” that wants the alcoholic to be *happy, joyous and free*, (see pg 133), this is also what the alcoholic wants. (syn: “*their prayer*”). With that attitude it is easier to let go of any blocks, barriers or obstacles with complete abandon. (i.e.: “*Let Go and Let God*” - see pgs 27 & 58).

By changing their dominant desire, (i.e.: “prayer”), the alcoholic displaces and rearranges *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which had been guiding forces in their life. (pgs 12, 23, 27, & Appendix II). They get replaced by a new set which are more in harmony, balance, and compatibility with *the Great Reality* of life, on life’s terms. (syn: “God”). As a natural consequence of making that ***elegant choice***, the alcoholic experiences increased happiness, joy and freedom.

This author finds such mental action to be a reasonably intelligent and understandable description of a *vital spiritual experience* required for recovery from alcoholism. (pg 27). It provides direct access to an infinite source of power which is all the available *new knowledge* about *the Great Reality*.(pgs 53. 55 & 68).

If “*God’s will for the alcoholic*” is to be happy, joyous and free (pg 133) then that is also what the alcoholic desires. (i.e.: “*prays for*” - see Step 11). “The power to carry it out” requires an attitude of *willingness, honesty and open mindedness* to accept life as it is on a daily basis. (pg 85 & Appendix II).

“Faith without works was dead, he said. And how appallingly true for the alcoholic! For if an alcoholic

failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, he could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead. If he did not work, he would surely drink again, and if he drank, he would surely die. Then faith would be dead indeed. With us it is just like that.” (pgs 14-15)

This author *believes* the alcoholic is faced with a serious choice of priorities. Either to hold on to a limited idea of God, or to let it go and intelligently “*trade up*” to a concept that demonstrates superior results.

Holding onto old ideas, and refusing to recognize demonstrated results is a closed-minded attitude. (review Appendix II). For those accepting that “*God is everything*”, (pg 53), any “*contempt prior to investigation*” of anything outside of their chosen *belief system*, is “*self-will run riot*” equivalent to a **rejection of God**. (see pg 23 & Appendix II).

Because, as far as anyone knows, none of the principles governing life, on life’s terms have changed, then for practical purposes the alcoholic would be choosing conflict with *the Great Reality*. To consciously choose conflict with reality certainly qualifies to be considered as “*insanity*”. (pg 38).

Any serious decision about priorities is between two alternative options. Both provide *ideas, emotions and attitudes* as guiding forces. (see pg 27). One is a “*second-hand package deal*” created, developed and promoted by others for reasons which may not yet be understood. (review Tradition 11). The other approach to “*a power greater than ourselves*” requires the alcoholic to use their own “*God-given inherent intelligence*”. (pg 86). The mental attitude of the alcoholic will then become one of either:

1. DON’T BOTHER ME WITH FACTS, BECAUSE I’VE ALREADY GOT MY MIND MADE UP ABOUT GOD

OR OF

2. RECEIVING STRENGTH, INSPIRATION AND POWER FROM HIM WHO HAS ALL KNOWLEDGE AND ALL POWER. (pg 85)

Only the alcoholic can determine what has *priority importance* in their own life.

Though religious convictions may be very good, for those who have the mind of a chronic alcoholic, they do not spell the necessary *vital spiritual experience* required for recovery. (see pg 27).

Others may speculate and desire to be helpful. Some may plead, coerce, threaten, and even *trespass* into the life of an alcoholic, without ever having been invited to do so.

Nonetheless, only the alcoholic really knows their own motivation for involvement in the AA recovery process. For those who have not yet experienced any life-threatening consequences from drinking, consider that:

**YOU CAN BE MOTIVATED BY INSPIRATION
INSTEAD OF BY DESPERATION.**

A careful examination of your motives is recommended. This will provide a way to measure progress and success. Without a conscious understanding of your true motives it is difficult to recognize if your prayers are being answered.

**WHY BOTHER TO PRAY FOR SOMETHING IF YOU ARE
NOT WILLING TO ACCEPT IT WHEN IT IS GIVEN TO YOU?**

Others usually become involved in the recovery process of an alcoholic. If possible, it is useful to also identify their motives. What you want and what they want you to want may not be the same.

WHAT IS THEIR PRIMARY PURPOSE?

When the principle of equality (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”) is being rejected by someone with a desire to “*do good all over the alcoholic*”, then conflict is inevitable. This author is grateful to have survived some well-intentioned individuals “*who only wanted to be helpful*”.

When considering advice about choosing a concept of God, it is prudent to ask *militantly religious members* about their primary purpose.

QUESTION:

“Is your primary purpose to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety?”

OR IS IT TO

“Convert others to your personal belief system about God?”

Careful attention to the difference may avoid wasting precious time by taking your life in a direction you do not consciously choose to go.

Most religions provide useful recommendations. Some provide *ideas, emotions and attitudes* to improve living during this lifetime. Take fullest advantage of anything beneficial whenever possible. (pgs 87 & 89).

Recognize that just because their spokesmen may be right about some things does not mean they are right about all things. It is also worth thoughtful consideration for any alcoholic to clarify how, in their own mind, another human being became an authority to them. (see pg 23).

Be aware that:

SHARING EXPERIENCE AND SHARING BELIEFS ARE NOT THE SAME

Direct experience can satisfy intelligence. However a *belief system* is an emotional desire that things be a certain way. “It *taint necessarily so!*”.

The *beliefs* of one individual are just as valid as those of any other until backed by experience. The experience may only be “the answer to a prayer for fulfillment of a *personal preference*”. It may also be “the revelation of *new knowledge*” which is compatible with principles which govern reality.

Either way, you don't know unless you know. That would require conscious understanding of reality, (Step 11), based upon those principles of life, which can be used by anyone, anyplace, and at any time. **The best test of validity for any *belief system* is the extent by which it has universal application.** (i.e.: “*Principles before Personalities*” - see Tradition 12).

YOU DON'T KNOW UNLESS YOU KNOW

This author has concluded that it is more intelligent to give priority importance to practical experience based principles than any theological *belief system* based upon emotional wishful thinking and speculation.

Where “*the will of God is for the alcoholic is to be happy, joyous and free*”, (pg 133), a *belief* in anything less is “*self-will run riot*”. Especially when inherent intelligence indicates that constant improvement is available. An alcoholic already knows if they are *happy, joyous and free* with life, on life's terms now. (i.e.: “*experiencing God's will for them*” - see pg 133). No one else can decide if they want to enlarge their *spiritual life* to experience more of “*God's will*” in this lifetime.

The only time an alcoholic can experience the “*will of God*” is right here and right now. Anyone claiming experience with some subsequent lifetime has great difficulty demonstrating their *belief* with any intelligence.

Wishful thinking is always available to anyone. Any *belief system* which involves a “pay now and collect your reward later” concept of God is best left to those who are experts on that subject. First, however, consider how they became an authority in your mind. (pg 23).

Every alcoholic develops their own mental attitude about *new ideas* and *new knowledge* about *the Great Reality*. (i.e.: “God”). On a daily basis, every alcoholic is presented an infinite supply of fresh *new knowledge* in an ever-changing universe. (pg 85).

Direct personal experience is invaluable when developing a conscious understanding of what is and is not life on life's terms. (syn: "God").

This "*daily reprieve from oblivion*" is a constant opportunity for any alcoholic to **expand the horizons of their mind**. This "*gift of God*" allows them to gain freedom from the shackles of their own personal ignorance. (i.e.: "*ignoring of reality*" see pgs 53 & 68).

Enlarging a *vital spiritual life* gets accomplished by seeking more *new knowledge* from any source where valid information is available. (i.e. "*God, - the source*"). This "*power of knowledge*" can be obtained from others who already know more than you now know. The alcoholic is also free to go directly to the same source others got their "*know-how*".

Instead of accepting this daily opportunity for *spiritual growth*, many alcoholics try to *force-fit reality* to make it stay within the familiar boundaries of an old *belief system*. That way they do not have to consciously work at seeking *spiritual progress*. (pg 60, & 83-84).

A consequence of this mental laziness (syn: "*sloth*" see pg 23) is that:

"Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas
and the result was nil until we let go absolutely."
(pg 58)

When an alcoholic desires to be of maximum service to God and their fellows, (see pg 77), any opportunity for personal growth and improvement offers them a way to enlarged their spiritual life. Then personal experience becomes an invaluable asset to the alcoholic who still suffers. When given intelligent direction, the conscious understanding of self-destructive behavior, which had once been their biggest liability, now becomes one of their greatest assets.

"...the ex-problem drinker who has found this
solution, who is properly armed with facts about himself,
can generally win the entire confidence of another
alcoholic in a few hours. Until such an understanding is
reached, little or nothing can be accomplished."
(pg 18)

The alcoholic reader has no intelligent reason to "*throw out the baby with the bathwater*" by rejecting any religious *beliefs* which produce desired results. Many of them incorporate prayers which emphasize principles. Those prayers can be useful in recovery. After all, improved conscious awareness of the principles of life is precisely what is being sought. (i.e.: "*prayed for*").

Principles are reliable guides to living whether we like them or not. The manner by which they are discovered is not as important as the power provided from consciously understanding *new knowledge* of reality. (syn: "God" - see Step 11).

Many principles found within a *belief system*, get described by traditional religions as being "*God's Will*". For the alcoholic who is seeking an intelligent concept of God, it

makes good sense to recognize where religious people are right. (pgs 60(c), 87, 89 & 133).

Within that context, consider that:

- ? “prayer” **is seeking *new knowledge of the Great Reality.*** (i.e.: “understanding the will of God” - see pgs 55 & 133)

- ? “meditation” **is doing some thinking about that thinking**

“*THINK - THINK - THINK*”

On awakening, let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day. (pg 86)

“In thinking about our day we may face indecision. We may not be able to determine which course to take. Here we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision. (pg 86)

“What used to be the hunch or the occasional inspiration gradually becomes a working part of the mind.” (pg 87)

“If we belong to a religious denomination which requires a definite morning devotion, we attend to that also. If not members of religious bodies, we sometimes select and memorize a few set of prayers which emphasize the principles we have been discussing. There are many helpful books also.....Be quick to see where religious people are right. Make use of what they offer.” (pg 87)

Making *the elegant choice* will be choosing the thought or action which is in the best harmony, balance and compatibility with life on life’s terms. This author *believes* this to be synonymous with “*God’s will*” because it produces the most *happiness, joy and freedom at the time the choice is made.* (see pg 133).

As the alcoholic understands how to make better choices they put their own house in order. (see page 164). Those improved thoughts and actions (Step 11) came from some intelligent awareness the alcoholic finds deep down within themselves. This is where conscious contact and understanding of *the Great Reality* is found.

“In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found. It was so with us.” (pg 55)

Once again, this author points out and emphasizes the word “only”.

As this occurs, the alcoholic may suddenly realize that God is doing for them what they could not do for themselves by complete reliance upon *self knowledge* and their *old ideas*.(pg 84). Because they had lacked the power of the necessary valid *new knowledge*, they now consciously recognize that their previous level of understanding was both limited and inadequate. (review pgs 39, 42, 45, 129, 164, Step 11 & Appendix II).

As there is improved conscious understanding of reality, (i.e.: “*as we enlarge our spiritual life*” - pgs 14-15, 35 & Step 11) there is an accompanying awareness of personal limitations. There is conscious recognition and acceptance that any personal power is limited to only what is now known. (i.e.: “*self-knowledge*”-pg 39).

Mistakes get made because of what we erroneously believe we know, or that it is enough. Some of any chosen *belief system* may not be so. (see pg 23). With an *enlarged spiritual life* available, (Steps 10 & 11), it follows that there is opportunity for more improvement. (i.e.: “*more God*”).

HOW MUCH “GOD” DO YOU WANT IN YOUR LIFE?

By using their own inherent intelligence, the alcoholic gains freedom to place principles before personalities. (review Tradition 12 - The Long Form). This produces freedom from direction and control of countless different personalities, each with their own “belief system”. (pg 55). The use of inherent intelligence as equals, (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”- see pg 86) also provides freedom from repeating the same mistakes due to personal ignorance, or from “*blindly following*” the ignorance and mistakes of others.

“IT WORKS -- IT REALLY DOES”

This completes comments about Step Eleven. What comes next is Step Twelve and “*Working With Others*”.

* * * * *

SECTION B07a:

Chapter 7

WORKING WITH OTHERS

STEP TWELVE:

“Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.”

READ:

The first paragraph of Page 89, beginning with “*Practical experience shows*”, and ending with “*Remember they are very ill*”.

COMMENTS:

“Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when other activities fail.” (pg 89)

This is the fundamental message for recovery from alcoholism. When one human being helps another, the one helping also receives benefits. This is a **principle** discovered and rediscovered by thinking individuals over the span of human history and certainly is not new.

Recognition of this concept can be found in many religions as a guiding force for much of mankind since primitive times. What is unique in the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous is that this same message is presented in a manner which can be understood and effectively utilized by other alcoholics. The approach used by AA has been so effective it has been copied by countless other activities. Not because the idea is “a new moral discovery of something good”, but because “it works”.

The effectiveness of the AA approach to alcoholism is *new knowledge* because it does not require any “*special professional qualifications*”. This continues to baffle the “*helping professions*” who spend years studying theories only to be “*up-staged*” by the practical experience of ordinary individuals. Many are frustrated to observe success by “*non-professionals*” who lack their own years of textbook study in a particular discipline.

Reality (syn: “God”) has tutored the recovered alcoholic in a very specific manner outside of an academic setting.

Nothing however, could be of greater significance to the alcoholic who desperately desires to stop drinking. (i.e.: “*their dominant prayer*”). For the alcoholic who has clearly

recognized that continued drinking inevitably leads to premature death or confinement, their choice becomes simple.

**DO YOU WANT ANOTHER DRINK, OR WOULD YOU RATHER
STAY ALIVE AND BE ABLE TO CARRY YOUR OWN KEYS?**

The early members of AA understood this with clarity. Other alcoholics have recognized this from their own experience.

YOU CAN BE MOTIVATED BY INSPIRATION OR BY DESPERATION

Professionals provide services for a fee. While “*helping professions*” continue to grow, and increasingly use the practical experience of AA, they are nonetheless limited. Whenever monetary support from public funds is removed, the availability of their standardized and certified skills is severely restricted only to those who can their fees afford. Most professionals discontinue working with alcoholics when they are not paid for it. By contrast:

“Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought A.A. membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.”

(Appendix I -Tradition 3 - The Long Form)

**WHERE ONE ALCOHOLIC HELPS ANOTHER,
AS AN ACT OF GOOD WILL OF ONE HUMAN BEING FOR
ANOTHER, “MONEY WILL LOUSE IT UP”.**

If nothing else, there is loss of equality. After that, expectations and obligations get introduced and human equality (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*” -see Tradition 3 - The Long Form) disappears from the relationship. Any alcoholic who is also a “*defiant individualist*” will frequently experience difficulty accepting help from any “*superior authority*”.

After recognition that the AA approach to alcoholism produces the most successful results, there are broader implications. For those who have depleted their ability to pay for *professional services* either directly or indirectly, it is sufficient to point out that:

“There are no dues or fees for AA membership, we are self-supporting through our own contributions”

(AA Preamble & Tradition 7)

This has captured the attention of many social organizations, wishing to fulfill their own objectives, by attempting to get a “*free ride*” on the coattails of serious AA members. Innumerable methods have been tried by the judicial system to force alcoholics “*to want what they want them to want*”. There has been some measure of success, despite their diluting AA’s effectiveness by flooding AA meetings with unwilling participants. Eventually, only those who want sobriety stay.

AA provides a practical solution to a very real problem. For the individual who thinks they may have a problem with alcohol, there is an affordable solution. It is one which is already available, if that is their primary desire. (i.e.: “prayer”). Others, who are forced to attend AA unwillingly may have a firm *belief* that:

“I’M NOT REALLY AN ALCOHOLIC!!”

Only the alcoholic knows what really goes on within the confines of their own mind. While it may be emotionally disturbing or mentally confusing to others, the experience of this author is that if an alcoholic does not *believe* they have a problem, they usually drink again. (see pg 30). The alcoholic always knows what they think and if it makes sense to their own mind or can be confirmed with their own intelligence. That is where the alcoholic has a problem.(pg 23).

The core issue here is reconciling what the individual *believes* to be true with the Ultimate Reality of Life on Life’s terms. (syn: “God).

For those who want sobriety and are willing to go to any length to get it, (pg 58), working with others is a key factor in reconciling differences between ***beliefs* and reality**. To achieve personal recovery from alcoholism, AA clearly states:

“Our primary purpose is to stay sober and to help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety”
(AA Preamble)

This mutual enrichment, on the basis of human equality, involves helping others with no strings attached. It is an inseparable part of achieving sobriety and is at the very foundation of the AA program.

“Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us.”
(pg. 77)

The intelligent reason for an alcoholic to fully use that principle is not *financial gain*, nor to demonstrate *moral superiority*, (see pg. 95), but to obtain *practical results*. Despite the *beliefs* of some moralists, this author *believes* that:

**ALCOHOLICS ARE NOT “BAD PEOPLE” WHO NEED TO BE “GOOD”,
BUT “SICK PEOPLE” WHO NEED TO GET “WELL”.**

It is important for the alcoholic to be mentally clear about their *primary objective*. Is it to become **good**, or is it to **survive?** (i.e.: “*their dominant prayer*”- see pg 23).

For the alcoholic who wants to “*stay alive and carry their own keys*”, being of value and usefulness to others becomes “*enlightened self-interest*”. Helping others, with no strings attached, confirms a popular phrase about relationships.

“WHAT GOES AROUND COMES AROUND”.

The alcoholic, capable of being honest with themselves, will recognize they have little value or usefulness to anyone when “*dead*”, or “*dead-drunk*”. Without their own survival and freedom, nothing else follows. If an alcoholic enriches the lives of others when sober, this becomes a *fringe benefit*” to their own happiness, joy and freedom.

When helping alcoholics who want help, there is no attempt to destroy their human equality. (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”). Recognizing them “*as equal human beings*”, produces less fear, anger and guilt. This creates a new and different climate for living which is increasingly more comfortable for all concerned.

There is additional practical value in one alcoholic trying to help another alcoholic recover - *as an equal*. The alcoholic freely offering help recognizes their own value and usefulness to God and the people about them. (see pg 77). Even when demonstrated success is not accepted, this “*revelation*” (pg 164) tends to confirm that:

“....., the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind rather than in his body” (pg 23)

“Frothy emotional appeal seldom suffices. The message which can interest and hold these alcoholic people must have depth and weight.”
(see “The Doctor’s Opinion)

One main benefit derived from working with others is reinforcement of intelligent reasons for not drinking. Those reasons the alcoholic finds “*deep down within themselves*”. (see pg 55). When trying to help others, they become more firmly established. For example:

- 1. There is conscious awareness of the severity of the alcohol problem in the individual seeking help.** (Step 11).
- 2. The person offering help is aware of progress made in solving their own problem.** (pg 60 & Appendix II).
- 3. This awareness automatically reinforces intelligent reasons for continuing to stay sober.** (pg 87).
- 4. That choice becomes a dominate desire** (i.e.: “*prayer*” - Step 11).

5. ***New knowledge of how to have that desire fulfilled is then sought from the source of all knowledge and all power.*** (i.e.: “the answer to prayer”- pgs 59 & 60(c) & Step 11).
6. **With improved conscious contact with God, the alcoholic enlarges their own spiritual life.** (pgs 14-15 & Step 11).
7. **Though not cured, the alcoholic offering help gets a temporary reprieve from their own alcoholic insanity.** (pg 85).

Accordingly, a self-evident conclusion is that:

THE CHOICE TO WORK WITH OTHER ALCOHOLICS HAS PRACTICAL APPLICATION.

This author *believes* that once the phenomenon of craving has been dealt with, (see “The Doctor’s Opinion”), working with others is an intelligent and practical approach to recovery. This conclusion is based upon material found within the basic text for recovery from alcoholism. Other views exist.

Some alcoholic readers may desire something more in the form of a *spiritual experience*. If so, there are innumerable “*god clubs*” from which to choose. That choice is both personal, private and no one else will receive the benefits of adhering to that particular *belief system*.

This author emphasizes that there is always more *new knowledge* and intelligence to be discovered from an infinite source. (pgs 53 & 68). Any effort to discover more intelligence and knowledge is tantamount to seeking “*a power greater than one’s own self*”. It may come directly from the source or through other equal human beings. (i.e.: “*equal in the eyes of God*”).

New knowledge can be obtained from recovered alcoholics who demonstrate their experience. The experience may be what is desired or perhaps provide awareness of what is not desired. It is also significant to recognize that any alcoholic can independently go directly to the source of all *new knowledge*. (i.e.: “God”). Anything now known about reality had to come from some place.

“WHERE DID THE FIRST PERSON GO TO LEARN IT?”

For the thinking alcoholic, some serious ideas about human equality are worth consideration. Be aware of differences between **sharing and imposing**. When alcoholics “*share*” their experience, strength and hope, it is given freely and joyfully received. Inherent intelligence will recognize room to “*trade up*” to something more in line with their own best interests. It answers a prayer.

Any alcoholic offering “the secret of their success” will automatically reinforce their own intelligent reasons for continuing what they are doing. Meanwhile, the person seeking new knowledge gains the opportunity to enlarge their own range of choices by observing what works in others.

By contrast, information can be exchanged without *open-mindedness and equality*. As such, it is neither requested nor desired. (i.e.: “*not prayed for*”). It is then imposed upon an unwilling recipient by someone who has a *belief* in their personal superiority. In a word, this amounts to “*trespassing*” into their affairs without respect for their human equality. (see pgs 60-61).

In blunt terms, when someone decides to “do good all over an unwilling alcoholic” they are “playing God”.

Any alcoholic who imposes their belief system upon another creates a liability for themselves by reinforcing a *belief* of their own human inequality. In their own mind they are claiming *personal superiority*. (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*” - review pg 62). That decision to impose may ultimately benefit the person being trespassed upon, however any *false belief* in inequality will eventually clash with the truth. (syn: “*God as the Great Reality*” - see pg 55).

In notable contrast, a desire to share something of value appears to be a basic and natural urge of human beings. One person notices a beautiful sunset and almost spontaneously tends to point it out to another person. Then disrespect and trespassing can quickly and easily occur by insisting the other person agree with their own opinion of the beauty. Conscious awareness of this difference permits some alcoholics to avoid many problems they create by a belief of inequality in human relationships. (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”, review Step 11).

Awareness of this mental attitude has particular significance when **sharing or imposing** personal *beliefs* about “*a power greater than ourselves*”. Every individual has a fundamental set of *ideas, emotions and attitudes* about how best to guide their life. (i.e.: “*a fundamental concept of God*” -see pgs 27 & 55). Conflicts involving “*equality vs. superiority*” block personal happiness, joy and freedom. (i.e.: “*God’s will*” - see pgs 42 & 133).

Many alcoholics have difficulty recognizing there can be a difference between “God” and “their idea of God”. (see Step 10). Though religious convictions may be very good, they do not spell the necessary vital spiritual experience necessary for recovery from alcoholism. (pg 27).

Many different concepts of how best to deal with reality are offered by various different religions. Most are available to any alcoholic who **decides to choose** one of those *belief systems*. Some of those well established *ideas, emotions and attitudes* have guided much of mankind for centuries.

Being aware of differences in ways to enlarge a spiritual life can be critical. Especially for any alcoholic trapped in the “*closed loop*” of a limited *belief system*. They will naturally have problems accepting an “*open-ended concept*” of what the word “*God*” means to their mind. (pgs 12, 14-15, 35, 53 & 68).

The results of improved understanding will speak for themselves in terms of human happiness, joy and freedom, (i.e.: “*God’s will*” - see pg 133 & Step 11). The fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous has not created a “*new reality*”. Instead, AA has discovered a

way that works to produce successful results to solve a specific problem in a specific manner. (see pgs 58, 95, 164, & Appendix II). There is an attempt to share awareness of those principles of recovery, and make them available equally to any and all alcoholics who want what they have.

The principles for recovery from alcoholism are “Universal Principles”. They are not restricted to AA nor have any limitations beyond the desire (i.e.: “prayer”) of the individual to stop drinking.

THERE IS NO SECOND REQUIREMENT FOR SOBRIETY IN AA

This provides an intelligent explanation why religious convictions seldom produce the necessary *vital spiritual experience* required for recovery from alcoholism. (pg 27).

Most traditional religions have finite and limited definitions of what they are or are not. In their broader categories, one either is or is not - for example “a Buddhist”, “a Christian”, “a Moslem”, “a Jew” or something else. Each religion gets even more precisely limited and defined by their own sectarian boundaries. These limits can usually be found in their creed of what they *believe* about the word “*God*”. Any other ideas or concepts are excluded by them and are outside of that particular definition.

Different religious *belief systems* may get broad acceptance and political support in different geographical locations. However, those *ideas, emotions and attitudes* never can claim universal acceptance. They only have their own “*ethnocentric belief*” that there should be conformity. Strong emotions of morality rather than the use of intelligence provide the support for their *beliefs*. The fundamental nature of many religious *belief systems* is to “*pay now and collect later*”. They frequently promise benefits for compliance to occur in some other lifetime. Despite emotional arguments that they should, many alcoholics have difficulty intelligently believing unsubstantiated promises of delayed results.

By following the AA program there are immediate benefits which are readily recognizable. This is usually self-evident to an alcoholic who is most concerned with continuing to survive “in this lifetime”.

The measurable difference in any spiritual approach is the extent by which it has universal application. AA offers a practical and immediate solution to a specific problem. It is available to anyone with a desire to stop drinking.

By contrast, traditional religions usually require both agreement and conformity with their *belief system* before anyone is accepted into their “*god-club*”.

For the alcoholic bent upon survival, there is nothing else to accept or reject beyond life, on life’s terms. (i.e.: “*God*”). The Ultimate Reality of Life simply is what it is and works the way it works. Though religious *belief systems* may be partially correct, unfortunately many of those old ideas which attempt to explain *the Great Reality* are

limited and exclusive. As a consequence, they must reject any reality which does not fit within their particular *belief system*.

This rejection of reality is an impractical attitude which produces an unmanageable situation in life. (see Step 1). Such mental restrictions cannot be intelligently considered to be sane if they exclude some self-evident “facts of life”. (see pg 23 & Step 2). At a minimum, that attitude will produce isolation and conflict with reality.(i.e.: “God”). The conflict will inevitably disrupt personal happiness, joy and freedom (i.e.: “*God’s will*” - see pg 133).

Recognize that any defect is with the *belief system* rather than the individual alcoholic.

By replacing an erroneous and limited *belief system* with an attitude of *willingness, honesty and open mindedness* to accept *new knowledge* (i.e.: “*God’s power*”) there is relief from alcoholism. (pg 60(c)). It makes intelligent good sense for any alcoholic who wants to recover to be willing to let old ideas be replaced with what is *good, truth and reality* (all syn for “God”- pg 58 & Step 3).

“....., we had to fearlessly face the proposition that God is either everything or else He is nothing.”
(pg 53)

“We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves.”
(pg 68)

With this approach, suggested by AA, the alcoholic becomes increasingly aligned with *the Great Reality* of life on life’s terms. Such a personality change represents *spiritual progress* which results in a profound alteration in the alcoholic’s reaction to life. (see pgs 14-15, 60, & Appendix II).

This *vital spiritual experience* occurs within the mind of the individual alcoholic from recognition, acknowledgment and respect of *their own equality*. (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”). What is significant is awareness of *how any uniquely different physical body deals with alcohol*. (see “The Doctor’s Opinion” & pg 30). Then there follows a conscious understanding that an alcoholic is not better than nor less than his fellows. (see Step 11). Every human being has differences.

This author *believes* recognition, acceptance and respect of physical and mental uniqueness, *which exists in all human beings*, is an essential element in the success of the AA recovery process.

“No person likes to think he is bodily and mentally different from his fellows. Therefore, it is not surprising that our drinking careers have been characterized by countless vain attempts to prove we could drink like other people.”
(pg 30)

Personal attitudes which label the merits of individual differences exist in life and are inescapable. Liking or disliking that bit of reality (syn: "God") does not change the way life really is.

Reality (syn: "God") is the foundation upon which the AA solution to "a common problem" has been built. (pgs 53 & 68). AA has produced a solution which is universally effective, as demonstrated by how their approach to alcoholism has already crossed most of the boundaries that separate humanity.

With alcoholism, there is no noteworthy difference between a "Buddhist hang-over" and a "Baptist hang-over". The principles of the AA program work equally well in producing recovery with both. Boundaries of race, religion, language and culture produce finite groups with limited objectives.

There is no cause for alarm by any alcoholic who is intelligently committed to their religious *belief system* as the guiding force in their life.

Nothing in AA conflicts with whatever allows you to be happy, joyous and free now. (see pg 133). There may be more than what you now *believe* about the word "God". (see pgs 14-15, 35, 129 & Appendix II). The same principle applies to the non-religious as well. (pg 164). *Spiritual growth* is open and available to any alcoholic with a desire to stop drinking.

Anything else is secondary and incidental to finding a common solution to a common problem. Despite serious individual disagreements about race, sex, politics, cultural and religious *beliefs*, where recovery from alcoholism is concerned, AA members wish every other alcoholic well - in terms of their recovery. It is a universal principle of "good will" observed in action.

This is a message which has allowed the fellowship of AA to transcend the barriers which humanity has erected and enables alcoholics who might never ever mix, to experience recovery together. (see pg 17). It is the workings of the *good will* of one human being for another as an equal. (i.e.: "in the eyes of God").

The comments which follow concern working with others and are based upon universal principles of human equality in recovery. (see pgs 58, 84, 164 & Appendix II). They are to be found within the basic text of "*Alcoholics Anonymous*". Remember:

THERE IS NO "SECOND REQUIREMENT" FOR AA MEMBERSHIP

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SECTION B07b:

Chapter 7

WORKING WITH OTHERS

STEP TWELVE:

“Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.”

READ:

From Page 89, beginning with “*Life will take on new meaning*” to the bottom of Page 95 ending with “*Let it go at that.*”.

COMMENTS:

Many alcoholics make their first contact with the AA program after having exploited all of their own known ways to achieve personal happiness, joy and freedom. (i.e.: “*self-knowledge*” see pg. 39). Their mental condition often includes a feeling of uselessness and self-pity. (see pg 84). Some have tried to hold on to their old ideas without results, or have pursued their *belief system* into the gates of insanity or death. (see pgs 30 & 58).

When alcoholics first encounter the AA program, many find it difficult to argue with success when confronted by other alcoholics much like themselves. There is personal identification with similar experiences that is unequalled by the offerings of trained professionals who are not alcoholics.

Personal experience with recovery can have unique value to those alcoholics who have used up all of their own known options. Sharing the secret of your own success can be a highly desirable piece of *new knowledge* to such a newcomer.

Conscious awareness that there is more to life than “*what is already known*” becomes the essence of a “*spiritual awakening*”. (see Step 11).

A newcomer may either embrace or reject awareness of the Ultimate Reality of life, on life’s terms. (syn: “God). They may even attempt to retreat from reality, (i.e.: “*by a return to drinking*”), but the conscious awareness remains that:

THERE IS A WAY TO GET SOBER AND STAY SOBER.

The reader may encounter newcomers who want to know and understand more of your own personal experience with recovery. Perhaps they will be unable to find *personal identification* with anyone else. In such matters your own life will take on new meaning. (pg 89). Any feelings of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. (pg 84).

As that occurs, personal experiences of happiness, joy and freedom will expand as an alcoholic **enlarges his spiritual life**. (see pgs 14-15, 35, & 133). There will be the experience of *spiritual progress* toward being “*of maximum service to God and the people about us*”. (see pgs 60 & 77).

In separating *principles* from *personalities*, there is no requirement in AA for anyone to accept any limited definition of that “*three letter word God*”. The definition and meaning an alcoholic assigns to the word “*God*”, is and must be personal. (see pg 55). Only the alcoholic, as a unique individual, can provide meaning to that word in their own mind regarding their own recovery. (see pg 23). This takes on great significance whenever one human being claims “*special access*” which is not equally available to others as a principle.

Recognize that “your idea of God” is just as valid as that idea in any other individual”. (see pgs 23 & 55).

The only measure of validity of one idea over another is in how well that definition is in harmony, balance and compatibility with reality. (review Step 2). Because *the Great Reality* is infinite one *belief about God* may differ from others about how life is, or how life should be. (i.e.: “*God*” - see pgs 53, 55 & 68)

THERE MAY BE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN “WHAT GOD IS” AND YOUR PERSONAL “IDEA OF GOD”

The alcoholic reader who is seriously interested in aligning their *belief system* with *the Great Reality*, (syn: “*God*” - see pg 55), will thoroughly review how well they have applied Step Ten to what the word “*God*” means to their own mind. (pg 23). Those capable of being rigorously honest with themselves will use their own “*God-given intelligence*” to determine how well their *idea of God* agrees with reality. (review pgs 58, 89 & Appendix II).

Many devoutly religious alcoholics will prefer to close their minds to the acceptance of any new knowledge on the subject of “*God*”.

**“DON’T BOTHER ME WITH FACTS,
I’VE ALREADY GOT MY MIND MADE UP”**

When working with newcomers, it is well to avoid errors in personal judgment about “*a power greater than ourselves*”. To avoid placing your own *personality* ahead of the *principles of recovery* in the basic text, the reader is advised to heed the admonition:

“Don’t start out as an evangelist or reformer. Unfortunately a lot of prejudice exists. You will be handicapped if you arouse it.” (pg 89)

In AA, to be helpful is our only aim. (pg 89). It is because of your own experience with drinking and recovery that you can be uniquely useful to other alcoholics. (pg 18). The newcomer will decide how they want to approach their own problem. Therefore, it is well to leave religious and medical matters in the hands of those who are professionally qualified to speak on those subjects. This attitude about working with others is reflected by a once popular slogan:

“AA -ALWAYS ON TAP, -NEVER ON TOP”

As an equal, (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”) every individual human being does their own “*wanting*”. Their desires (syn: “*prayers*”) are their own. No one else has control over that. Much personal frustration can be avoided by recognizing the futility of trying to get another human being to “*want what you want them to want*”. Despite any sanity or intelligence involved in the arguments, most alcoholics do what they want most once they have freedom and the opportunity. Although “*compliance*” may be enforced, each alcoholic already knows if they desire sobriety for themselves.

No two individuals are precisely the same. That is a common problem when seeking a solution to alcoholism. (see pg 60(b)). Control by another human being requires having the power to do so. Continued control requires continuing to have domination. (i.e.: “*permission to play God*”). Few alcoholics will consciously allow this condition to exist for long in their life if they have any choice.

DESPITE SIMILARITIES, EACH ALCOHOLIC IS STILL A UNIQUE INDIVIDUAL.

That common denominator of uniqueness may explain why religion, medicine and psychiatry have not yet produced any solution for alcoholism which is comparable to the results of AA. Providing a “*standardized and certifiable approach*” without “*practical personal experience*” is at best difficult, if not impossible.

“Science may one day accomplish this, but it hasn’t done so yet.” (pg 31)

There are boundaries which define each different professional discipline. Any scientific approach, like many of the religious approaches to alcoholism, will have it’s own limitations in awareness of the Ultimate Reality of Life. (syn: “*God*”). By contrast, AA “*seeks more awareness*” without claiming it has “*the last word of new knowledge*” on any subject. This “**open-ended approach**” offers the newcomer unlimited opportunities for additional success beyond that which has already been produced “*as the desired results of sobriety*”. (i.e.: “*answer to a prayer*”).

AA provides newcomers with practical demonstrations of recovery by other alcoholics with *direct experience* rather than *claims of theoretical knowledge* of how to achieve and maintain sobriety.

“DON’T TELL ME - SHOW ME”

The successfully recovered alcoholic has acquired *new knowledge* of how to produce recovery in their own life. That education did not come from the study of theoretical concepts and propositions in the classroom setting of a seminary or medical college. It was the result of personally dealing with the Ultimate Reality of life on life’s terms. (i.e.: “God”). Armed with this *new knowledge*, obtained from “the school of life”, the alcoholic no longer suffers from a once seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. (see Frontispiece). Very few who work in the *helping professions*, can claim this level of conscious awareness of reality about alcoholism.

“But, obviously you cannot transmit something you haven’t got.” (pg 164)

This author *believes* any claims of *personal superiority* (i.e.: “in the eyes of God”) is an *egotistical self-centered* attitude. (see pgs 23 & 27). It may be a waste of time to try to persuade another alcoholic to want (i.e.: “pray for”) what you believe they ought to want, or to be more “just like you!”. “Believe it or not”, they may need or want something which you are unable to provide.

It is more intelligent to recognize that **the secret of your own personal success may not appeal to another unique but equal alcoholic.** Remember that as part of recovery in AA, our real purpose is to be of maximum service to the people about us. (pg 77). Therefore:

“To spend too much time on any one situation is to deny some other alcoholic an opportunity to live and be happy.” (pg 96)

Therefore, when working with other alcoholics as a member of AA, do not lose sight of your *primary purpose* of ensuring your own recovery first.

THERE ARE STILL ENOUGH ALCOHOLICS ON PLANET EARTH

This author recommends the reader attempt to share their own unique experience with another alcoholic who wants you have to offer. Do so because it fulfills their desire. (syn: “answers their prayer”). Recognize that some other individual may possess additional and useful *new knowledge* that is not part of your own awareness of reality. (syn: “God”). As difficult as it may be to accept limitations to *personal knowledge of reality*, in this lifetime:

YOU CANNOT BE ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE.

Furthermore, recognize that the non-alcoholic professionals may know something of value to a newcomer that you do not know.

The real value of professional advice is any results it provides for those who seek what they offer. It either is or is not what that alcoholic wants for themselves. (i.e.: “*the answer to their prayer*”- see pg 89).

It is presumptuous to try to do any “*wanting*” for another person. You can quickly recognize this, by asking, as an equal, if you would allow anyone else to do the same for you. (see pg 60(b)).

The alcoholic reader may wish to evaluate their own *belief system* by honestly answering some pertinent questions:

1. **Have you admitted you are powerless over alcohol and that your own life has become unmanageable?** (pg 59)
2. **Do you *believe* that somehow, someday you may control and enjoy your drinking?** (pg 30)
3. **When did you become *qualified to run the lives of others, or assure them of success?*** (pg 61)
4. **Why do you *believe* any equal person would want the same power you claim for yourself?** (pg 12)
5. **Is it possible there could be better way than “*your way*”?** (pg 68).

Pay close attention to any *personal belief system* concerning the value of your own knowledge as being desirable to other alcoholics. (i.e.: “*the answer to their prayers*”) It is a huge jump to “*playing God*” from “*a solution you desire for yourself*” to the assumption you have “*the solution for all of mankind*”.

PRINCIPLES BEFORE PERSONALITIES

There is a difference between sharing new knowledge of a “principle”, and presumptuously imposing your “personality” upon someone you *believe* to be your unfortunate and unwilling inferior.

The essence of *sharing* is that it is freely offered, and willingly accepted. Such an exchange is based upon the principle of equality. (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”).

Recommendations will have value only if the person receiving them actually wants them. That desire (syn: “prayer”) must come from them. Nonetheless, you may be in a position to offer much practical advice if they are interested in it.

The AA basic text recognizes a frequently misunderstood principle of equality that alcoholics determine their own desires. (syn: “prayers”). It realistically recognizes their *human equality* in acquiring *new knowledge* from the source of all knowledge. (syn: “equal access to God”- see pg 68).

“We do not like to pronounce any individual as alcoholic, but you can quickly diagnose yourself. Step over to the nearest barroom and try some controlled drinking. Try to drink and stop abruptly. Try it more than once. It will not take long for you to decide, if you are honest with yourself about it. It may be worth a bad case of jitters if you get a full knowledge of your condition.” (pgs 31-32)

A newcomer does not find power in “*second-hand knowledge*” which is not their own until it becomes their own awareness of reality. (i.e.: “God” - see Step 11). Until they have enlarged their own *spiritual life* by improving their own conscious understanding of reality, it remains the power of others.(see pgs 14-15, 27, 45 & Steps 10-11). They may not want what you have nor be willing to accept it as their own belief system.

It is the newcomer doing the seeking who decides if they want what you have. However, if they do, then the power of what you know is available for them to freely use in their own lives. (see pg 58).

Actually, the newcomer may be helping you more than you are helping them. This is reason enough for placing the welfare of other people ahead of your own. Do not forget why you are endeavoring to be helpful. **Your attempt to pass on the secrets of your own success plays a vital part in your own recovery**. Helping others works because it *enlarges the spiritual life* of the individual whose real purpose is to fit himself to be of maximum service to God and the people about him. (pgs 14-15, 35, 77 & 94). If you are among those more religious members of AA, remember that:

“Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.”
(Tradition 3)

Many an old-timer has said “*let John Barleycorn deal with public relations*”. It was summarized by their suggestion to:

“GIVE THEM PLENTY OF BOURBON AND KINDNESS”.

As brutal or deadly as it may sometimes be, continued drinking usually helps the alcoholic decide if they want what AA has to offer. Nothing else will so completely provide an alcoholic with *valid new knowledge of the true nature of their condition*. (pg 32).

For the drinking alcoholic who survives, their “*drinking world*” rapidly becomes very cold and unfriendly. By contrast, the ready welcome to join the ranks of those who have recovered in AA usually gains increasing appeal. This can be frustrating when someone wants to control the behavior of the alcoholic, including the alcoholic himself.

“The idea that somehow, someday he will control and enjoy his drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker. The persistence of this illusion is astonishing. Many pursue it into the gates of insanity or death.” (pg 30)

This observation was written with the sad recognition that many alcoholics will actually doom themselves to an alcoholic death.
(see pgs 26 & 44).

The basic text for recovery from alcoholism, and this Study Guide have a common objective which is adequately stated as follows:

“Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a Power greater than ourselves. Obviously. But where and how were we to find this Power? “

“Well, that’s exactly what this book is about. Its main object is to enable you to find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem.” (pg 45)

The limited value of this Study Guide is that it has been prepared specifically for alcoholics who experience difficulty accepting traditional religious approaches to “*a source of power*” required to relieve their alcoholism. This author is merely pointing out what has been found within the framework of the basic text for recovery. Obviously other approaches are available to those who prefer more traditional concepts. Acceptance or rejection of any *fundamental idea of God* remains with the individual alcoholic. (see pg 55).

“.....he must decide for himself whether he wants to go on. He should not be pushed or prodded by you, his wife, or his friends. If he is to find God, the desire must come from within. (pg 95)

When working with others, it is both presumptuous and arrogant to assume your approach to “*a power greater than yourself*” has superior moral value over some other approach.

This is especially important if some other approach also produces practical results. For someone, lacking “*all knowledge of everything*” it is not sane thinking to claim having “*the answers to life*”. (i.e.: “*God’s omniscience and omnipotence*”). Doing so may be equivalent to proclaiming a proposition immediately recognizable as both ridiculous and unintelligent.

“MY INSANITY IS SUPERIOR TO YOUR INSANITY”

It is also unwise to assume another alcoholic will want to precisely follow your footsteps and be “*just like you in every way*”. For each alcoholic there may well be a better way that is uniquely suited to their own “*God-given individuality*”. For all you

know, it may be a path of best right action going beyond the knowledge and awareness any human power has yet discovered. (pg 60(b)).

The path of recovery for an individual alcoholic may be broader than the finite boundaries understood by either science or religion. (review Chapter One - "*Bill's Story*").

Who are you to claim otherwise?

"If he thinks he can do the job in some other way, or prefers some other spiritual approach, encourage him to follow his own conscience. We have no monopoly on God; we merely have an approach that worked for us.

(pg 95)

There is always a way to get sober and stay that way - if it is desired. (i.e.: "*prayed for*"). **There is no second requirement for obtaining it beyond seeking *new knowledge* of that which is "*truth, good and reality*".** (i.e.: "God" Step 3).

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SECTION B07c:

Chapter 7

WORKING WITH OTHERS

STEP TWELVE:

“Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.”

READ:

From Page 96, beginning with “*Do not be discouraged if your prospect does not respond at once.*” to Page 98 ending with “*Burn into the consciousness of every man that he can get well regardless of anyone. The only condition is that he trust in God and clean house.*”

COMMENTS:

When working with a newcomer, recognize they can and will be gaining *new knowledge* from a variety of sources. This will include being confronted with some different *fundamental ideas of God* than the more familiar ones offered by traditional religions. Nothing is any more personal, nor provides a stronger basis for making decisions and choices than a *belief system* about what is *the Great Reality* of life, on life’s terms.

For the individual alcoholic, that *belief system* eventually becomes a guiding force in their life. (see pgs 27 & 55). Any *fundamental idea of God* is both unique and individual, and it is a rarity to find 100% agreement with another individual on every aspect of whatever that *belief system* might be. Recognize that “**principles before personalities**” is the *spiritual foundation* of AA traditions. (see Appendix I - Tradition 12 “The Long Form”). As far as AA is concerned:

“We have no monopoly on God; we merely have an approach that worked for us.” (pg 95)

Remember that any *fundamental idea of God* is individual. (pg 55). The idea of God which worked for you may not have equal value to every other alcoholic. Other *belief systems* about God exist which may have greater value to an alcoholic with some different idea of how to be happy, joyous and free than your own. (pg 133). If the newcomer is to find God, the desire must come from within. (pg 95).

Challenging a basic *belief system* can be frustrating. Known facts confront wishful thinking. This pits *old ideas* against *new knowledge* on the basis of everyone having equal access to the source of all knowledge and power. (syn: “God”).

Understanding all new knowledge remains incomplete, despite the “God-given intelligence” of the alcoholic seeking spiritual progress to enlarge their spiritual life. (review pgs 23, 55, 60, 86, Steps 3 & 11).

Within this mental framework (pg 23) an alcoholic develops a *belief system* about “a power greater than himself” which is uniquely individual. Despite many similarities, each individual concept of *the Great Reality* is ultimately different from that of any other individual *belief system*. Nonetheless, life is what it is, and works the way it works regardless of human *beliefs* or understanding.

To some extent, what any one alcoholic believes about the Great Reality of life is both accurate and erroneous at the same time. Everyone knows something, no one understands everything. (review Steps 10 & 11)

Life, on life’s terms is determined by **principles**, not by “*belief systems*”. What any alcoholic *believes* about life either is or is not in agreement with those **universal principles**. (i.e.: “*God’s Laws*”). **Principles govern all of life, not just some special portion on this tiny planet in this insignificant galaxy.** If you also *believe* in human equality (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”), then trying to convince another alcoholic your conception of God is right, is wasting time. Do you allow them “*equal opportunity*” to suggest their concept might be better than your own? (see pgs 28, 46-47, 86, 93-95, 164 & Appendix II).

For the alcoholic reader, your own *fundamental idea of God* does or does not accept the proposition that

“..... either God is everything or else He is nothing.
God either is, or He isn’t. What was our choice to be?”
(pg 53)

Where there is conflict with life on life’s terms, the conflict is with a *belief system* which is a **personal preference** of how to interpret those universal principles. This author merely *shares a single perspective* with any other alcoholic who may find it useful. (see pg 77).

When there is fear of insanity or death, without help from “a power greater than themselves”, the extent Step 10 has been applied to an old idea of God gains increasing importance”.

Placing reliance upon an idea of “a power greater than themselves”, requires trust in having personal access to some form of intelligence. (pgs 53, 55 & 60). Many alcoholics are driven to seek that source of *new knowledge* out of desperation rather than inspiration.

“Frothy emotional appeal seldom suffices. The message which can interest and hold these alcoholic people must have depth and weight. In nearly all cases,

their ideals must be grounded in a power greater than themselves, if they are to re-create their lives.”
(The Doctor’s Opinion)

To an alcoholic faced with insanity or death, there is creative power for survival found in *new knowledge of how to stay sober*. It certainly is “*greater power*” than they previously possessed at a conscious level of understanding. (see Step 11).

Any newcomer, capable of being honest with themselves, can eventually recognize the true nature of their condition. (pg 31) Also, that some kind of power is available to create a new kind of freedom and a new kind of happiness. (review pgs 83-84). That creative power is available to any alcoholic who may not yet have that “*know-how*” but seeks it. (pgs 45 & 60(c)). However, it requires being open-minded to the acceptance of *new knowledge* from the source of all power. (i.e.: “God” see pgs 14-15, 53, 59, 84, 164, & Appendix II).

Being open-minded includes self-honesty and willingness to accept an idea there is something more to be learned about “*the power*” required for recovery from alcoholism. (see pg. 27, Step 11 & Appendix II).

With the indispensable ingredients of “*willingness, honesty and open mindedness*” (see Appendix II), something occurs within the mind of the newcomer. This author suggests that, as an equal, (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”), the alcoholic has an inherent capacity to recognize the truth. (syn: “God”- see pg 55).

“We found the Great Reality deep down within us. In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found. It was so with us.”
(pg 55)

When inherent intelligence confronts emotional wishful thinking it can produce conflict about reality. This the place where the *belief system* of the individual alcoholic confronts *the Great Reality* of life, on life’s terms. It occurs within the mind of the alcoholic. (pg 23).

As, with any conflict, until it is resolved in the mind, it will disrupt personal happiness, joy and freedom. With the possible exception of those “*who believe they already know everything worth knowing about everything*”, there is a need for continued spiritual growth. This is a process which never stops for those alcoholics who seek a *daily reprieve* from alcoholic insanity. (pg. 85).

The alcoholic reader will note that, at this point, a newcomer will require willingness to discard old ideas in favor of something which produces successful results. Without the indispensable ingredients of *willingness, honesty and open-mindedness*, little progress is possible. (see Appendix II).

It is possible a newcomer may only have interest in some portion of what you have to offer. Therefore, when working with a newcomer, it is worth finding out what they desire (i.e.: “pray for”) before suggesting they place trust in your personal *belief system*. You could be mistaken, couldn’t you?

There are boundaries to your own *belief system* which are the same as those which define most traditional religious concepts. You may discover some ideas are true and included while others are not. It is valuable to know if some part of *the Great Reality* has been excluded from what you *believe* about life, on life's terms. A *personal belief system* may **reject** some portion of *the Great Reality*. (i.e.: "God"). With **acceptance** of an "*infinite concept of God*" there is always more to be accepted and understood. What is your choice to be? (pgs 28, 53, 68, & Step 11).

In most cases "a personal idea of God" will include some universal principles. It is not likely that any human *belief system* will embrace all universal principles which govern all life, on life's terms. Some valid *new knowledge* is to be discovered both within and beyond the boundaries of traditional religious concepts of "a power greater than ourselves".

Therefore:

"Be quick to see where religious people are right."
(pg 87)

At the same time, recognize that despite any of their claims, traditional religion may not possess **all the answers to everything**. When there is a problem, there is a difference between having **a part of an answer**, and having **the entire or only answer**. With an *infinite concept of God*, there is always more to be learned by any individual or group of individuals. (pgs 68 & 164).

This author suggests that, "*the source of all truth*" will fit almost any universal concept of "*a power greater than ourselves*". Whenever that phrase is used, it also fits most definitions for the "*three-letter word God*". That word is a **personal conception** of some *fundamental idea of God* which exists in the mind of the alcoholic who hears it. (pgs 12, 23 & 55). **What is important to recognize is that differences exist in personal understanding of that word in the mind of every alcoholic.** (Step 11).

Recognizing personal differences is important when working with others. Before suggesting they "trust God and clean house", (pg 98), be aware there could be "unintelligent baggage" attached to their meaning of the word "God" that may not exist within your own *belief system*.

Because most traditional religious concepts of God are controversial, it is well to avoid them in favor of examining **universal principles**. Principles apply to any alcoholic, at any place, and have no second requirements for conformity. (Appendix I, - Traditions 3 & 10 - "The Long Form").

There is another obvious intelligent reason for avoiding religious interpretations of the word "God" when working with newly sober alcoholics.

If any single religious concept of an infinite God were total and complete, then no one could or would recover who did not embrace that specific belief system. (see pg. 53).

However, this is not borne out by the experience of AA. Instead, recoveries are continually being produced which cross those boundaries which separate human beings by their *belief systems*.

In AA, where the *primary purpose* is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety : (AA Preamble):

**IN AA IT DOESN'T MATTER WHO IS "RIGHT",
ONLY WHO IS "LEFT".**

Therefore, this author recommends thoughtful consideration of any limitations to your own awareness of that *Ultimate Reality* which is referred to as "*God*". If you possess any valid answers, they will be attracted by what you are able to demonstrate with success. (see pg 60). However, if there is more, then other ideas of God may have greater value. **You could be mistaken couldn't you?** (pg. 164 & Step 10).

Be careful about discouraging a newcomer from considering concepts of power that are different from your own. With an attitude of open-mindedness they may come to believe in and trust in some different concept of *infinite power* no human power is yet able to consciously understand. (pg. 60(b) & Step 11).

"We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves."
(pg 68)

Unless you *believe* you are standing on some moral or spiritual hilltop, the newcomer will quickly recognize equality in your common relationship to "*a power greater than ourselves*". (pg. 18).

As equals, with a common problem, you can avoid becoming so smug and self-satisfied as to suggest they should become "just like you".

Freedom to examine universal principles of recovery will be helpful to other alcoholics who desire to get sober. If your own primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety, it may be more useful to offer the newcomer that same freedom of choice as an equal.

Principles of recovery are available to any alcoholic who sincerely desires to get well. (pg 95). However, if your primary purpose is to convert other alcoholics to your personal *belief system*, you will introduce both controversy and conflict. Each alcoholic does their own wanting. It is a waste of time to try to convince any newcomer they should want what you want them to want.

Each newcomer must gain sufficient *new knowledge* to discover their own reasons to stay sober. The desire for recovery must come

from within. If the desires of another person were sufficient, the problem of alcoholism would have been resolved centuries ago.

Remember that not every alcoholic will want what you have nor seek the same results which you are demonstrating by your own life. Any recovered alcoholic has experiences which are of value to other alcoholics. However, continued efforts to force sobriety upon any one alcoholic of special interest may deprive another alcoholic of your help toward recovery. Especially one who may be genuinely interested in the secret of your own success. (pg 96).

Unless you are a mind reader, you may easily assume something which is not so. For example, someone may convince you they sincerely want to stop drinking, when in reality, they are trying to impose upon you for something other than relief from alcoholism. Be cautious about putting temptations for dishonesty into the path of an alcoholic who may not be stable enough to deal with them. Doing so would be counter-productive to your own primary purpose. (see pg. 77, 96 & AA Preamble).

Be cautious and use intelligence about what you *believe* produced your own recovery. (pg. 86, 93-95 129). Any recovered alcoholic understands some of what produced their own recovery. However, it is easy assume you know what is best and right for others.

The moment you *believe* you know what is best for another alcoholic, you have abandoned human equality (i.e.: “in the eyes of “God”) and have started “*playing God*”.

No single individual, nor group of individuals, can rightly claim such omniscience and omnipotence. No one has all the answers for all of the problems of any other alcoholic. Assuming that responsibility in the life of another alcoholic can lead to tragic results.

Any alcoholic who has freedom to choose, will not allow someone else to run their life for long. It is one thing to help another human being with a loving attitude of “*I want you to have whatever it is that you want for yourself!*” as an equal. It is a demeaning attitude when it becomes “*I’m going to do good all over you and someday you will thank me for it!*”.

“For the type of alcoholic who is able and willing to get well, little charity, in the ordinary sense of the word, is needed or wanted.” (pg 98)

While attempting to burn into the consciousness of the newcomer that he can get well regardless of anyone, (pg 98), remember this is possible without them adopting the same *fundamental idea of God*” which you *believe* to be the foundation of your own personal recovery. (review pg 12 & Step 11). The world-wide experience of AA has successfully demonstrated that this is true.

“Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us.” (pg 164)

Some new understanding of reality may be an improvement over that which is now understood. It makes intelligent sense to *believe* there is more *new knowledge* available. It does unless you are claiming to know all there is worth knowing about everything in life.

The AA program suggests that “*God is everything*”. This is a personal choice of a *belief system*, (pg 53), and includes all knowledge. (syn: omniscience). What is your choice to be?

With *open mindedness* , it is a self-evident truth that:

THERE IS MORE TO BE KNOWN THAN WHAT ALL HUMAN KNOWLEDGE NOW KNOWS

This *fundamental idea of God* (pg 55) extends the mental horizons of many traditional concepts of “God”. Anything now known is modified by the discovery of *new knowledge*. It all comes from the same source of all knowledge. (i.e.: “God”. For example, few if any traditional religions still *believe* the world to be flat nor the center of the universe. There was a time when most did.

NEW KNOWLEDGE PRODUCES CHANGES IN BELIEF SYSTEMS.

Those who intelligently accept the reality of *new knowledge* enlarge their *spiritual life*. In the process of making *spiritual progress*, many alcoholics experience mental conflict and emotional turmoil. (see pgs 14-15, 23, & 164). On one hand is reliance upon an old idea of God (pg 68) which is in conflict with intelligent understanding of *the Great Reality*. (syn: “God”). On the other side is the *fear* of abandoning *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which have been guiding forces in life. (pg 27). Especially, when no intelligently acceptable *new concept* has been developed as a replacement. (pg 12).

This author strongly recommends applying Step 10 to your “old idea about God”.

“Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.” (Step 10)

This author *believes* that the oversight of applying Step 10 to a *fundamental idea of God* is a primary cause of mental confusion and emotional turmoil. (review pgs 12, 23, 27, 53, 55. & Appendix II). Recognition and acceptance that *new knowledge* allows for *infinite spiritual progress during this lifetime* is a source of relief for many alcoholics.

Do not overlook that a moral inventory reflects a *belief system* of what is important to the alcoholic, as an individual. In life, on life’s terms, (syn: “*God’s will*”), the priorities may be different. Constant improvement is available on a daily basis. (pg 85).

This author *believes a fundamental idea of God*, based upon principles, will be in harmony, balance and compatible with *the Great Reality*. (syn "God" - pg 55). Only the results can measure how well one concept works when compared to another. This provides the best test for validity. A newcomer may have a concept of God which is just as valid as yours. (pg. 93).

Anything less than a *principle with universal application* is just a demonstration of how that particular principle was used in a given situation. The way a principle is used in one situation is not the only way it can be utilized.

Electricity is a power which can be used to light a city or to destroy a human life. It is well to be consciously aware that the difference is in the choice of how to use power.

Devoutly religious readers are reminded that there is no need to abandon *beliefs* which are acceptable to your own intelligence. If your chosen *belief system* produces happy, joyous and free experiences for you, (i.e.: "*God's will*" - see pg 133), then by all means keep using whatever produces desirable results.

If you *believe* that "*what you believe*" is all there is, then no one could nor would recover without embracing your "*fundamental idea of God*" (pg. 55). The world-wide experience of AA happily demonstrates that no such limitations exist. Therefore:

"Abandon yourself to God as you understand God.
Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows."
(pg 164)

However, this author strongly recommends the reader consciously understand that there can be a difference between:

"GOD"

and:

"YOUR FUNDAMENTAL IDEA OF GOD"

Avoid the pitfalls of being "*closed minded*" (review Appendix II) by giving close attention to Steps 10 and 11 when working with others in Step 12. It provides for enlarging a spiritual life on a continuing basis. (see pgs 14-15, 35, & 164). This allows for more *spiritual progress* toward improving conscious understanding of power, greater than ourselves. (pg 60 & Step 11).

The benefits of any such improvement accrue to the alcoholic who enlarges their own personal understanding of *infinite knowledge*. (syn: "God"). This author *believes* such an opportunity to enlarge a spiritual life is available to any alcoholic, at anyplace and at any time. It is an essential part of the recovery process.

Therefore, the alcoholic reader may wish to ask themselves:

HOW SAFE DO I WANT TO BE?

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SECTION B07d:

Chapter 7

WORKING WITH OTHERS

STEP TWELVE:

“Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.”

READ:

From Page 98, beginning with “*Now the domestic problem*” through Page 100 ending with “*The story of how you and your wife settled your difficulties is worth any amount of criticism.*”

COMMENTS:

Since the first printing of the basic text for recovery from alcoholism, the social climate for domestic relationships of alcoholics has undergone many changes. Fairly rigid rules which once defined the roles and responsibilities for each member of a “*traditional family*” no longer exist. Once upon a time, in the usual family setting, the husband/father was the predominate “*bread-winner*”. The wife was a “*home-maker*” and the children had their own well established roles and places. Any departures were generally considered to be unusual.

All that has changed significantly. Clearly defined boundaries for the “*head of the household*” no longer exist in the same manner. There is no intent here to argue the relative merits of either the former or present arrangement. However, when reading the basic text for recovery, it is important to recognize the social climate which prevailed at the time it was written.

Traditional religions provided the main support for many of those former attitudes. How the changes are evaluated now becomes a highly personal matter. For example, the role of women in society is not longer what it once was. Women are no longer barred from voting, property ownership, or unsupervised movements. At one time or other, all of those conditions were considered as being “*traditional family values*”, but ultimately yielded to changes as *new knowledge* modified individual views of life, on life’s terms.

Arguments abound concerning how desirable or undesirable it would be to return to the “*social morality*” of the past. Some traditional religions have assumed the role of spokesmen on those issues. There is so much variety amongst them, that when selecting “*the god-club of your choice*” it is clearly a matter of personal preference. There are, however, certain principles which apply to all human relationships without reference to any of those traditionally defined roles.

Some observations are provided in this Study Guide which the author has found to be compatible with the basic text for recovery. The alcoholic reader may find them useful as part of their personal approach to newcomers in AA.

Mutual desire is the only glue which holds together two equal human beings (i.e.: “in the eyes of God”) in a relationship when freedom of choice exists. As equals, each party decides if they desire the relationship to continue. Enforcement, by coercion, intimidation, and financial pressures may require two people to stay together in some relationships. However, this does not occur on the basis of human equality (i.e.: “in the eyes of God”) nor with respect for individual freedom of choice. (pgs 100-101).

Each person does their own ”wanting”. When sufficiently strong, that desire constitutes a reasonably intelligent definition of a prayer. The reasons for that desire are personal. Nothing is more personal than the dominant desire of an individual about their fundamental relationship to the Great Reality. (syn: “dominant belief system about God” - see pgs 12 & 55).

This is reality, and a principle applicable in any relationship, regardless of any vows, commitments, or the myriad other “ought-to’s and should’s of society”. Many individuals become intimidated by self-appointed “spokesmen for God” who tell them “what God told them they were supposed to want”. While those kinds of “special relationships to a creative power” are highly questionable, it is still the individual who ultimately chooses to “**believe it or not**”. Their freedom of choice to stay or to go in any relationship is not changed by why the choice got made. Neither are the consequences of any actions taken.

Some alcoholics choose to *believe* a whimsical creative power has been victimizing them. It is possible they may be right, once everything there is to know about life, on life’s terms is known. Until then, “**what they believe**” is personal and the individual remains responsible for the consequences of their own choices.

Many alcoholics *believe* it to be “*God’s Will*” that some relationships continue until death. Then, the other, and equal half, has a different idea and chooses to leave. Disillusionment, anger, and frustration easily follow when one individual *believes* it is “*God’s Will*” they stay together and the other does not. (review pgs 98-99). Oftentimes the only available scapegoat is “*to blame God*”. This *belief system* is equivalent to claiming they have absolutely no responsibility for the consequences of their own actions.

Like little children who “*flunked sandbox*”, many will loudly proclaim:

“I DIDN’T DO ANYTHING”

This author contends their real problem is not with “*God*” but rather with their “*fundamental idea of God*”. (see pgs 12, 23, 27, 55, 62, & 133). Each individual has equal power of choice of what they *believe* about “*God*”. (see pgs 12 & 55).

Recognize that what an alcoholic *believes* and the principles which govern life are not the same thing. In reality, they may very well conflict with each other.

However, in a combative relationship, like little children playing in a “*sandbox*”, each party is emotionally claiming:

“MY BELIEF IS BETTER THAN YOUR BELIEF”

The point is that, **you don’t know unless you know**. The only way to find out is to examine the results. Then the idea that “*my belief in better*” becomes a value judgment, which may differ between individuals. (Steps 4 & 10). Every inventory of “*moral values*” is personal. Frequently, the spokesmen for traditional religious *belief systems* will offer their own direct connection to “*a concept of God*” as the basis for “*their version of better or best*”. However, if you accept equality (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”) then:

“*Why don’t you choose your own conception of God?*”
(pg.12).

Principles do not adjust to personalities. (Appendix I - Tradition 12). This author does not *believe* that the Ultimate Reality of Life (syn: “God”) is ever changed by the personal preferences of an alcoholic. The sincerity of a desire (syn: “prayer”) is of no consequence. Anything suggesting otherwise is an example of “*self-will run riot*”.

**WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE HOW SINCERELY
YOU GO IN THE WRONG DIRECTION?**

With *new knowledge* many alcoholics displace and rearrange *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which were once guiding forces in their lives. (see pg 27). They are no longer victimized by the boundaries and limitations of a “*second-hand belief system*”. Instead, they consider endless improvements as they seek *new knowledge* from an infinite source of power. (see pgs 53, 60(c), 68, 164, Steps 3, 11 & Appendix II).

With this enlarged spiritual life, a completely new set of guiding forces begin to dominate the life of the alcoholic. (pgs 14-15, 27, 35, 60, 100, 129, & 164). If they work for it, they will know a *new freedom and a new happiness*. (pgs 42, 83 & 133). This new “*moral value system*” requires only a willingness to “*trust in God and clean house*”. (pgs 94 & 98).

This author suggests that “*the only house*” any alcoholic needs to clean is their own because it is the only life that belongs to them. Anything else is trespassing.

Often the power of example will produce more helpful friendliness than any verbal arguments. This is a difficult relationship to accept when one individual is attempting to control the actions of another. However, by allowing the principle of human equality (i.e.:

“in the eyes of God”) to operate, there is an equal freedom of choice, with each individual choosing their own participation in a relationship.

YOUR OWN *BELIEF SYSTEM* EITHER ACCEPTS OR REJECTS EQUALITY.

A conflict results whenever two personalities get involved in a “*tug of war over who is right*”. (review pg 66). However, when one party stands upon the solid ground of universal principles, they can “*let go of the rope*”. Though they may lose the argument, the other combatant is left without an enemy to attack.

WHEN YOU LOSE SOMETHING TO THE TRUTH, YOU HAVEN’T REALLY LOST ANYTHING

For someone with a personal desire (syn: “prayer”) to fight and argue, this kind of surrender can be extremely aggravating. As in a physical “*tug of war*” the “*surrender*” of “*letting go of the rope*”. (“*Let Go and Let God*”) leaves the other person no way to continue the conflict. They are unable to continue creating the mental confusion and emotional turmoil which disrupts happiness, joy and freedom. This appears to be a principle.

The alcoholic reader may learn to utilize three responses which can be extremely effective when dealing with argumentative individuals.

1. **“I’m sorry you feel that way.”**
2. **“I’ll respond to that later.” - *and***
3. **“You may be right!”**

Being able to remain sober, considerate and helpful has value, regardless of what anyone else says or does. Where family relationships remain intact, it can become the basis for greater compatibility. Because those responses have value in so many difficult situations, they may also be a key to remaining undisturbed by encounters with other argumentative people.

Whenever there is a difference between universal principles and the unrealistic desires of an individual, there is emotional conflict. This sometimes occurs because the alcoholic has failed to reconcile an “*old idea of God*” with reality. Conflicts often produce “*self-inflicted wounds*” because the individual *believes* their own unfulfilled desires (i.e. “unanswered prayers”) are “*divinely inspired*”.(see pgs 129 & 133).

“*RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION IS THE VERY BEST KIND*”

When conflict continues, give careful attention to Steps 10 & 11. This can be useful when developing “*a realistic conception of God*” to use when working with others. (see pgs 12, 23, 27 & Step 12). Acceptance of reality (i.e.: “*God*”) becomes the answer.

Like it or not, the infinite intelligence which governs life, on life's terms will prevail over personal preferences.

Should the alcoholic reader be focused upon maintaining a successful marriage relationship, this author will readily acknowledge a lack of successful knowledge and experience in that department of life. There are many others too, who do not have very attractive "*track records*" with marriages. Therefore, it would be the more intelligent and "*elegant choice*" to seek out someone in AA who is able to demonstrate the kind of results you desire.

While it is difficult to argue with success in sobriety, be aware that advice is easily offered by persons with no stake in the outcome.

IT IS EASY TO GIVE ADVICE WHEN YOU'RE NOT AFFECTED.

The individual left with the consequences is undeniably responsible for their choice to accept the advice. (see pg 62). **When tragic results occur, the individual giving advice is still able to say "whoops - I'm sorry, - I'll try something different next time", and then go merrily on their way unaffected by what has happened.**

Before any advice is accepted, it should be recognized there is a *principle* of each individual being responsible (i.e.: "*in the eyes of God*") for their own life. That *principle* definitely applies here. Accordingly, any comments offered in this Study Guide should be considered suspect until they can be confirmed by the intelligence of the alcoholic reader.

".....but we invariably find that at some time in the past we have made decisions based on self which later placed us in a position to be hurt." (pg 62)

Any alcoholic is naive who *believes* they can go through life without making mistakes, or escape being hurt by errors in personal judgment. Such an attitude is both egotistical, and unrealistic. That kind of "*perfect pure intelligence*" is a quality generally reserved to describe "*a concept of God*". (pgs 12, 55 & 60(c)).

However:

"Let no alcoholic say he cannot recover unless he has his family back. This just isn't so. In some cases the wife will never come back for one reason or another. Remind the prospect that his recovery is not dependent upon people. It is dependent upon his relationship with God." (pgs 99-100)

This author *believes* using intelligence is preferable to using emotions when choosing "*a concept of God*". (see "The Doctor's Opinion, pgs 12, 23, & 27). **Once again, there may be a difference between "*God*" and "*your idea of God*". You may require a review to determine how well you have applied Step 10 to "*your old idea*".**

Your relationship to the Ultimate Reality of life, on life's terms will seriously impact the *ideas, emotions and attitudes* used when guiding any newcomer in their recovery. (review pg 27). Intelligent choices require awareness of available options. To reduce errors in judgment there is a need for *new knowledge*. It is the intent of this Study Guide to point out some options based upon the basic text for recovery from alcoholism. Other options and opinions exist. They are available for any alcoholic to evaluate. It is recommended that you use those which work the best for you.

“We find that no one need have difficulty with the spirituality of the program. *Willingness, honesty and open mindedness are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable.*” (Appendix II)

A decision to accept or reject any portion of this Study Guide remains the inescapable responsibility of each individual alcoholic reader.

It is not recommended that the alcoholic reader gullibly swallow any “*second-hand information*”. First reconcile any suggestions offered to you with the basic text for recovery. The choices you make may well become guiding forces in your life. (pg 27). Intelligent choices, rather than unthinking emotional responses seem to produce the most desirable results.

At this point, it may be useful to review:

- 1. The Foreword to First Edition.**
- 2. The Foreword to Second Edition.**

Comments are provided there about different ways men have “*discovered God*”.

“We have no desire to convince anyone that there is only one way by which faith can be acquired.” (pg 28)

A newcomer with flexibility to choose their own concept of God, (pg 12), will have less difficulty making *spiritual progress* when it provides for unrestricted growth. (see pgs 53 & 68).

Intelligent reasons exist for avoiding many restrictions found in traditional religions because most religious *belief systems* do not provide unlimited *new knowledge* about the *Great Reality*. (pgs 55 & 60(c)). Where there is sanity in a *belief system*, only the “*god given*” intelligence, inherent in every man, woman and child, is capable of separating facts from fantasies. (see pg. 55).

As the newcomer to AA lets go of “*old ideas about God*”, they get relief from much of the *fear, anger and guilt*, associated with many religious limitations to human behavior. Then they become more free to enlarge their *spiritual life*. (see pgs 14-15, 58, 100, Steps 3 & 11).

Recovered alcoholics will recognize *spiritual progress* of this *educational variety* is the result of experience rather than any *belief system* dealing in theories. (see Appendix II).

“But the ex-problem drinker who has found this solution, who is properly armed with facts about himself, can generally win the entire confidence of another alcoholic in a few hours. Until such an understanding is reached, little or nothing can be accomplished.” (pg 18)

This author contends that:

**WHAT ONE PERSON CAN KNOW,
ANY OTHER PERSON CAN ALSO KNOW.**

Emotionally charged promises, and statements of *good intentions* abound with most newcomers to sobriety. It is only the results which have any lasting significance when seeking a new way of life. Therefore, when the emphasis is upon *“this lifetime”*, it is not by accident that newcomers who are overwhelmed by their own *“good intentions”* are often confronted with the admonition:

“DON’T TELL ME, - SHOW ME!”

This emphasis on actions instead of words can be stressed when working with newcomers. They too will be more interested in demonstrations of *“the secrets of your own success”* than *“good intentions”* or *“speculative promises”* of nebulous rewards in *“some other lifetime”*.

Therefore:

“If you have been successful in solving your own domestic problems, tell the newcomer’s family how that was accomplished. In this way you can set them on the right track without becoming critical of them. The story of how you and your wife settled your difficulties is worth any amount of criticism.” (pg 100)

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SECTION B07e

Chapter 7

WORKING WITH OTHERS

STEP TWELVE:

“Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.”

READ:

From Page 100, beginning with “*Assuming we are spiritually fit...*” Through to the end of Chapter 7 on Page 103 which closes with: “*After all, our problems were of our own making. Bottles were only a symbol. Besides, we have stopped fighting anybody or anything. We have to!*”

COMMENTS:

Once more, the emphasis is upon the attitude which exists in the mind of the individual alcoholic. (pg. 23). The “*spiritual fitness*” of an alcoholic is directly related to the attitude they maintain about drinking alcohol. It comes from their personal concept of “*a power greater than themselves*” which they *believe* responds to something referred to as a “*prayer*”. That prayer is a desire for something the alcoholic wants above all else. That power to fulfill that desire (i.e.: “*answer the prayer*”) is a source of the *new knowledge* which is greater than any “*know how*” the alcoholic has as his own resources. (i.e.: “*self-knowledge*”). This greater source of *new knowledge* qualifies as a valid conception of the word “*God*”. (pg. 12).

SELF-KNOWLEDGE IS LIMITED

Obviously, the necessary power of all knowledge is lacking in the individual alcoholic. (syn: “*omniscience*” pgs 43 & 45). Experience indicates a *belief* that self-knowledge is sufficient to produce recovery from alcoholism is erroneous. (review pgs 40-43). However, there is an available source of all power that includes everything. (pgs 53 & 59). Therefore, it makes intelligent sense to place trust and reliance upon that infinite source of power rather than the finite limits of self-knowledge. (pg. 68).

Most traditional religions require the alcoholic go outside of themselves to find “God”. The book “*Alcoholics Anonymous*” suggests that no such restrictions or limitations are necessary.

Mental confusion and emotional conflict can occur if an alcoholic *believes* a traditional version of that “*three letter word God*”, and then encounters that same word used differently in the AA program.

Those alcoholics who think, will recognize differences between AA and most traditional religions with their various *belief systems* about the word “*God*”.

The meaning is not necessarily the same, and regardless of similarities, any “*fundamental idea of God*” is always personal. (see pg. 55).

Without attempting to lay claim to understanding all of those varied religious views of “*the power*”, (i.e.: “*God*”), this author proposes to point out some significant comments which are to be found within the AA basic text for recovery from alcoholism. Here are some comments, extracted from the AA text for consideration now:

“Frothy emotional appeal seldom suffices. The message which can interest and hold these alcoholic people must have depth and weight. In nearly all cases, their ideals must be grounded in a power greater than themselves, if they are to re-create their lives.” (The Doctor’s Opinion)

“*Why don’t you choose your own conception of God?*”
(pg. 12)

“Here and there, once in a while, alcoholics have had what are called vital spiritual experiences”... .. “Ideas, emotions and attitudes which were once the guiding forces of the lives of these men are suddenly cast to one side and a new set of conceptions and motives begin to dominate them.”
(pg. 27)

“Upon hearing this, our friend was somewhat relieved, for he reflected that, after all, he was a good church member. This hope, however was destroyed by the doctor’s telling him that while his religious convictions were very good, in his case they did not spell the necessary vital spiritual experience.”
(pg. 27)

“We have no desire to convince anyone that there is only one way by which faith can be acquired.” (pg. 28)

“All went well for a time, but he failed to enlarge his spiritual life. To his consternation, he found himself drunk a half a dozen times in rapid succession.” (pg. 35)

“He was positive that this humiliating experience, plus the knowledge he had acquired, would keep him sober the rest of his life. Self-knowledge would fix it”... . “One day we were told that he was back in the hospital.” (pg. 40)

“I saw that will-power and self-knowledge would not help in those strange mental blank spots” (pg. 42)

“It meant I would have to throw several lifelong conceptions out of the window. That was not easy.”
(pg. 42)

“Once more: The alcoholic at certain times has no effective mental defense against the first drink. Except in a few rare cases, neither he nor any other human being can provide such a defense. His defense must come from a Higher Power.”
(pg. 43)

“Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a *Power greater than ourselves*. Obviously. But where and how were we to find this Power?”
(pg. 45)

“Much to our relief, we discovered we did not need to consider another’s conception of God. Our own conception, however inadequate, was sufficient to make the approach and to effect contact with Him. As soon as we admitted the possible existence of a Creative Intelligence, a Spirit of the Universe underlying the totality of things, we began to be possessed of a new sense of power and direction, provided we took other simple steps.”
(pg. 46)

“Instead of regarding ourselves as intelligent agents, spearheads of God’s ever advancing Creation, we agnostics chose to believe that our human intelligence was the last word, the alpha and the omega, the beginning and end of all. Rather vain of us, wasn’t it?”
(pg. 49)

“... ..we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else He is nothing. God either is, or He isn’t. What was our choice to be?”
(pg. 53)

“... ..for deep down in every man, woman, and child, is the fundamental idea of God”
(pg. 55)

“He was as much a fact as we were. We found the Great Reality deep down within us. In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found. It was so with us.”
(pg. 55)

“With this attitude you cannot fail. The consciousness of your belief is sure to come to you.”
(pg. 55)

Be aware that there is great value available within many “*god clubs*”. What AA suggests is that there is also more knowledge, power, and conscious awareness of reality, (i.e.: “*God*”), than is embraced by the *belief systems* of most traditional religions. The one you rely upon may be an exception. However, you don’t know, unless you know.

A decision to place trust in the infinite source of *new knowledge* is an individual matter. (pgs 12, 28, 68 & 95). Any faith that this Creative Intelligence can do a better job of running an infinite universe, than the present accumulation of human knowledge, becomes a personal value judgment. We only have a personal *belief system* to go by. The point is, that no one knows for sure.

This author eagerly endorses any source of new knowledge which provides value and usefulness to any alcoholic in their personal recovery. Unfortunately, all the defined religious belief systems have limitations which are inherent in their own definitions of what they are or are not. (see pg. 53).

Most traditional religious *belief systems* are an ethnocentric group dedicated to the proposition that their group is superior to other groups. Most religions will deny that alcoholics have access to the infinite power called “*God*” without first accepting “their concept of God”. (review pg. 12 & Appendix I, Tradition 3).

Many alcoholics have perished because they were unable to intelligently understand what was meant when some equal human being announced that:

“TO USE THE POWER OF GOD, YOU MUST FIRST FIND:

?? BUDDHA IN YOUR LIVER

?? MOHAMED IN YOUR GALL BLADER or

?? JESUS IN YOUR HEART.”

Most *belief systems* and “*god clubs*” are “*local tribal customs*” which continue to fire “*centuries-old conflicts*” which are **emotionally powered** by arguments over whose version is best. Sadly, none of their recovery rates for alcoholics is very impressive. No such limited attitude is to be found within the basic text of AA.

For a practical test of how the strong emotions of a *belief system* can override inherent intelligence, simply question the *fundamental idea of God* of a religious alcoholic. Then observe what happens with their *willingness, honesty and open mindedness* concerning any different or equally valid *conception of God*. (review pgs 12, 27-28, 53, 55, 68, 86, 95, 164, & Appendix II).

By thinking “*with the brains God gave them*”, (pg. 86), early AA members produced successful recoveries where traditional approaches had failed. Improving a conscious awareness of the differences in approach is significant to any alcoholic who is serious about recovery. (Step 11). It is strongly recommended that the alcoholic reader study “*The Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous*”. (see Appendix I - The Long Form). This may help clarify the critical differences between AA and traditional *belief systems*.

Your *fundamental idea of God* exists within your own mind. (see pgs 23 & 55). It is that *old idea* which may be in conflict with reality. (i.e.: “*God*” - see pgs 12, 27-28, 58, 95 & 164). **There is no universal definition of what constitutes “*spiritual fitness*”**. It is an *idea*, created in the mind of man, and is presented to you as a *belief system* for your own intelligent acceptance or rejection.

THE READER IS STRONGLY ENCOURAGED TO READ APPENDIX I, AND STUDY “THE TWELVE TRADITIONS - (THE LONG FORM)” NOW.

Some alcoholics *believe* their religious “*god club*” provides them divine protection exclusive from the rest of humanity. This *fundamental idea of God* has potentially dangerous consequences for alcoholics because it does not include all who wish to recover. (see Tradition 3). When an alcoholic has a *belief system* which conflicts with the reality of life on life’s terms, (syn: “God’s Will” - see pg 133), the foundation of their life can collapse. (see pgs 27 & 42).

“Remember that we deal with alcohol--cunning, baffling, powerful!” (pgs 58-59)

There is also a mental problem with a *belief* that “a bottle of booze” has intelligence and free will. (pg 28). It is the “belief system in the mind of the alcoholic” when dealing with alcohol which is what is cunning, baffling and powerful. (pg. 23).

Inherent intelligence will confirm that a “*bottle of booze*” is incapable of malevolent intentions or stupid motives. It will just sit there and gather dust until the alcoholic decides to pick it up. However, once an alcoholic decides to “*drink booze*”, their reasons why are no longer of any consequence.

RESULTS ARE NOT CHANGED BY REASONS FOR ACTIONS

If an alcoholic *believes* they have any freedom of choice, then their chosen actions are their own responsibility. It does not matter if what they do was “*divinely inspired*” or simply “*self will run riot*”. The consequences, on life’s terms, will be the same. Those who use their “*god given brains*” will consciously make choices which are compatible with the Ultimate Reality of Life, as it is understood. (syn: “*God*” see pg 86 & Step 11).

When working with others, remember that any decision to pick up “a bottle of booze” will be their own choice. It will also be “*the will of God*” if it is “their version of being happy, joyous and free”. It is a rarity someone or something will sit on the chest of an alcoholic and force a drink down their throat while they scream for help. (see pg. 133).

When dealing with the drinking world, every alcoholic has choices. There is a principle for survival that is embodied in a deadly game called “*Russian Roulette*”. The principle for survival is exceedingly simple:

1. When you are certain of safety, you are free to fire or not fire as you prefer.
2. When you are certain of danger you must not pull the trigger if you want to survive.
3. **WHEN IN DOUBT, MAKE ALL YOUR MISTAKES IN THE DIRECTION OF SURVIVAL.**

Mistakes are always possible unless the alcoholic is sufficiently informed enough to ***believe*** they have no additional room for *spiritual progress*. (review pgs 14-15, 35, 164 & Appendix II). Few, if any alcoholics will qualify for that degree of omniscience. Because few, if any alcoholics have achieved that level of *spiritual perfection*, there is always room for error. (pg 85).

Errors are possible for any alcoholic when they are interpreting how principles govern reality. For many, it is a shock to discover *the Great Reality* (i.e.: "God") can be different from the way they *believe* it to be.

"Some of the contemporaries of Columbus thought a round earth preposterous. Others came near putting Galileo to death for his astronomical heresies." (pg 51)

The introduction of *new knowledge* of reality, (i.e.: "God"), can force changes to erroneous *belief systems*. There is always more to be understood about "*a power greater than yourself*". (see pg. 68 & Step 11). There always exists a potential for error in what is *believed* about the meaning of that "*three-letter word God*". Any mistaken *fundamental idea of God* will affect the *ideas, emotions and attitudes* guiding the life of any alcoholic. (see pg 27). Do you *believe* you are an exception?

MISTAKES IN WHAT YOU *BELIEVE* WILL IMPACT YOUR LIFE

For the alcoholic, any "*erroneous beliefs about a fundamental idea of God*" can have life and death implications. Gambling with "*beliefs about a Creative Intelligence*" is gambling with life. (see pg. 46) The only prize for winning is personal survival. Therefore, when playing "*Russian Roulette with your own life*", you may wish to consider:

HOW SAFE DO YOU WANT TO BE?

Universal principles provide the most intelligent basis for choosing a personal *belief system*. Reality is certainly more stable than emotional wishful thinking. A *fundamental idea of God* as being *the Great Reality* may have value to a newcomer to AA because the power of *new knowledge* is endless. (pgs 55 & 68). This approach to the power of *new knowledge* can be understood by anyone. (pgs 23 & 27). Seeking to

improve understanding of universal principles (Step 11) is an *idea of God* which is understandable to any finite mind of any alcoholic. (pg 23).

To utilize such an approach to a *fundamental idea of God* requires the alcoholic be sufficiently *open minded* to recognize that anyone may eventually discover more reality. (syn: "more God" - see Steps #3 & #11). You will note that this conception of God includes human equality for the individual alcoholic. (see pg 12). This leads to certain conclusions.

?As we have a *vital spiritual experience*, there is improved understanding of principles which apply to anyone, anyplace, at any time. (Step 11).

?As that understanding expands, the alcoholic becomes increasingly able to effectively deal with life on life's terms.

The result is improvement in personal happiness, joy and freedom over that which was available within the old *belief system*. (pg 133).

"We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us." (pg 84)

"When your relationship with Him is right, great events will come to pass for you and countless others." (pg 164)

Notice that **fear** touches every aspect of the life of an alcoholic. (pg 67). When working with newcomers, note that **the use of fear is a primary element of many traditional religions.**

This author finds it difficult to place trust in something which is feared. Many newcomers will feel that same way. Therefore, it is odd that some alcoholics in AA claim to be "God fearing" and still "trust infinite God" at the same time. (see pg. 68).

Any "**God fearing**" alcoholic may discover that **what they fear** is the wrath of an **old idea of God**. Some assume, develop and then adopt a "*Holier than Thou*" attitude (pg 18) about their religious *belief system* as if they had somehow risen above their humanity.

This is not particularly productive when trying to help another alcoholic to recover from alcoholism. The reason is simple, it emphasizes separation from other alcoholics. It is a *belief* in separation from reality, hence a *belief* in separation from God. (see pgs 23, 27, 55, 164 & Appendix II).

Any *close minded attitude* which discourages alcoholics from thinking outside of their traditional *belief system* will restrict *spiritual growth* simply because it is limited and that creates an obstacle to *spiritual progress*. Although many beneficial aspects are often

included, the old *belief system* may still need to be displaced and rearranged “in order to trade up”. (pg 27, 42 & 95).

Those alcoholics who choose to “*hold on to their old ideas of God*” will find it is a matter of personal preference to do so. (see pg. 58)..

Applying Step #10 to “*an old idea of God*” is beneficial in recovery from alcoholism. Those who adopt restrictive *belief systems* often discover they are like the man who stood on his right foot with his left foot while complaining he cannot run.

Herein lies a critical difference between AA and a religious approach to recovery. When an alcoholic accepts the proposition that God is everything, there is nothing to accept or reject which is not God. (see pg 53). If a *fundamental idea of God* excludes any person, place or thing, then some portion of reality is left out. At that point, the *closed mind* of an alcoholic is denying that more can be revealed. (see pg 164).

Recognition of that fundamental difference may have value to newcomers to AA if they are experiencing problems with traditional *belief systems* about God. Most religions define “what they believe”. This establishes their unique, individual and ethnocentric *belief system*. Despite some of their other values, a portion of *the Great Reality* has been omitted. (see pg. 53). Fortunately, by the inescapable introduction of *new knowledge*, more **will be** revealed **as** they are obliged to improve their conscious contact with “*God*”. (see pg 164 & Step 11).

Any choice of a *belief system* by the alcoholic reader establishes the path they desire to follow. It is their own responsibility. So are the consequences. The degree of intelligence used when choosing a personal *belief system* will be measured in terms of personal happiness, joy and freedom. (pg 133).

The only valid measure to evaluate any success is in how well the *belief system* works for the individual alcoholic. Someone else may have a different and equally valid idea of what constitutes happiness, joy and freedom for them. As equals, (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”), they are equally entitled to pursue their own *beliefs* and evaluate how well they produce “desired results”. (i.e.: “*the answer to prayer*”).

“*After all, our problems were of our own making.
Bottles were only a symbol. Besides, we have stopped
fighting anybody or anything. We have to!*” (pg 103)

WHO OR WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE IS KEEPING SCORE?

* * * * *

SECTION B08:

Chapter 8

TO WIVES

BEFORE ALANON:

READ:

The entire Chapter 8 beginning on page 104 “*With few exceptions, our book thus far has spoken of men.*” through to the end of the Chapter 8 on Page 121 ending with “*Good Luck and God bless you!*”.

COMMENTS:

There is a significant shift in emphasis in the basic text for recovery at this point. Until now, the message of recovery has been directed to the alcoholic. It reflected the experience of the first members who were successful in achieving recovery. Now, the reader is presented with the experience of the wives of alcoholics.

The message for the wives of alcoholics has application to nearly everyone who is bound by ties of blood or affection to an alcoholic. (pg 104). In addition, it can be useful when one alcoholic is working with another toward the common goal of recovery.

Remember, that when the book “*Alcoholics Anonymous*” was written, the social conditions were that the male “*head of the household*” was predominately the “*bread-winner*”. The prevailing social attitude is reflected in the basic text. Admittedly, there were also women who were alcoholics as well. However, at that time, the drinking wife, mother, or maiden aunt was often kept out of sight whenever possible. The polite and civilized thing to do was to avoid mentioning her drinking problem. Social conditions and “*traditional family values*” have changed with time.

In the basic text for recovery, the emphasis now shifts away from the alcoholic and **his problem with alcohol** to the spouse and **her problem with an alcoholic**. Nonetheless, the basic message remains the same:

AN ALCOHOLIC CAN RECOVER.

The recovery process has now entered a broader arena of consideration.. The previous message was about self-preservation for the alcoholic. Now the message concerns understanding recovery is possible. Some special attention is also given to matters of family and employment.

With conscious understanding that recovery for the alcoholic is possible, there is a broader principle which prevails. This author suggests that:

IT IS FUTILE TO TRY TO FORCE SOMEONE ELSE TO WANT WHAT YOU WANT THEM TO WANT.

Efforts to coerce, threaten, intimidate or bribe conformity from an alcoholic may produce temporary results. It is something akin to “*painting a house to hide the termites*”. However, when the alcoholic is truly free to make choices, they will do what it is they most want to do. (i.e.: “*their prayer*”). On the premise of human equality, (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”), it is re-emphasized that:

EVERYONE DOES THEIR OWN WANTING.

The alcoholic will drink - if they want to. Many pursue it into the gates of insanity or death before they consciously understand the life-threatening nature of their malady. (pg 31 & Step 11). However, self-preservation is a fundamental law of life. This is followed closely by the sex drive to preserve the species.

Those two primitive forces for preservation can easily become entangled in the lives of alcoholics. Keeping their priorities straight is of critical importance. A mistake in judgment can have potentially fatal consequences for an alcoholic.

Drinking alcohol does provide *temporary relief* from those feelings of *fear, shame and guilt*, acquired from many religious *belief systems*. (review pg. 133). Therefore, a word of caution is offered about getting them confused with “*God’s will*” in the AA recovery process.

WITHOUT SURVIVAL, NOTHING ELSE FOLLOWS

This observation does not deny the possibility of some “*other life*” which no one has yet been able to confirm. Because no one has the ability to demonstrate the existence of such a condition, it is an intelligent choice to take care of this life while the opportunity is at hand.

“ONE LIFE AT A TIME!”

When seeking to obtain the best benefits from this lifetime, there is only one observation about “*God’s will*” for the alcoholic in the basic text.

“We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous, and free. We cannot subscribe to the belief that this life is a vale of tears, though it once was just that for many of us. But it is clear that we made our own misery. God didn’t do it.”
(pg 133)

Therefore, be cautious about more religious AA members trying to interpret “*the will of God*” for you. The alcoholic reader may dare to ask of them “*How would you know?*”. Most often it will become apparent that they are merely parroting the dogma of their chosen *belief system*.

Some self-appointed experts on your life may even state with great self-assurance that “*God wants you sober*”. This may or may not be correct. However, intelligence indicates that, if this were true, then you are “*more powerful than God*” because you have the capacity to get smashing drunk any time you want to do so. That option to drink is sufficient to establish that:

1. **If God wants me sober,**
- and
2. **I can go get drunk**
- then
3. **I am more powerful than God.**

Short of physical restraints, any alcoholic has the ability to get drunk if they want to. It should be self-evident, that if someone believes that God wanted them sober, then it is that *fundamental idea of God* which is flawed.

In a society which places great emphasis upon gaining power and control over others, it can be pretty heady stuff to *believe* you know “*God’s will for others*”. For the alcoholic, a more subtle and insidious problem arises. As “*head of the household*” it is their ego which needs to be smashed. While married alcoholics do not have a monopoly on such problems, their egos usually need deflating to accommodate reality. (syn: “God”). This is particularly so when the basis for evaluation of “*family values*” is a set of standards established in ancient writings.

This author does not *believe* that a “*second-hand belief system*” takes priority over personal survival. By contrast to a sudden and spectacular upheaval, the “*vital spiritual experience*” of most recovered alcoholics has been of the “*educational variety*” and has been “*sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism*”. (see Appendix II). There are those who know and those who don’t know. Seeking and accepting the power of *new knowledge* is part of that educational process.

That prayer is being answered now on the basis of a daily reprieve contingent upon the maintenance of a spiritual condition. (pg 85). That daily reprieve demands an attitude where the mind is not closed to all spiritual concepts. (Appendix II). The alcoholic reader may wish to pursue this path of recovery. It is there if you want it.

“We found that God does not make too hard terms with those who seek Him. To us, the Realm of Spirit is broad, roomy, all inclusive; never exclusive or forbidding to those who earnestly seek. It is open, we believe to all men.” (pg 46)

Because spiritual concepts extend beyond the finite limits of human understanding, there is always more to be known. This specifically includes claims by the best experts of any religious *belief system*. Individual agreement or disagreement is not an issue with spiritual principles which govern an infinite universe.

Maintaining a vital spiritual experience requires enlarging a spiritual life by keeping an open mind about that which is not known.

(see pgs 14-15, 35 & Appendix II). **This is an on-going mental process.**
(review Steps 10-12).

As conscious understanding of the Ultimate Reality is enlarged, an expanded concept of “a power greater than ourselves” follows. Access to that “infinite concept of God” is available to anyone who seeks it. (pg 60).

An endless supply of *new knowledge* is available to any alcoholic unless they block off considering any valid new information because it does not fit into their “*old idea of God*”. Such a mental attitude is the same as saying:

**DON'T BOTHER ME WITH FACTS,
I'VE ALREADY GOT MY MIND MADE UP**

Religious concepts of God are “*second-hand belief systems*” which become the personal values of the alcoholic concerned. The *belief system* may have been chosen on the basis of intelligence or of emotion. Once the alcoholic has allowed that concept to become a guiding force in their lives, (pg 27), it will impact the results they experience. In contrast to most religious concepts, the AA approach to a “*power greater than ourselves*” is clear.

“We have no monopoly on God, we merely have an approach that worked for us.” (pg 95)

Here is where the wife or partner of an alcoholic can get confused. They each have their own equally valid concept of “*the power*”. (pg. 55). What they *believe* about God may not be sufficient to assure the survival of the alcoholic.

The dominant desire (i.e.: “*prayer*”) of the wife is often the admirable objective of preserving the family. Meanwhile, the alcoholic has an even stronger desire for another drink. This becomes equal versions of “*God's will to answer a prayer*”. Their “equally valid beliefs” about “*the will of God*” for the alcoholic are not necessarily the same as reality. (pg. 133).

In efforts to achieve a goal they believe to be “*God's will*”, some well meaning wives attempt all manner of things to insure the fulfillment of what are really their own desires.

This, on the assumption they are best qualified to determine what the other person should want for themselves. Often, this includes their *belief* they are doing “*God's will*” and will be rewarded for their efforts.

Because they lack the power to control another equally powerful human being, (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”), they usually fail. The failure aggravates an already difficult situation which can trigger a fundamental principle in human emotions where:

ALL FRUSTRATION LEADS TO AGGRESSION

For the alcoholic, such a response can have potentially fatal consequences. (pg. 66). The alcoholic may choose to drink, sometimes motivated to prove equality and establish that no one can control him. (pg. 64). In this manner, the alcoholic may assert his own individuality and independence.

It is ironic that when an alcoholic does not survive, the well meaning spouse, friend, or sponsor who was trying to manipulate them is still around to say “*Whoops*”. That high drama may be followed by their own educational variety of *spiritual awareness* by recognition of the truth that:

I NEVER MADE A MISTAKE BEFORE, BUT THIS MIGHT BE ONE.

In a family situation, it is easy for the alcoholic to lower the priority of their sobriety and allow other issues to become “*more important*”. (see pg 23). Money, property and prestige can readily become top priority. This would be well and good if they were “*cured*”. Unfortunately, there is still no known cure for alcoholism. Science may one day accomplish this, but it hasn’t done so yet. (pg 31). Thus far the most intelligent method, which has produced the best results, is based upon a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of a spiritual condition. (pg 85).

Both science and religion have been dealing with alcoholism for a long time. Thus far neither have achieved results comparable to those recoveries produced with the AA program.

The efforts of science and religion are to be commended. Recovered alcoholics owe a debt of deep gratitude to anyone who genuinely desires to be helpful to alcoholics. Time was when few did, or even cared or bothered to help. Still, it is ultimately the individual alcoholic who must decide how seriously they value staying alive and carrying their own keys.

Scientific or religious approaches to alcoholism can sometimes offer appealing distractions from successful recovery. Especially if they imply a possibility for successful drinking at some future time. (see pg 31). However, any mistake based upon *wishful thinking* can be fatal for the alcoholic who chooses that path. From this perspective, as far as the AA program is concerned, “*the spiritual life is not a theory*”. The alcoholic has to live it to survive. (pg 87).

Spiritual progress, rather than spiritual perfection in AA is measured by the progress of the individual alcoholic. Are they more happy, joyous and free than previously? (see pg 133).

The *vital spiritual experience* essential for recovery appears to be in the nature of a huge emotional displacement and rearrangement of ideas, emotions and attitudes which were once guiding forces. (pg 27). When he was informed such a *vital spiritual experience* was required for recovery, one early member of AA erroneously concluded that his *religious affiliation* would be sufficient.

“Upon hearing this, our friend was somewhat relieved, for he reflected that, after all, he was a good church member. This hope, however, was destroyed by the doctor’s telling him that while his religious convictions were very good, in his case they did not spell the necessary vital spiritual experience.” (pg 27)

ONCE AGAIN, THERE IS A NEED TO EMPHASIZE THAT TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS CONVICTIONS ARE NOT THE SAME AS THE VITAL SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE REQUIRED FOR RECOVERY FROM ALCOHOLISM.

Many alcoholics have assumed that religion has a monopoly on God. (see pg. 95). Perhaps this is because religious spokesmen frequently lay claim to matters they cannot defend with intelligence. As a consequence, many alcoholics confuse the spiritual program of AA with their religious *belief system*. Because they make **some progress** using their religious *belief system*, there is a tendency to assume it is **the only way** to enlarge a spiritual life. This misunderstanding restricts them to **limited progress** when infinite *spiritual growth* would otherwise be available.

When dealing with an alcoholic, it is well to be clear about your own **primary purpose**. Is it:

1. To help the alcoholic achieve sobriety?

OR

2. To convert the alcoholic to a personal concept of God?

Obviously, **any spiritual progress** will benefit those closest to the alcoholic. They are dealing with “*an improved human being*” as a result. The same principles of AA that wives used when the AA Big Book was written have now been developed into innumerable other “*12-Step programs*”. Be aware that those **principles** used by AA and others are neither new, nor exclusive in their application.

“We have no monopoly on God; we merely have an approach that worked with us.” (pg 95)

Universal principles have been discovered and rediscovered for as long as thinking individuals have noticed they exist. Centuries of

conflict have been produced by the *erroneous belief of having the only valid concept of God. Many of those conflicts are still actively in operation.*

The *beliefs* which are synonymous with *the Great Reality* are the ones which provide the *vital spiritual experience* required for recovery. Any *belief system* beyond that reflects a *personal preference* about what to believe.

The implication that “*you should believe just like me*” can be offensive to many alcoholics seeking recovery. (see pg 95).

The alcoholic who has chosen a specific religious *belief system* to produce more personal happiness, joy and freedom, (pg 133), will have no conflict with the AA program. The objectives of AA for the alcoholic in this lifetime, are the same. Any considerations beyond that have nothing to do with the AA program. The only intelligent measure of any *belief* is in how well it works to produce demonstrable results.

Wives, partners, or friends of an alcoholic frequently have different priorities on how to be *happy, joyous and free*. (i.e.: “*God’s will*” see pg 133). They too will find there is no substitute for demonstrated results. The experience of the Alanon Family Program is an invaluable source of information on what works. (i.e.: “*principles before personalities*” - see Tradition 12).

Others who lack the phenomenon of craving for alcohol have learned to change their own ideas, emotions and attitudes when dealing with an alcoholic. (see pg 27 & “The Doctor’s Opinion”). One significant element is to recognize the difference between:

1. Trying to change yourself,

and

2. Trying to change someone else.

Anyone dealing with an alcoholic would do well to clearly understand what they are trying to do.

WHAT IS YOUR PRIMARY PURPOSE?

If someone knows to how achieve the results you desire, you can learn what they know. Your desire for that *new knowledge* is consistent with “*a prayer*”. If what is most desired (syn: “*prayed for*”) is available to anyone, then that *new knowledge* is available to all who seek it. (pg 60).

WHY NOT ACCEPT YOUR OWN EQUALITY?

No one is denied the ability to acquire *new knowledge*. The reader will find that *Great Reality* within their own thought processes. (syn: “*God*” - pg 55) The sources of *new knowledge* are endless. (i.e.: “*God*” - see pgs 53 & 68). The early members of AA were specific when they wrote:

“We found the Great Reality deep down within us.
In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found.
It was so with us.” (pg 55)

How else could you recognize what you were looking for when you found it? A very simple and universal principle to recognize about the workings of your own mind is that:

**THE THING YOU ARE LOOKING FOR
IS THE THING YOU ARE LOOKING WITH.**

The alternative is a *belief* of being a victim singled out for *special treatment* by a power which is unequally *playing favorites*. The choice of such a *belief system* is individual, and so are the results.

* * * * *

SECTION B09a:

Chapter 9

THE FAMILY AFTERWARD

BEFORE ALANON:

READ:

The entire Chapter 9 beginning on page 122 with "*Our women folk have suggested*" through to the end of Chapter 9 on Page 135.

COMMENTS:

The reader interested in resolving family problems may find highly desirable solutions by investigating the Alanon Family program. They have answers which produce satisfactory results for the problems of many wives, family members, and close associates of alcoholics.

This author does not lay claim to any noteworthy personal success in dealing with family problems. There is no argument with those who have other ideas and hold the resolution of their family problems as their top priority. Nonetheless, there has been highly acceptable progress and improvement in achieving personal happiness, joy and freedom. (see pg 133). That benefit is something experience indicates is available to anyone who seeks it.

A wide variety of views already exist on the best way to deal with family problems. Just as with recovery from alcoholism, the path chosen by the reader will be one of personal preference. It either will or will not produce the kind of results desired. Intelligent choices and decisions do appear to produce superior results over those based upon emotional reactions to problems.

The more intelligence is involved, the less emotion prevails, and the more realistic are the results.

The discarding of *personal intelligence* in favor of *emotional wishful thinking* does not seem to work out very well. There exists a noteworthy difference between *inescapable reality* and a *belief system* which may not be valid. Particularly when *wishful thinking* reflects a *belief system* obtained from others who are not directly affected. While it is possible they may be right, that question often can be clarified by asking those authorities:

DON'T TELL ME, - SHOW ME!

Traditional religious views of family matters offer a variety of opinions about the roles and responsibilities of individual family members. Some *religious authorities* claim direct knowledge of "*the will of God*". This can range from attendance at religious services

along with financial tithing, to birth control, abortion and divorce. Those *traditional family values*, are often based upon ancient writings which they have adapted and modified to fit into modern-day society. Many alcoholics discover those *old ideas* and values may not be realistically applicable to their present-time life activities.

Be they religious or otherwise, what authorities on family matters have to offer is their own knowledge and their own *beliefs*. The reader may find agreement with some portion of one *belief system*, while finding portions of another to be unacceptable. This leads to more confusion and turmoil as to whom to *believe* has “*the right answer*”. They all may be mistaken.

Just remember that “*their knowledge is not your knowledge*”. Your agreement is not the important issue. What is significant is how well any one particular *belief system* is compatible with reality. (syn: “God”).

YOU DON'T KNOW UNLESS YOU KNOW!

Doubts do not get resolved without *new knowledge*. Therefore a common ground exists between both science and religion when both accept there is more to be understood about the Ultimate Reality of life.

Science demands facts to understand principles. Traditional religions do not, and often combine *wishful thinking* and *fanciful beliefs* with their version of reality. It is this difference which makes most religious versions of an *infinite reality* difficult to reconcile with the “*god-given intelligence*” of many individual alcoholics.

It becomes particularly awkward for religions to defend their *belief system* when what they believe cannot be reconciled with factual demonstrations of reality. (see pg 51).

This can lead to complicated arguments in a vain effort to defend an untenable situation. Eventually, it is the individual who decides what to *accept or reject* as their own concept of reality. (i.e.: “God” - see pgs 12, 23, 27, 55, 129, 164 & Appendix II). When mental confusion and emotional turmoil occurs, (pg 23), it should be recognized that:

REALITY REMAINS REALITY.

Mental confusion and emotional turmoil directly impact personal happiness, joy and freedom. A debate over reality may be an option for some drinkers, but for the alcoholic a mistake can be critical and potentially life-threatening. When the alcoholic drinks they develop that *phenomenon of craving* which sets them apart from others. (see “The Doctor’s Opinion” & pgs 30-32). That is reality for the alcoholic and does not change simply because someone else is able to drink successfully. Many alcoholics pursue their efforts to “*drink like other people*” into the gates of insanity or death. (pg 30).

Regardless of sincerity or good intentions, the ultimate reality of alcoholism is not subject to negotiation. What science or religion *believe about alcoholism* does not change

the truth. Neither does the refusal of any individual alcoholic to accept that Ultimate Reality. (syn: "God").

WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT, - THAT'S HOW IT IS!

This author *believes* the most intelligent choice for an alcoholic is to seek the most realistic concept of "a power greater than themselves" (pg 12) which is available at the time. Then, be willing to "trade up" as more *new knowledge* is revealed from the source. AA still produces the best results.

This is a different kind of *spiritual experience* from those who have the "hot flash" variety. (pg 164 & Appendix II). Where *recovery from alcoholism* is of paramount importance, only the results really matter. By improving conscious understanding of the reality of alcoholism, an individual alcoholic enlarges their own *spiritual life*. (pgs 14-15 & Step 11). This *educational variety* of a spiritual awakening reveals more of the true nature of their problem. (see pgs 31-32, 60 & Appendix II). With an expanded concept of reality (syn: "God") their mind opens to personal progress with beneficial value for "*The Family Afterward*". (pgs 12, 23 & 60)

As with the Chapter "*To Wives*", the title "*The Family Afterward*", assumes there is one. Both chapters reflected social values which prevailed at the time the basic text for recovery was written. Traditional religion was then and still is the most vocal spokesmen for those "*traditional family values*". Standards which existed several decades or several centuries ago have changed. Many are not now necessarily acceptable nor equally applicable to every individual alcoholic.

WHO DECIDES YOUR VALUES TODAY?

Arguments abound over what alcoholics should desire. Those arguments are freely offered by both professionals and other authorities designated as competent to decide. Ultimately, the alcoholic reader will make that determination for themselves. Whom they believe is competent will be their own choice. It may not necessarily be an *intelligent choice*.

The decision of choosing who is an authority directly impacts the basic approach an alcoholic takes to living life. It is their ideas, emotions and attitudes which will become the guiding forces. (see pg 27). **Recognition of what is life, on life's terms provides the freedom to change that fundamental idea of truth, good & reality.** (all syn: "God"- see pgs 12, 23, 42, 55, 83-84 & 98).

For many readers the above observation may seem self-evident. For more religious members, it may gore the sacred bulls of their entire *belief system*.

This author recommends honesty and open-mindedness about what you believe. Also a willingness to take personal responsibility for that choice as having direct impact

upon personal happiness, joy and freedom. (see pg 133). Unhappily for some, reality will not agree with *old ideas* or *wishful thinking* about “*how life should be*”. Eventually, each alcoholic will live their own life on life’s terms regardless of how well or how badly their personal *belief system* is in harmony, balance or compatibility with *the Great Reality*. (pg 55).

Where family matters are concerned, every alcoholic must eventually answer to themselves:

1. Do I desire to live my life in “single harness”

OR

2. Do I desire to live my life in “double harness”?

Ultimately, each alcoholic decides which path to follow. Their decision may be based upon intelligence or emotions. Often, the choice will be dictated or influenced by some spokesman for a traditional religion which claims direct knowledge of “*The Will of God for you*”. Although the alcoholic may not be consciously aware of it, (Step 11), they do have the freedom to either *believe them* or to *question their authority*.

In their own mind, (pg 23), **the alcoholic establishes a belief that “the spokesmen for God” is either their superior or their equal as a human being.** (i.e.: “in the eyes of God”). **The real equality will not change.** The only difference will be in the way that alcoholic relates themselves to *the Great Reality*. (i.e.: “God”). What is affected is a *fundamental idea of God*, as determined by their own personal *belief system* about “the Great Reality”. (pgs 12, 23, 55). **This author suggests that mistakes are possible and can be corrected.**

Any alcoholic is free to blindly accept the moral judgments of others as being superior to their own. By their own choice they then establish a personal preference for the “*second-hand values*” of their chosen authority. When doing so, they abdicate personal responsibility for that portion of their life.

However, every alcoholic is equally free to improve their own conscious understanding of the same *new knowledge* which is available to others. (Step 11). This is precisely the same *new knowledge* used to designate *an equal human being* as being their superior, according to their own belief system.

“Remember that we deal with alcohol-cunning,
baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But
there is One who has all power - that One is God. May you
find Him now!
(pgs 58-59)

The reader either does or does not believe they can go to the same source that experts got their *new knowledge*. This author suggests the reader has equal access to that power (i.e.: “God”) and that it is always available if it is sought. (pg 60(c)).

If there is conflict about living in either a “*family situation*” or as a “*single member of society*” that conflict will impact directly upon the personal happiness, joy and freedom for the alcoholic concerned. Resolution of that conflict will be, according to their personal understanding of *the Great Reality*. (i.e.: “God” - see Step 11). Whatever action gets taken either will or will not be compatible with the Ultimate Reality of Life. (syn: “God’s Will”). Those who understand more of reality are likely to make better choices. (Step 11).

Often more *new knowledge* is desirable. “*How much is enough*” will depend upon how happy, joyous and free the alcoholic wants to be. Advice from others can have great value. However, *new knowledge* is infinite, and so is personal ignorance. (pg 68). *Spiritual progress* in reducing ignorance of *the Great Reality* (i.e.: “God”) improves conscious understanding of how to cooperate with life, on life’s terms. (pgs 12, 14-15, 35, 42, 60, 129, 133, 164, Step 11 & Appendix II).

The alcoholic reader, either does or does not know how to maintain such an attitude toward understanding an infinite reality. (pg 68 & Step 11). Obviously, other views exist which imply that everyone is a victim, and that any intelligent thinking is irrelevant to personal well-being. Who or what do you *believe* is keeping score on your own spiritual progress?

This author has concluded that the use of the “*God-given intelligence*” within the alcoholic is an essential ingredient to becoming happy, joyous and free. (pg 55, 86, 133).

“*THINK - THINK - THINK*”

An alcoholic reader may choose to seek more knowledge from other individuals, or go to the same source others got their *new knowledge*. For many alcoholics, this concept may not be compatible with their religious *belief system* which requires a “*middle-man*” to interpret “*the Will of God*” for them. Often such a *belief system* is part of an effort to control the lives of others. For any alcoholic, it is a matter of their own personal preference of “what to believe”.

ALCOHOLICS WHO *BELIEVE* IN HUMAN EQUALITY WILL ALSO *BELIEVE* “*IN EQUAL ACCESS TO GOD*”

When personal behavior does not conform to what is *believed*, then a conflict exists. A lack of personal integrity is the result. This internal conflict will block happiness, joy and freedom because the two approaches to life are not integrated with “*God’s will for the alcoholic*”. (review pgs 30-32, 58 & 133).

The most intelligent information available at the time, can be the basis of a choice which will resolve the indecision of what action to take.

Recognize that as additional *new knowledge* becomes available, a further and new decision may be required to **improve** conscious understanding of reality. (Steps 3, 11 & pg 164).

Beliefs concerning equal access to the source of *new knowledge* also become an issue with “*family matters*”. Successful two-party relationships are those where both parties have a desire to be in the relationship. Each individual wants what they want, for their own reasons. It is of no real consequence why.

Mutual desire is the glue which holds any two individuals together in any relationship. Why they want the relationship to continue is a matter of their own personal preference. The desire of the individual may be divinely inspired or it may be sick and neurotic. Nonetheless, neither party has any real control over the desires of the other.

It is trespassing to meddle in the life of another, equal human being, without being invited to do so. Here again your belief in human equality (i.e.: “in the eyes of God”) is at issue. Consider “your own reaction” when someone meddles in your affairs without your permission to do so.

Even an infant in a crib knows when their individuality is being trespassed upon by others. That awareness exists regardless of their ignorance of the consequences of their actions. An infant may cooperate with superior forces or resist without use of any personal intelligence.

The emotional response of any sensitive, childish and grandiose alcoholic is often much the same when others impose upon them. Sometimes **protecting the integrity of their individuality** will be more important than using their “*God-given*” intelligence to consider **the best choice for their own interests**. (review pgs 30-32). Under that mental condition, rebellion will become automatic.

In a broader context, the forces of society and religion will frequently impose pressures upon alcoholics without considering their own personal desires. (i.e.: “prayers”). Any alcoholic who is undecided about living their life in “double-harness” or in “single-harness”, may wish to consider this. What are your own personal priorities?

If forced to choose, would you **honestly** prefer to:

1. Abandon what is important to you in order to maintain the relationship?

OR

2. Abandon the relationship to maintain the integrity of your own values of what is important?

An **honest answer** may help distinguish *reality* from *wishful thinking*. (see pg. 58). The alternative is to allow someone else decide what is best and right for you. This makes you dependent upon them and their values for your own happiness. This may not be the most intelligent option available.

For an alcoholic who develops a unique *phenomenon of craving* whenever they do drink, (see *The Doctor’s Opinion*), it is not an intelligent choice to let another person decide for them when to drink or not to drink. Because it is the alcoholic who ultimately

decides what they really want, the consequences of the choice are inescapable. It either helps them to be happy, joyous and free or it does not. (pg 133).

Seeking new awareness from the experience of others is equivalent to seeking *new knowledge*. Note the difference between allowing others to make decisions for you. More *new knowledge* may produce *improved understanding of the Great Reality*. (see pgs 14-15, 164 & Step 11). Nothing in life precludes the alcoholic from seeking and acquiring *new knowledge*. (see pgs 31-32, & 60).

Knowledge is power. Knowledge you do not yet possess is “a power greater than yourself”. (pg 59).

The availability of any authority which an alcoholic has chosen to make decisions to run their lives will quickly become a problem. This often includes an unrealistic expectation they will always be available when answers are urgently required. **Many religious alcoholics “want to believe” that a “special someone” will make their selfish and self-centered problems a matter of priority.** Such a *belief system* has provided the foundation for many of the traditional religious approaches to “*a power greater than ourselves*”.

This author *believes* every alcoholic has direct access to the source of all knowledge and all power. (syn: “God” - see pgs 53, 55, 68, 129, 164 & Appendix II). For some, it becomes a self-evident truth that *new knowledge* must come from the source of all knowledge. Obviously, other *beliefs* exist about needing someone or something to find “God”. In AA, no “*middle-man*” is required.

As with an infant, some urgent needs of an alcoholic cannot wait for them to discover the best possible solution to a problem. Reality demands that they make decisions and take action utilizing “the best information available at the time”. It is unrealistic “wishful thinking” to assume that someone or something else will always be readily available.

Many traditional religions offer a “*middle-man service*” to those who choose not to do any intelligent thinking on their own. Nonetheless, many alcoholics tap into the endless source of *new knowledge* on their own, without requirement of a middleman. (pg 60(a-c)). When seeking a solution to a problem, the use of personal intelligence is desirable. The practical experience of the middle-man has value if they can demonstrate what does or does not work. The alcoholic remains responsible for deciding what it is that they want to work. (i.e.: “*the answer to their prayer*”).

“Upon awakening let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day. Before we begin, we ask God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives. Under these conditions we can employ our mental faculties with assurance, for after all God gave us brains to use. Our thought-life will be placed on a much higher plane when our thinking is cleared of wrong motives.” (pg 86)

This provides a new degree of freedom from dependency (pg 83) when human power is not available. **Seeking the source of all new knowledge can be equated with seeking a concept of God.** (pgs 12 & 60(c)). It can if you choose to believe it is. (pg 23). Any additional *belief* that some *super-human individual* is required for access to the power is optional.

IT'S YOUR MIND AND YOU CAN BELIEVE ANYTHING

When conditions are being unwillingly imposed by *social pressures*, then *personal integrity and self-honesty* become important factors for consideration. In many cases, the glue of *mutual desire* in family matters is based upon avoidance of consequences by society rather than any honest desire to have the relationship continue.

One definition of “*a compromise*” is that:

“TWO PEOPLE BOTH GET SOMETHING NEITHER REALLY WANTS”

Most alcoholics have already encountered voices in society and religion telling them what they “*should want*”, or “*how life ought to be*”. Political pressures often get applied to force individuals to conform. Those who make the rules often base their actions upon a claim of knowing “*God’s Will for the individual*”. **Usually it is someone else besides themselves who needs the improvement.** Those who make moral judgments almost invariably exclude themselves by claiming to be “*better than those others*”. (syn: “*ethnocentric*”).

In the real world, alcoholics are apt to encounter more vocal experts on *morality* than those able to demonstrate *attractive results*. (review Tradition 11). Any moral judgment is best left to those able to demonstrate expertise and excellence which is attractive to others who want what they have as a “*success story*”. This includes choosing to live in “*single-harness*” or in “*double-harness*”.

The capacity to use personal intelligence is inherent within most alcoholics. (see pg. 58). **However, it is their *belief* in human equality which is at issue. This author suggests choices, based upon what produces the most desired results, are superior to the *moralistic wishful thinking* provided by others.**

Such an evaluation is individual for the alcoholic, and based upon what they *believe* will produce their own best personal happiness, joy and freedom. (syn: “*God’s will*” - pg 133). Without question, “*more will be revealed*”, and when it is, the alcoholic is free to “*trade up*” to a more and improved level of spiritual progress in dealing with life, on life’s terms. (pgs 14-15, 45, 55, 60, 129, 164, Step 11 & Appendix II).

Remember, that the mind of the alcoholic is capable of *believing* something which is erroneous. (pgs 23 & 27). Furthermore, there is always more new knowledge available. Therefore the practical observation remains.

INDIVIDUALS DO THEIR OWN WANTING

Coercion or pressure to impose conformity with any pre-established *moral code of conduct* directly impacts personal happiness. Resolution of that conflict requires the individual to either disallow the validity to their own honest desires, (syn: “*prayers*”) or abandon conformity to the “*second-hand*” moral code of others.

TO THINE OWN SELF BE TRUE .

Most individuals will freely make choices to their own best interests, when they consciously understand what that is. (Steps 3 & 11). This is a practical choice which is usually preferred over some “*second-hand*” moral theory when there is a recognizable difference.

Be aware that, without a complete understanding of reality, the moral judgment of one individual will potentially be as valid or flawed as that of any other human being. In practical terms, this means an entire *belief system* can be subject to error. (pgs 23, 27, 60-62, Step 10).

Arguments of “*better*” are based upon a limited personal perception of reality. For the reader, that will be their own perception which may be as valid or imperfect as that of anyone else. It is the demonstrated results which are of real significance. All else is speculation.

Traditional religions offer a seemingly endless supply of moral judgments about “*what is good*”. Where those claims produce desired results, it is difficult to argue with success. By contrast, “*wishful thinking and fanciful beliefs*” are difficult to establish as being real. Each individual eventually decides what they will or will not *believe*.

The reader with an open mind may ultimately be required to make a choice between two fundamental approaches to life. (see pg 42).

IS IT GOOD?

OR

DOES IT WORK?

Constant improvement upon a conscious understanding of Universal Principles appears to produce the most reliable results. (review Step 11). The reason is simple. Principles are all inclusive and work for anyone, at any place, and at any time. Traditional religions are usually restricted to some “*exclusive idea*” which is part of their *belief structure* and is a pre-requisite for membership in their *ethnocentric group*. Any finite idea will always exclude some element of an infinite reality. (i.e.: “*God*” see pgs 53, 55, 68 & Appendix II).

The experience of successfully recovered alcoholics however is clear.

“We found the Great Reality deep down within us.
In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found.
It was so with us.” (pg 55)

With that thought in mind, this author asks the reader:

“WHAT DOES THE WORD ONLY MEAN TO YOU?”

Many alcoholics continue to *believe* their church membership constitutes the necessary vital spiritual experience for recovery. (pg 27). When this occurs, many find the foundation of their old ideas are uncomfortably joined with atheists and agnostics because both have excluded some element of that “*Great Reality*”. (syn: “God” - pg 55).

“Instead of regarding ourselves as intelligent agents, spearheads of God’s ever advancing Creation, we agnostics and atheist chose to believe that our human intelligence was the last word, the alpha and the omega, the beginning and end of all. Rather vain of us, wasn’t it?” (pg 49)

As part of the “*everything*” which is God, each alcoholic has some, but not all power. (pgs 53 & 59). As “*a spearhead of God’s ever advancing Creation*”, every alcoholic changes all life by what they do with their life.

**“YOU HAVE POWER TO CHANGE THE UNIVERSE,
- BUT ONLY BY THE COUNT OF ONE”.**

For good or for ill, *as an equal human being*, every alcoholic has some impact upon life. In this regard, *life is fair according to life’s terms*. Life will not necessarily be fair when judged according to *old ideas or personal beliefs*.

Any personal understanding of life’s terms will have finite limitations. In an ever-changing universe, there is always a constant need for *improved understanding and spiritual progress* in order to maintain cooperation with *the Great Reality*. (i.e.: “God” see pgs 14-15, 23, 27, 35, 45, 53, 55, 60, 129, 133, 164, Steps 10-11, & Appendix II).

For the alcoholic, seeking relief from a once seemingly hopeless state of mind and body because of a lack of power: (pg. 45).

“But there is One who has all power - that One is God. May you find Him now!” (pg 59)

Where knowledge is power, there is always more to know. The supply of *new knowledge*, and the power that goes with it, is infinite. (pg 68). Accordingly, any old ideas or preconceived notions about family matters which are part of an alcoholic’s *belief system* are subject to change and improvement with the addition of *new knowledge* of reality.

The alcoholic reader either is or is not sufficiently open-minded enough to give some new thinking the respect of their own intelligent consideration. (review quote in Appendix II).

Consciously understanding how to be *happy, joyous and free* is knowing how to do “*God’s will*”. (pg 133 & Step 11). What more does an alcoholic need to seek in order to make *spiritual progress* and personal improvements in this lifetime? Any personal preference to seek *new knowledge* will have a direct bearing upon the results.

A life that is realistically happy, joyous and free is the promise made by AA to those who are painstaking about this phase of their development. (see pgs 83-84). Is that what you are seeking, or is it something else?

* * * * *

SECTION B09b:

Chapter 9

THE FAMILY AFTERWARD

MORE BEFORE ALANON:

RE-READ:

The entire Chapter 9 beginning on page 122 with “*Our women folk have suggested*” through to the end of Chapter 9 on Page 135.

COMMENTS:

In the previous section, the reader was provided a point of view addressed to individuals who are concerned about an alcoholic. This section is addressed primarily to those individual alcoholics who have become involved with the AA program of recovery. As with all comments in this Study Guide, the opinions expressed are those of the author. They are offered for the intelligent consideration of the reader and do not reflect the only possible interpretation. However, recognize that principles do have universal application.

The alcoholic reader is always free to decide what has value in their own recovery process and discard the rest. The only valid measure of success will be personal. Hopefully the choice will produce increased happiness, joy and freedom. (i.e.: “*God’s will for you*” see pg 133). Accordingly, it is recommended the alcoholic reader reject any portion which does not produce the results they desire.

**WHY BOTHER TO PRAY FOR SOMETHING
IF YOU WON’T ACCEPT IT WHEN GIVEN?**

After all, your “*prayers*” are for the fulfillment of your dominate desires, aren’t they? It may be a surprised to discover that “*prayers get answered on life’s terms*” rather than according to some “*second-hand belief system*”. Fortunately, the alcoholic is free to change whatever they want the most at any time they choose.

The Chapters addressed “*To Wives*” and to “*The Family Afterward*” presume those conditions are applicable. This is not necessarily so for all who join the fellowship of AA. Regardless of their social status, the individual alcoholic has a need to discover principles of AA which have application to anyone with a desire to stop drinking. The principles of recovery found in AA cut across all blocks and barriers which otherwise separate individuals from each other. The fellowship of AA has demonstrated an ability to do just that for any alcoholic.

This author has observed the AA program of recovery transcend boundaries of race, religion, political ideologies, as well as those of sex, education, and financial status.

“No one is too discredited or has sunk too low to be welcomed cordially --if he means business. Social distinctions, petty rivalries and jealousies--these are laughed out of countenance. Being wrecked in the same vessel, being restored and united under one God, with hearts and minds attuned to the welfare of others, the things which matter so much to some people no longer signify much to them. How could they?” (pg 161)

Recognizably, some individuals or groups in AA may depart from accepting the universal aspect of the AA program. A careful look at AA’s own definition of itself (i.e.: *The AA Preamble*) and the “Long-Form of the Twelve Traditions” (see Appendix I) usually provides identification of those differences. It is the “*group conscience*” which has responsibility for correction of those errors in judgment by any AA group. Other activities, which imply some “*second requirement for membership*”, are outside of the AA program and warrant honest identification of their objectives.

For example, the “group conscience” of some AA groups may readily accept “being restored to sanity and united under one God” (pg 161) only so long as it is “their concept of God”. (pg 12).

For the most part, every AA member wishes every other AA member well, insofar as their sobriety is concerned. However, a limited belief system (pg 27) may impact alcoholics who disagree in some subtle but destructive ways. Because the basic message of AA was not intelligently understood, a non-conformist may well feel being excluded from the message of recovery offered by that particular “*group conscience*”. This can produce *fear of failure, anger at exclusion and guilt for being different.*

FEAR, ANGER AND GUILT DESTROY PERSONAL HAPPINESS!

The author of this Study Guide suggests that fear, anger and guilt get their power from personal ignorance and that there is “*some intelligence called God*” which runs a perfect universe. Furthermore, that the universe is proceeding quite nicely without the need for approval from any individual, or “*individual group conscience*”.

The alcoholic has the freedom of choice to cooperate with or resist that universal power. (see pg 59). **When the choice is cooperation, then the will of God and the dominate desire of the alcoholic are the same** (i.e.: “their prayer” - see pg 85).

MISTAKES PRODUCE CONFLICTS WITH REALITY.

Ignorance of the Great Reality (syn: "God" - pg 55) then becomes the main problem for the alcoholic. (see pgs 23 & 45). There is "**God**" and then there is "**the fundamental idea of God**" defined by the **belief system** of the alcoholic which guides the choices they make in their daily affairs. (review pgs 27, 55 & 85). When there is a difference between **the Great Reality** and what the alcoholic **believes about God**, there is conflict. That conflict exists within the mind of the alcoholic. (pg 23).

As the truth is understood, the alcoholic gains freedom from the self-inflicted wounds of their own mistakes in personal judgment.
(Steps 3, 11 & pg 85).

Insofar as the basic text for recovery is concerned, most alcoholics in AA genuinely want every other alcoholic to be happy, joyous and free. That desire is synonymous with "**the will of God**". (see pg 133).

WHAT GOD WANTS AND THE ALCOHOLIC WANTS ARE THE SAME!

Therefore, a self-evident conclusion can be reached. If God wants the alcoholic to be happy, joyous and free, and individual alcoholics desire the same, any differences are found in their personal and individual "**beliefs about God**".

Reality (i.e.: "God") just is what it is and *new knowledge* which allows for *improved understanding* (i.e.: "*spiritual progress*") of reality reduces the *self-inflicted wounds* of personal conflict. Any personal conflict is due to personal ignorance of how to cooperate with **the Great Reality**. (i.e.: "God"). Resolution of the conflict requires more *new knowledge*. That power is available, if sought. (pgs 45, 59 & 60(c)).

If the alcoholic reader has chosen a different concept of that power (pg 12) their dominate desire may be for **something more than survival and sobriety**. Traditional religions make such offers, without ability to intelligently substantiate their claims. Where survival and sobriety are **not enough**, the individual alcoholic may wish to seek answers to those problems **outside the framework of the AA program**.

This author *believes* that where the dominate desire of the alcoholic is in harmony, balance and compatibility with "**God's will for the alcoholic**" (pg 133) then no conflict exists. Where **fear, anger and guilt** obstruct "**the will of God**" as a mutual desire, there is a need for corrective action in the mind of the alcoholic to produce happiness, joy and freedom. (pg. 23).

Regardless of why any conflict exists, it is the alcoholic who needs to adjust to the reality of life. Not the other way around. To make the adjustment, the alcoholic requires more *new knowledge* of reality. (syn: "God") which is always available from the source of all knowledge.

FEAR was dealt with at some length in Step Four. The alcoholic has been made aware of how to approach their fears in an intelligent manner. The emotional devastation

fear produces, as a guiding force in the life of the alcoholic, is then reduced, dissolved and eliminated.

“We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.” (pg 83)

ANGER is also dealt with extensively in the same inventory process.

“Resentment is the ‘number one’ offender . It destroys more alcoholics than anything else.....In dealing with resentments.....we listed people, institutions and principles with whom we were angry. We asked ourselves why we were angry.” (pg 64)

This author has observed that anger, and subsequent resentments begin with the inability to get something desired. **A lack of the power of new knowledge becomes the dilemma.** (see pgs 45 & 59). **Those who have the “know how” to get results they want** (i.e.: “pray for”) **are not angry.** Any inability to obtain desired results is a source of frustration when “others” (i.e.: “equal in the eyes of God”) are accomplishing what they want to do. They become frustrated because results of their desires (i.e.: prayers) are on life’s terms instead of their own *belief system* of how life *should be*.

ALL FRUSTRATION LEADS TO AGGRESSION

Any “*revelation of reality*” which is in harmony with *the Great Reality*, (syn: “*the will of God*”), will not be negotiable. Improved understanding of life’s terms provides more freedom to cooperate with that ultimate power which is “*God*”, (Step 11), and any frustration gets reduced by the acceptance of valid *new knowledge*. (pg. 23).

Constantly seeking conscious recognition and awareness of *the Great Reality* is recommended. (pgs 14-15, 35, 55 60(c), 129, 164, & Appendix II). The obvious best place to seek *new knowledge* is from the source. (pg 59). Until humanity knows everything about everything, there shall always be those gaps of ignorance.

“I knew from that moment that I had an alcoholic mind. I saw that will power and self-knowledge would not help in those strange mental blank spots.” (pg 42)

GUILT is another one of the *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which needs to be *displaced and rearranged* in order for the alcoholic to have the necessary *vital spiritual experience* essential for recovery from alcoholism. (see pg 27).

Regardless of how, where or when it was obtained, “guilt” is an old idea based upon a “second-hand belief system”. It implies the ability to utilize “knowledge and understanding” which was not yet consciously understood by the individual at the time it was needed. (review Step 11).

Any “*feelings of guilt*” are an attitude which can always be changed. The *beliefs* of successfully recovered alcoholics clearly indicates that:

“We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous, and free. We cannot subscribe to the belief that this life is a vale of tears, though it once was just that for many of us. But it is clear that we made our own misery. God didn’t do it.” (pg 133)

This author *believes* that “guilt” reflects a mistake in personal judgment summarized by the comment “*if I had known better I would have done better*”. It then becomes self-evident that more *new knowledge* is required to correct the error. Relief comes from improved conscious understanding of *the Great Reality*. (syn: “God” - see Step 11).

As that infinite source of *new knowledge* is better understood, there is a reduction in ignorance. (Steps 3 & 11). *Increased cooperation* with reality (i.e.: “God” - pg 55) then becomes an optional choice for the alcoholic. Those who choose the path of cooperation with *the Great Reality* make fewer mistakes. This then becomes *spiritual progress*. (pg 60).

AS UNDERSTANDING OF REALITY IS IMPROVED, THERE IS RELIEF FROM FEAR, ANGER, AND GUILT.

This author contends that the alcoholic who thoroughly follows that path will experience relief from alcoholism by becoming increasingly *happy, joyous and free*. (review pgs 23, 27, 45, 55, 58-60, 83-87, 133 & Appendix II).

This author has observed that *fear, anger and guilt* are dominating forces of many traditional religions. Are those *ideas, emotions and attitudes* really your version of being *happy, joyous and free*? (i.e.: “*God’s will for you*” see pgs 27, 42, & 133).

Those same *belief systems* may also have more desirable elements as well. It remains the responsibility of the individual alcoholic to decide what portions, within any “*second-hand belief system*”, they are willing to accept or reject as guiding forces in their own life. Do you use intelligence to render that judgment? Is there more?

IF “GOD” IS EVERYTHING THERE IS NOTHING ELSE TO REJECT.

Acceptance of responsibility for mistakes in personal judgment is one principle for recovery found in the book “*Alcoholics Anonymous*”. (Step 10). The AA program also presumes the existence of some *all knowing and all powerful intelligence* (syn:

“omniscient and omnipotent intelligence” - see pg 59) capable of maintaining orderliness in an infinite universe.

This author contends that wherever there is order it is evidence that some intelligence created that order. Whatever that creative intelligence is, each individual alcoholic is part of it. (pgs 49 & 53).

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

Despite questionable *beliefs* and promises made by some religions, the primary objective for most alcoholics appears to be personal survival during this lifetime.

Without survival, there is no need for sobriety nor the AA program which makes survival possible. Therefore, survival is usually the **dominate desire**, (syn: “prayer”) of the alcoholic, and the way many approach the AA program of recovery.

It is difficult to argue with the numbers who succeed by living

“ONE LIFE AT A TIME”.

Because AA welcomes anyone who states they have a desire to stop drinking, be aware that some who join may have other objectives. Just because someone is involved with AA, or attends meetings, does not necessarily mean their primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics achieve sobriety. Therefore, unless the “*Statue of Limitations*” has expired, the use of caution and intelligence is recommended when openly discussing intimate experiences in open AA meetings.

“Another principle we observe carefully is that we do not relate intimate experiences of another person unless we are sure he would approve. We find it better, when possible, to stick to our own stories. A man may criticize or laugh at himself and it will affect others favorably, but criticism or ridicule coming from another often produces the contrary effect.” (pg 125)

Remember that any personal moment of clarity is valid only if it is consistent with reality. The use of intelligence, and cautious judgment are also recommended about any radical personality changes, or religious experiences in the nature of sudden and spectacular upheavals. (review Appendix II). It is the experience of this author that any

intelligent conscious understanding of reality will still remain valid long after those strong emotions have subsided.

“We found the Great Reality deep down within us.
In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found.
It was so with us.” (pg 55)

**NOTE DISCOVERING A SINGLE PRINCIPLE OF LIFE
IS NOT THE SAME AS UNDERSTANDING
THE ANSWER TO EVERYTHING IN LIFE.**

This author believes that complete understanding of *the Great Reality* (syn: “God”) is beyond the finite capacity of any human mind. pg 23). Failure to recognize that limitation to personal judgment has placed many newcomers, and old-timers alike in conflict with life, on life’s terms. Some of their *ideas, emotions and attitudes* reflect *beliefs of a lifetime*. Many of those *old ideas* are difficult to sustain when confronted with reality. (i.e.: “God”). **As** more *new knowledge* is revealed, *the Great Reality* is better understood at a conscious level. (pg. 164, Steps 3 & 11).

Many erroneous ideas get blindly accepted on emotional faith and wishful thinking. They can become part of a fundamental belief system (see pg 55) **which is unable to stand up to the light of intelligent examination.** (i.e.: “the light of God”)

Individual alcoholics decide to allow ***emotional desires*** to be their guiding forces in preference to an ***intelligent acceptance of reality***. That choice is **“the answer to their unintelligent prayers”**. (pg 12). It has become *their version of being happy, joyous and free*. (i.e.: “God’s will for them” see pg. 133). For many, ***if they knew better they would do better*** by *perfecting and enlarging their spiritual life*. (pgs 14-15).

Those results are in notable contrast to a conscious contact with **“the Great Reality which is God”**. (see pg. 55 & Step 11).

What any individual knows about reality is always limited by whatever new knowledge they have willingly accepted. It would be folly and spiritual pride to assume there is nothing more worth learning than what is already understood. (Step 11, pg 164 & Appendix II).

“We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves.”
(pg 68)

A choice to trust an *infinite reality* rather than to place blind faith in a traditional religious belief system is not “rejection of God”, but represents faith in a power which extends beyond the *finite limits* of that particular belief system. One is limited by it’s own clearly

defined *belief structure*, the other is infinite and provides for endless improvements in personal understanding. (Step 11).

“It was impossible to say we had no capacity for faith, or love, or worship. In one form or another we had been living by faith and little else.” (pg 54)

“Those of us who have spent much time in the world of spiritual make-believe have eventually seen the childishness of it. This dream world has been replaced by a great sense of purpose, accompanied by a growing consciousness of the power of God in our lives. We have come to believe He would like us to keep our heads in the clouds with Him, but that our feet ought to be firmly planted on earth. That is where our fellow travelers are, and that is where our work must be done. These are the realities for us. We have found nothing incompatible between a powerful spiritual experience and a life of sane and happy usefulness.” (pg 130).

“Alcoholics who have derided religious people will be helped by such contacts. Being possessed of a spiritual experience, the alcoholic will find he has much in common with these people, though he may differ with them on many matters. If he does not argue about religion, he will make new friends and is sure to find new avenues of usefulness and pleasure. (pgs 131-132)

Only an alcoholic who is honest with themselves, really knows if they are indulging in “*spiritual make-believe*”. For many, their transformation from a world of *fantasy* into improved understanding of life, on life’s terms, develops slowly over a period of time. Those recoveries are of the “*educational variety*” and occur **as** the alcoholic improves their conscious contact with reality. (see Step 11 & Appendix II).

As reality is consciously understood, there is the ever increasing option to cooperate with it, and the way it works. Such a learning process demands a lifetime of attention in order to be effective. (pg 85). That same reality applies equally to anyone and everyone. Again, the choice of seeking to improve *conscious understanding* of reality (i.e.: “God”) is a personal decision. (pg 58 & Steps 10 & 11). **There really are others who may know something of value.** What they know (or “*believe they know*”) may have value. *Open-mindedness* is a primary requirement to intelligently considering the knowledge and *beliefs* of others. (see Appendix II).

“God has abundantly supplied this world with fine doctors, psychologists, and practitioners of various kinds. Do not hesitate to take your health problems to such persons. Most of them give freely of themselves, that their fellows may enjoy sound minds and bodies.” (pg 133)

This mental attitude can be of great significance for a newly recovered alcoholic. It is particularly so for the newcomer who is dealing with any temporary or persistent problem of sexual impotence. (see pg 23).

“Unless the reason is understood, there may be an emotional upset.” (pg 134)

Once again, this author recommends the use of intelligence when seeking medical advice. Doctors, psychologists and other medical practitioners often have a more realistic awareness and understanding of sexual problems of alcoholics than those who are not specifically trained in that area of human experience. However, be cautious about accepting that another AA member may be “*the best source of new knowledge*” in this important area of happiness, joy and freedom. (see pg. 133).

Spokesmen for many traditional religions have strong emotional views on matters of *sexual morality* which are founded upon “*sacred writings from antiquity*”. Many of those views have been and remain in dispute as the result of *new knowledge* being revealed about the reality of life. (pg. 164).

This is one important area of human understanding where science and religion frequently disagree. Religious *belief systems* may once have had an intelligent basis for acceptance. However, with the discovery of *new knowledge* by science, many of those *old ideas, emotions and attitudes* are now difficult to reconcile with any intelligent understanding of present time reality. (review pgs 27 & 42).

Many other issues are frequently approached, based upon *moralistic beliefs*, which are not necessarily consistent with reality. Any personal decision to accept or reject the Ultimate Reality of life, (syn: “God”) will definitely impact the alcoholic in any of their affairs involving “*The Family Afterward*”.

“THINK - THINK - THINK”

This concludes observations pertaining to this particular chapter in the book “*Alcoholics Anonymous*”. The reader is invited to accept whatever thoughts which have been offered if they have personal value.

* * * * *

SECTION B10a:

Chapter 10

TO EMPLOYERS

MATTERS OF EMPLOYMENT:

READ:

The entire Chapter 10 beginning on page 136 with “*Among many employers nowadays.....*” through to the end of Chapter 10 on Page 150 ending with “*I have enjoyed every moment in getting them straightened out.*”

COMMENTS:

The two previous chapters of the AA Big Book, (“*To Wives*” & “*The Family Afterward*”) plus this chapter “*To Employers*” deal with matters beyond the recovery process for the individual alcoholic. The reader should be aware that, this Study Guide also has an identifiable focus. It is primarily directed to those alcoholics who have joined AA but are experiencing difficulty with traditional religious interpretations of the word “God”. This Study Guide attempts to offer a viable spiritual approach which does not require the limited mental restrictions which are found in most traditional religious versions. (see pg 23). Anyone is free to utilize observations offered in this Study Guide if they want to. They are equally free to retain their *old ideas* about the meaning of that *three-letter word* “God”.

Despite their *belief systems*, the traditional religions do not have a monopoly on the idea of God. (pg 28, & 46). Neither does the AA program make any such claim. (pgs 93-95). A thinking alcoholic will readily recognize that a wide variety of concepts already exist concerning “*a power greater than ourselves*”. (pgs 42 & 56). Maintaining an open mind toward all of them is encouraged. (pgs 12, 164 & Appendix II).

“Most emphatically we wish to say that any alcoholic capable of honestly facing his problems in the light of our experience can recover, provided he does not close his mind to all spiritual concepts.”

(Appendix II)

This author also recommends that the alcoholic reader keep an open mind toward many other unfamiliar attitudes which guide society. Be cautious about automatically accepting or rejecting something when it is not understood. (see Step 11). Especially if the attitude is about social conditions which are being applied by others with some degree of success. *New knowledge* may provide a new perspective. (pg 164).

IT IS DIFFICULT TO ARGUE WITH SUCCESS

When the chapter addressed to employers was written, the visible alcoholic was most likely the male head of a traditional household and the primary bread-winner. As such, he would have been the principle provider of financial support in a “*traditional family*” arrangement. Since then those social conditions have undergone significant changes.

This tends to illustrate and emphasize that social attitudes do change and society makes adjustments accordingly. Today those same comments may have sexist overtones read into them, with or without regrets. A subsequent generation has already developed other views.

This author recognizes both advantages and disadvantages to so-called “*traditional family values*”. It is recommended that any seemingly sexist comments be evaluated accordingly. For good or for ill, the desirability of changes in family values becomes a personal judgment call. While some devout religious adherents of “*traditional family values*” may long for a return to “*the good old days*” where the man of the house always had the last word, a recently liberated female may cry “*it is high time we got rid of those restrictions*”. Quite naturally, each will *believe* their own view to be superior to that of the other.

Any joyful acceptance or reluctant resistance to change reflects what is currently *believed* to be important.

Like it or not, both individuals, and the society in which they live, are constantly undergoing changes. This author has observed that most value judgments get made according to what the individual wants most at that time.

Ideas, emotions and attitudes applicable to the society which existed in the period preceding World War II have changed. When a *belief* is accompanied by a strong emotional desire, it fits most definitions of “*a prayer*”. Without total knowledge, any *belief* is then a matter of personal preference.

Most traditional religions provide a “*ready-made framework*” for their members. That “*belief system*” defines a spiritual relationship with reality for them, and has been constructed according to a “*second-hand concept of God*” created by others. This convenience relieves followers of that *belief system* from any burden of “*thinking independently*”.

For those alcoholics who prefer not to do their own thinking, no changes are required in their approach to life, on life’s terms. They are free to stay locked into the closed-loop of a second hand belief system by accepting the thinking of others with *blind faith*. (review pg 86).

By noteworthy contrast, this Study Guide was prepared for only those alcoholics seeking to accept personal responsibility for the *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which are

guiding forces in their lives. (see pgs 12, 23, & 27). When it comes to a *fundamental idea of God*, what is your choice to be? (see pgs 53 & 55).

With the use of intelligence, it is possible to recognize that spokesmen for traditional religions sometimes have other less apparent objectives. Often the *ideas, emotions and attitudes* they establish are in support of an ***ethnocentric belief system*** which places themselves in a position of “***superiority over others***”. (pg 27). Those same spokesmen will usually be eager to provide *spiritual guidance* to anyone willing to let them do so. Oftentimes conformity of thinking and agreement with their “*second-hand belief system*” is a basic requirement to be part of their “***superior group***”. (syn: “ethnocentric group”). The concept of an equal relationship to the “*Creative Intelligence*” behind “*the Spirit of the Universe*” is sometimes overlooked or even intentionally omitted. (review pgs 42, 49-53 & 55).

A particular “*belief system*” may define specific *ideas, emotions and attitudes* concerning the role of the head of the household and his responsibilities for providing for the *traditional family*. This inevitably includes matters of employment, and the role it plays in “*traditional family values*”. If following that chosen *belief* results in being *happy, joyous and free* then there is nothing better to seek as an individual. (see pgs 12, 23, 27, 42, 55, 133, & 164).

For those who are *happy, joyous and free* within that chosen *belief system*, there is no intelligent reason to seek anything more. However, remember that what is *believed* is finite in scope. With an endless opportunity for *spiritual growth* available, there could be something more or even better.

It should be self-evident that any *belief structure* may not necessarily be acceptable to everyone. Some alcoholics, (i.e.: “*equal in the eyes of their creator*”), may desire (i.e.: “pray for”) something more or different than what a particular religious group has to offer. *Open-mindedness* is an attitude which requires intelligent evaluation of what else is possible. An *open-minded attitude* toward *the Great Reality* of life (syn: “God”) provides for *infinite spiritual growth and progress*. (pgs 12, 14-15, 60, 68, 164 & Appendix II).

Improved awareness of reality (i.e.: “God” - see Step 11) **may indicate that intelligent changes are required. This will include old ideas and beliefs concerning “traditional family values” and the role of “the male head of the household” in matters of employment.**

To intelligently evaluate *old ideas* (pg 58) requires *self-honesty* about what is currently *believed*, and an *open mind* to **the possible existence of new or improved ideas**. Some *new ideas* may be realistic others may just be wishful thinking. The use of “*God-given intelligence*” is required to tell which is which. (review pgs 42 & 86). Any *spiritual progress* demands *willingness* to trade up for something new or additional that works better. (see Appendix II).

IF NOTHING CHANGES, - THEN NOTHING CHANGES!

Here is where the entire process of self-evaluation and *spiritual progress* can hit a snag and shut down for many alcoholics. An *old idea* can become so familiar that **strong**

emotional attachment has been developed to it as a guiding force for an alcoholic. This is particularly so if and when that idea has been successfully utilized at some point in the past.

Remember that successful application of an *old idea* in the past may have been determined by conditions which have nothing to do with alcoholism. More *new knowledge* may be required to take other factors into consideration.

“What used to be the hunch or the occasional inspiration gradually becomes a working part of the mind” (pg 87)

There is fear involved when moving from familiar survival techniques into the unknown realm of new knowledge. Where an *old idea* has been the only available guiding force in the past, whenever that *idea* gets threatened, the *emotional reaction* will be equivalent to a *threat to survival*. What an alcoholic chooses to learn from an infinite supply of *new knowledge*, becomes their own personal responsibility. However, faith in the ability to learn new knowledge is still essential to spiritual progress. (review Appendix II).

“Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.” (pg 58)

Fear is the natural, automatic and almost immediate emotional reaction of an alcoholic who does not have the *knowledge* of how to successfully handle a threatening situation with confidence. This author suggests this is because the “*God-given*” intelligence within the alcoholic recognizes there are finite limitations to their personal understanding of reality. (syn: “God” - see pgs 55, 86 & Step 11). Those with adequate knowledge do not feel threatened. (Step 11). Others experience powerlessness over some new aspect of life and require the additional power of *new knowledge*. (i.e.: “*the power of God*”).

Many alcoholics will quickly recognize it is their personal ignorance which is the real problem. (pg 45). For them, *honesty, willingness and open-mindedness* become essentials to their *spiritual progress*. (see pgs 14-15, 42, 129, 164, & Appendix II). To seek new and enlarged awareness of reality requires an open mind. Fortunately, more *new knowledge*, and the power to use it is available to anyone who seeks it. (review pgs 46, 49, 54-56, & 60(c)).

“We found the Great Reality deep down within us.” (pg 55)

A flight from reality is always an alternative option for alcoholics who do not know how to deal intelligently with a genuine threat. (see pg45). Drinking sufficient amounts of “*booze*” will very effectively produce oblivion. (see pgs 23, & 31-32).

For the alcoholic closing their mind to *new knowledge about reality* (i.e.: “*improved understanding of God*”), the results they experience will be consistent with their choice. Because reality is not negotiable a *temporary unintelligent emotional answer to a problem* will meet some definitions of insanity. (Step 2).

Refusal to intelligently challenge an old idea by seeking oblivion can produce a temporary “feeling of relief” and a false sense of security. This has been likened to someone “*peeing their pants in a blizzard to get relief from the cold*”. The Ultimate Reality of Life is what it is and anything short of that is only a temporary illusion of an answer to a problem.

When the book “*Alcoholics Anonymous*” was written, an employer was the primary source of financial security in the *traditional family structure* of most alcoholics. Nowhere is the *illusion of security* more pronounced than with the *belief* that a sufficient amount of money will enable an alcoholic to be *happy, joyous and free*. Other ideas and structures really do exist.

“Some of us have taken very hard knocks to learn this truth: Job or no job--wife or no wife--we simply do not stop drinking so long as we place dependence upon other people ahead of dependence on God.” (pg 98)

Consider how much *fear* occurs when your familiar source of money gets threatened.

It is recommended the alcoholic reader examine what they *believe* about money, when it concerns their sobriety. It is well to recognize that some strong emotional opinions exist on that subject. *Personal beliefs* and *universal principles* are not always the same. Not even when they co-exist in harmony with each other. However:

IF THERE IS CONFLICT, GUESS WHERE IT OCCURS?

The conflict goes on within the mind of the alcoholic. (pg. 23). Life, on life’s terms does not care if the alcoholic agrees or disagrees. *The Great Reality* just continues to be what it is, regardless of any approval by the alcoholic. Conscious recognition of this is equivalent to the alcoholic accepting a concept of God on life’s terms.

How an alcoholic makes decisions which impact their life will reflect the *belief system* they have acquired over their lifetime. Many of those *beliefs* may be “*second-hand*” and untested as principles by any personal experience with reality. This author suggests that a conscious awareness of reality is worth seeking. (review Steps 10-11).

In many cases, the alcoholic *believes* something which, upon intelligent examination, turns out to be nothing more than what someone else believes. Frequently it is a *belief* which they have blindly accepted without question. Oftentimes the *belief* itself has nothing to do with their own experience.

In this manner, an erroneous assumption can develop, perpetuate itself, and eventually become mistaken as being valid. There is *fear* involved when disputing a large number of “*other people with a false belief*”. Fear of rejection by others can produce faulty reasoning that the “*erroneous beliefs of all those others*” must be *factual reality*. (see pg. 51).

“IT ‘TAINT NECESSARILY SO !!!”

As the result of intelligent examination, (pgs 42 & 86), many alcoholics have discovered some *false beliefs* which had once been guiding forces in their lives. (i.e.: “*somehow, someday I will control and enjoy drinking*” - see pg 30). With an enlarged conscious awareness of reality (i.e.: “God” - see pgs 14-15, 35, 129, 164, Steps 10-11 & Appendix II) they become free to make changes in their choice of “*what to believe*”. (review pgs 83-84).

WHENEVER WE BELIEVE SOMETHING WE ALSO BELIEVE IT IS TRUE.

Just because an alcoholic *believes* something does not mean it is accurate, or will fit with a growing awareness reality. (syn: “God” - see pgs 53 & 68). Any “*second-hand belief system*” is suspect when it comes from another human (i.e.: “*equal in the eyes of God*”) with a capacity to be mistaken.

Sustaining that *belief system* may require creating the concept of a flawless human to produce the “*closed loop of a belief system*”. This then would allow the claim of a *flawless guide* for their own choices. **It is conceivable that they may be right.**

YOU DON'T KNOW UNLESS YOU KNOW !

With the passage of time the universe is constantly undergoing changes. The possibility exists that some changes have occurred, on life's terms, (i.e.: “*God's will*”), which are presently beyond the finite range of human knowledge and understanding. Without that knowledge and understanding, (see pgs 45, 53, 55, 68 & Step 11), there is always a potential for human error in judgment.

Each alcoholic is part of a social structure with a predominate set of *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which are guiding forces. (review pg 27). Those *ideas, emotions and attitudes* will influence decisions and choices by individual members of that society. That *collective belief system* is affected by changes, to include spiritual growth and an improved understanding of reality. (Step 11).

This author *believes* that continued *spiritual progress* includes an intelligent examination of that *collective belief system* as well as the society itself. Obviously, any changes will impact *beliefs* about *financial security*, and the importance of *employers* to the continued survival of the alcoholic. (review pgs 83-84 & 98).

A chosen *belief system* reflects the guiding forces which define the personality of an alcoholic. Any *belief system* is less likely to produce mistakes or conflict with reality (i.e.: “God”) when it is founded upon **principles** which work for anyone, anyplace, and at

any time. Hence the importance of placing **principles before personalities** (Tradition 12) as the spiritual foundation for recovery from alcoholism.

The alcoholic reader is free to place the principles of life before their own personality, and personal preferences, as a guiding force in their life. (i.e.: “*God’s will* VS *self will run riot*” see Step 10).

An entire work could be written on just the subject of *beliefs* about money. Some alcoholics *believe* that their employers are their source of financial security. This involves what is believed about the relationship of employers to the flow of money. (review pgs 83-84).

If employers were the *only source* of financial security, there would be no *financial freedom* without being employed. An intelligent view of reality clearly indicates this is not valid. Intelligent observations of reality indicate that some seemingly outrageous ideas have produced great financial wealth for many alcoholics.

There are many wealthy alcoholics who do not fit the erroneous *belief system* that *financial security* is solely dependent upon the *ideas, emotions and attitudes* of an employer. Therefore, it is suggested the alcoholic reader determine what portions of their *personal belief system* about money has universal application as a principle. You may be surprised at what else may be revealed. (see pgs 42, 58, & 164). It is recommended that if you discover you have been wrong that you promptly admit it. (Step 10).

With improved understanding of that “*three-letter word God*”, the alcoholic is better able to cooperate with *the Great Reality*. (see pg 55). This mental action can be considered as spiritual progress. (see pgs 23 & 60). As an alcoholic understands principles which guide life, on life’s terms they enlarge their own *spiritual life* by improving their conscious contact with “**God**”. (see pgs 14-15, 53, 68 & Step 11).

For some alcoholics, accepting new knowledge will be equivalent to surrendering “self-will” (i.e.: “*holding on to old ideas*” - see pg 58), **in favor of “the will of God”**. (i.e.: “*accepting life on life’s terms*”).

How any individual alcoholic labels or evaluates those changes is undeniably personal. Regardless of personal interpretation, any new choices, when based upon reality, (i.e.: “God”), will be more intelligent than those based upon old ideas and false beliefs.

The alcoholic either is or is not seeking to improve their conscious contact with whatever intelligence created the orderliness of an infinite universe. (see pgs 12, 14-15, 23, 27, 45, 53, 55, & 68). If what the alcoholic *believes* about *the Great Reality* does not have equal application to any and all others, then they are choosing to separate themselves from “*those others*”. Under that condition (pg 23) what they choose to believe is not a principle, but merely a matter of limited personal preference.

When a *belief* is compatible with reality, (syn: “God”), there is no problem. However, if a *belief* does not have equal application to all, then personal separation from some segment of reality (syn: “God”) is unavoidable and may qualify as “**self-will run riot**”.

This author suggests separating “**self-will run riot**” from “**the will of God**” whenever possible. (see Steps 10 & 11). A clear mental separation between **universal principles** and **personal choice** is recommended. (see pg 23). Where **personal survival and recovery from alcoholism** are concerned, it is valuable to know which is which. This helps getting to the root of most problems of how to be *happy, joyous and free*. (i.e.: “*God’s will*” - see pg. 133).

“Therefore, the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than in his body.”

(pg 23)

That same principle has broader applications for employers when dealing with *old ideas* about how best to deal with alcoholic employees. Most individuals have strong opinions, and prejudices about alcoholism. Keeping those **personal opinions** and prejudices clearly separated from **principles** is at the core of the recovery process outlined in the Big Book “*Alcoholics Anonymous*”.

“Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.” (Appendix I - Tradition 12)

Employers frequently become involved with matters concerning health decisions of their workers. Nowhere is the separation of prejudices and *personal opinion* from *principles* more critical than with decisions concerning medical treatment.

The health conditions of an alcoholic can be related to complex physical, mental and spiritual problems. Employers, and well-meaning friends frequently have strong beliefs but are inadequately informed.

This author recommends that matters pertaining to the health care of an alcoholic are best left to those professionals who are qualified to provide answers which are **consistent with reality**. (i.e.: “*God’s will*” see pgs 62 & 133). As the result of ignorance, mistakes in judgment can have “*life and death*” consequences. Even professional medical practitioners may not always possess adequate answers.

“Physicians who are familiar with alcoholism agree there is no such thing as making a normal drinker out of an alcoholic. Science may one day accomplish this, but it hasn’t done so yet.” (pg 31)

Despite **good intentions**, a wide array of misguided medical advice is frequently offered to many alcoholics seeking recovery. This advice often comes from well-meaning employers, friends, family **and even from other alcoholic members of AA**.

When inaccurate advice is based upon **personal assumptions** and *erroneous beliefs*, such action can have devastating consequences. Especially when that advice conflicts with superior knowledge of reality concerning alcoholism.

In a society where medical doctors are frequently treated as “gods”, the implication of “playing doctor” becomes distastefully clear. Any sober member of AA who presumes to be qualified to give medical advice to a newcomer is treading a path perilously close to making “life and death decisions” for another human being.

The newcomer to AA should also recognize that “*qualified and accountable professionals*” are also human beings who have their own set of ideas, emotions and attitudes. They too have *belief systems* which are guiding forces in their lives, the same as those who lack their *specialized knowledge*. When choosing medical advice, the alcoholic should recognize that if that person is mistaken, they will still be around to say “**Whoops!!**”. This has particular significance to any alcoholic who may be faced with insanity or death. (review pgs 30-32).

No one is exempt from the principles which govern *the Great Reality* of all life. The alcoholic who accepts and follows *erroneous medical advice* from an employer, or anyone else, must still deal with the consequences.

This author maintains an alcoholic has inescapable responsibility to utilize their own “*God-given*” **intelligence** whenever they take advice from anyone who is not God. (see pgs 68 & 86). This admonition specifically includes any comments of this author to be found in this Study Guide.

ETERNAL VIGILANCE IS THE PRICE OF FREEDOM

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SECTION B10b:

Chapter 10

TO EMPLOYERS

MATTERS OF EMPLOYMENT - Cont'd:

RE-READ:

The entire Chapter 10 beginning on page 136 with “*Among many employers nowadays.....*” through to the end of Chapter 10 on Page 150 ending with “*I have enjoyed every moment in getting them straightened out.*”

COMMENTS:

When this chapter “*To Employers*” was written it reflected experience by AA’s earliest members about a successful program for recovery from alcoholism. As of the time of writing this Study Guide, the superior rate of success by AA still applies. Other approaches have also been tried, and some have produced limited numbers of recoveries for those alcoholics who can afford expensive “*specialized treatment*”.

This author suggests that the success of the AA program continues to speak for itself. Willingness to accept or reject that bit of reality of life, becomes a matter of individual choice. It is a “no-cost” affordable choice available to any alcoholic who is aware of the existence of the AA program for recovery. (see AA Preamble).

Comments, made to employers, may also have personal implications for an alcoholic who wants to get well. Any alcoholic can benefit from considering the experience of those early AA members concerning the *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which were guiding forces in their lives. (see pg 27). This author suggests intelligently evaluating personal experience with the more generalized observations offered to employers.

For example, self-destruction has been considered by many alcoholics seeking a solution to personal problems with alcohol. Unfortunately it was **an idea of a final solution** which was chosen by many who were unaware of an alternative choice. Many who **successfully ended their life** would have chosen differently had they known a more acceptable answer was available.

Many alcoholics have paid with their lives as the cost of their own personal ignorance. There was the absence of *new knowledge*.
(i.e.: “*the omniscience and omnipotence of God*” - pgs 45, 53, 59, 68, 164 & Appendix II).

That *conscious awareness of the Great Reality* was something unrecognized beyond the limited and finite range of their existing *belief system*. Their suicide was “*self-will run riot*” carried to extreme. They either could not or would not use *new knowledge*

of a solution which was available to anyone willing to claim it on life's terms. (pgs 45, 58, 60(c), 164, & Appendix II).

Within the finite limits of their own understanding, suicide can appear to be a rational choice for an alcoholic who is frustrated by an inability to be happy, joyous and free in this lifetime. (i.e.: "experience God's will for them" - pg 133). It is self-evident that suicide will produce something new and different.

Some alcoholics *believe* suicide to be the only available option which has not yet been applied to their problem. Their own mind has ignored the existence of additional *new knowledge*. (see pg 23). **Suicide then becomes a demand for change within what they understand of life**. (i.e.: "the answer to a prayer" - Step 11). What they seek is limited by what they *believe* is available from life. (i.e.: "God"). What they are able to accept is similarly limited by what they *believe* is available. (review pg 42, 53, 60(c), & 85). *New knowledge* of an infinite reality (i.e.: "God" - see pg 68) is always available to anyone.

WHY PRAY FOR ANSWERS YOU DON'T WANT TO ACCEPT?

Sadly, many self-centered alcoholics lack the *new knowledge* to eliminate personal ignorance and produce recovery that is available for them if they seek it. (review Chapters 2, 3 & 4, pgs 42-43, 45, & 60(c)).

More *new knowledge*, and a conscious understanding of a solution provides additional options and useful answers beyond what is *believed* to be possible. (i.e.: Step 11). Nonetheless, many alcoholics prefer to hold on to their *old ideas* (i.e.: "second-hand belief system" - see pg 58). In doing so they create self-imposed limits to their *open-mindedness*. (review Appendix II).

Many alcoholics assume there is nothing of value in life beyond the "package deal" of their "second-hand belief system". They willingly place *blind faith* in a limited interpretation of *the Great Reality*. (i.e.: "God"). This then becomes their *fundamental idea of God*. (see pgs 12, 55, & Steps 10-11). When that limited *belief system* fails, their *idea of God* fails them, as an individual. (see pgs 12, 23, 27, 45, 53, 55, 59, 60(c), 94-95, 98, 164 & Appendix II).

The result is many alcoholics erroneously *believe* they have been singled out for special attention or that they are inherently inferior to others. (i.e.: "in the eyes of God").

Failure to seek *spiritual progress* results in a lack of *new knowledge* of how to produce desirable changes. (review pgs 45-48, 60 (c)). Under that mental condition, (pgs 12, 23, & 27), suicide can then become a *seemingly reasonable option within the limits of what they know and understand*. Unfortunately, many alcoholics never allow themselves the opportunity to discover there is more *new knowledge* of how to be *happy, joyous and free*. (see pg. 133).

"Here were three exceptional men lost to this world
because I did not understand alcoholism as I do now.
What irony---I became an alcoholic myself! And but for the

intervention of an understanding person, I might have followed in their footsteps.” (pg 137)

The alcoholic reader may wish to consider if they have considered suicide as a solution to problems with drinking. If honest about it, that idea may be recognized as part of a *belief structure* which had reached it's finite limits of understanding reality. (i.e.: "God" - see pgs 27 & 68). Those reading this Study Guide now recognize that other ideas are available to be sought. (pg. 60(c)).

Often times contemplating suicide is not really a desire to end life, but really a desperate demand for change. (i.e.: "prayer"). This author suggests **the idea of suicide** comes from impatience and frustration. It is a reflection of personal failure to find a solution to a serious problem. (i.e.: "*personal ignorance of reality*").

BECAUSE YOU DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER DOES NOT MEAN THERE IS NO ANSWER.

The attitude of *willingness* to accept responsibility for **personal ignorance** is critical to survival. (see Appendix II). For the desperate alcoholic, that ignorance involves some element of *the Great Reality* (i.e.: "God" - see pgs 53, 55, & 68) which relates to their recovery from alcoholism. For them, it is *new knowledge* which is essential to continuing their own life on life's terms. There are those who have the "*know-how*" and those who don't.

Those who do not *believe* themselves equal to others in ability to acquire *new knowledge* often considered they have been singled out for special consideration. This appears to be an erroneous self-centered view of reality and their relationship to that One Power (pg 59) that governs all life. By contrast, the individual who *believes* they are equal to others, (i.e.: "*in the eyes of God*"), recognizes they really can learn what others have learned - if they want to.

"Selfishness---self centeredness!! That we think,
is the root of our troubles." (pg 62)

Accepting social responsibility for the well-being of employees was often considered a moral responsibility of employers at the time the basic text of AA was written. That condition may still apply and in other cases that same social attitude has changed. For the individual alcoholic, the important question remains:

"HOW WILLING ARE YOU TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR OWN WELL-BEING?"

One popular social attitude, then and now, is the *belief* that sufficient "***will power and guts***" (pg 138) are all that is required for recovery. In reality, there is more often a need for *new knowledge* of how to apply practical solutions to daily living problems. There is a "*need to know*" how to cooperate with the realities of life, on life's terms. A condition sometimes considered synonymous with "*God's Will for the individual*".

IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED, - LEARN TO DO IT RIGHT

“*Lack of power, that was our dilemma.*” (pg 45). If the “*know-how*” to do things successfully comes from the source of all *new knowledge*, (i.e.: “God”), then that necessary knowledge must come from something greater than the finite “*self-knowledge*” of the individual alcoholic. This author *believes* if an alcoholic already knew the answers they would use their own knowledge to produce desired results.

“I saw that will power and self-knowledge would not help in those strange mental blank spots.” (pg 42)

Individual alcoholics, exercise their will power within the range of what they *know and understand* about reality. (syn: “God” see Step 11). It is worth recognizing that personal *will-power and self-knowledge* can be trusted only by the extent they agree with **universal principles** which are equally applicable to all life. Anything else is “**self-will run riot**”. Neither blindly discarding nor unthinkingly relying upon the value of will power in the recovery process is an intelligent approach to recovery from alcoholism.

“We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves.”
(pg 68)

Every alcoholic lacks complete understanding of an *infinite reality* and will experience some conflict with life, on life’s terms as the result of their ignorance. (i.e.: “*ignoring God*” - Steps 10 & 11). To completely avoid conflict with reality an alcoholic would need to know everything about everything. Any alcoholic who desires (i.e.: “prays”) to cooperate with life, on life’s terms, has a need to seek new knowledge of reality. (i.e.: “God” see pg 60(c) & Step 11). **If they already had that omniscience** (i.e.: “*all knowing*”), **by definition they would “be God”**.

“We can exercise our will power along this line all we wish. It is the proper use of the will.” (pg 85)

The alcoholic reader is invited to consider if they have abdicated their inescapable personal responsibility to continually seek an improved understanding of reality. (i.e.: “God” -review pg 23 & Steps 10-11).

The reader may find value in questioning how sure they are of what they *believe* about drinking is true for themselves or others. With sufficient *new knowledge* it is possible that some of that *belief system* may be mistaken.

**WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE HOW MUCH YOU KNOW
IF WHAT YOU KNOW IS NOT SO?**

The reader may discover an old well-established attitude of annoyance when another person, or themselves, is so “*weak-willed and irresponsible*” as to go on a bender. (pgs 27, 42, & 139). That erroneous and limited idea of how life is supposed to be reflects a *belief structure* which is an *old idea* of “*how to do things right*”. (pg 23). Maintaining such an attitude, in the face of new knowledge of reality (i.e. “God”) may be a personal example of “*self will run riot*”.

**DON'T BOTHER ME WITH FACTS,
I'VE ALREADY GOT MY MIND MADE UP**

This author suggests there is always more to be understood about alcoholism. As with the employer, the alcoholic reader may wish to evaluate their own attitude on this subject.

“Can you discard the feeling that you are dealing only with habit, with stubbornness, or weak will?.....Can it be appreciated that he has been a victim of crooked thinking, directly caused by the action of alcohol on his brain?” (pg 140)

Both employers and recovered alcoholics make mistakes. Usually, mistakes in judgment are erroneous *old ideas* about what does or does not work on life's terms. What often fails to be recognized is whose desire is being dealt with for recovery. Is it their desire, or is it yours? There may be a better solution than either is able to provide within the limits of what is known and understood. There really is more *new knowledge* available.

Despite any good intentions or a strong desire to be of value and usefulness to others, every alcoholic does their own wanting. No one can do that for them. If it were otherwise, the social problem of alcoholism would have been resolved centuries ago.

It is well to recognize that everyone who comes to the AA program is not necessarily willing to go to any lengths for sobriety. Where others may *believe* it obvious that sobriety is desirable, the drinking alcoholic *knows* they do not have to be what another human being (i.e.: “*equal in the eyes of God*”) wants them to be.

Many are willing to go to any lengths to maintain the integrity of their own personal independence and will continue drinking “*into the gates of insanity or death*”. Once sufficiently aware of the consequences of their decisions, many drinking alcoholics will then freely and willingly embrace sobriety as their own dominate desire. (syn: “prayer” - see pgs 31-32).

There are other alcoholics who, for reasons of their own, will tell anyone whatever it is that they want to hear.

“This is not to say that all alcoholics are honest and upright when not drinking. Of course that isn’t so, and such people often may impose on you.” (pg 141)

Many drinking alcoholics are merely inconvenienced by the consequences of their actions but still “seek oblivion from reality”. They know alcohol provides the desired escape from reality, as do other mind- alterants. Short of being physically restrained, with the exercise of their own “power of decision”, they reap both the benefits and consequences of their choice. As individuals, “the power of God answers their prayers”.

It is clear that alcohol (&/or other mind altering drugs - see pg 55) are not only available, but also provide a very effective “*answer to their prayers*” for relief or oblivion. It should also be recognized that it only does so temporarily. What they get (i.e.: “*as a gift from God*” -see pg 53) is a short term benefit as their personal preference over a long-term solution. (review pgs 30-31, 37-38 & 53).

Any failure to be honest about the true nature of the malady (pg 32) will produce personal conflict with reality (i.e.: “God”). For alcoholics, any continued efforts at controlled drinking will ultimately produce an improved and full knowledge of their condition. (pg 32). As a result of acquiring this *new knowledge*, some alcoholics may change their dominate desire. (syn: “prayer”).

“But there are many men who want to stop, and with them you can go far. Your understanding treatment of their cases will pay dividends.” (pg 141)

Any personal knowledge and understanding that now has limitations can be enlarged. (see pgs 14-15, 35, 53, 55, 60(c), 68 129, 164 & Appendix II). The reader who is serious about being helpful in the recovery of another alcoholic may wish to evaluate the limits of their own understanding treatment of other alcoholics. Do unexamined *old ideas* play a role in the way you treat them or yourself? For example, consider if your *belief system* includes equality. (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”).

“Next he can be assured that you do not intend to lecture, moralize, or condemn; that if this was done formerly, it was because of misunderstanding.” (pg 142)

While the above comment had specific application to employers when written, it also has significance for alcoholics concerning the *ideas, emotions and attitudes* they have about themselves. (pg 27). What was once *believed* may be true, or it may be an *old idea* which has need for correction.

YOU DON'T KNOW UNLESS YOU KNOW!

“Either you are dealing with a man who can and will get well or you are not. If not, why waste time with him? This may seem severe, but it is usually the best course.” (pg 142)

The earliest members of the AA program discovered some principles which offered any alcoholic an almost 100% chance for recovery. The ultimate and irreversible choice of suicide seems to occur with those alcoholics who *believe* they have been singled out for special and undesirable attention by life. The experience of successful recovery is now *new knowledge* which offers them *freedom of choice*. That *new knowledge* (i.e.: “*from the source of all knowledge - God*”) gets read at most AA meetings:

“Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves” (pg 58)

The extent by which others are honest with you, or even honest with themselves is only of secondary significance. What is important is the degree by which **you are honest with yourself**. When the physical treatment of another alcoholic is concerned, it can become a serious problem.

This author suggests rigorous *self-honesty* be applied to any *belief* that one individual is qualified to run the life of another. (i.e.: “*equal in the eyes of God*”). The accompanying *ideas, emotions and attitudes* (review pg 27) embrace the broader implications of “*playing god*”.

Any belief of inequality and superiority does little to produce recovery from alcoholism. A belief that one human being (i.e.: “*equal in the eyes of God*”) **can claim personal responsibility for the life of another without their permission, also includes the belief that someone else could do the same for their own life as well. What is your choice to be?** (review pgs 42, 46, 53, 68 & The Long Form of the Traditions in Appendix I).

This author *believes* that when human beings (i.e.: “*equal in the eyes of God*”) receive responsibility for human lives they get “*one each*”. This *belief* flies in the face of other ideas, to include “*the Divine Right of Kings*” and many *traditional religions* which support different *belief systems*.

A difference in *beliefs* does not preclude universal recognition that **human power** can apply *fear, intimidation, and physical force* to obtain compliance. (see pg. 60(b)). However, once that pressure of conformity is removed and “*the power of independent personal decision*” is restored, each alcoholic is free to claim personal responsibility for their own life. (see pgs 45, 83-84). Fear of being recognizably imperfect can restrict acceptance of that “*god given freedom to choose*”. As a result many alcoholics abdicate their own freedom and allow someone they believe to be an authority to make decisions for them.

As a consequence of *personal ignorance* alcoholics often “*step on the toes of their fellows and they retaliate*”. (pg 62). Jails, institutions and death are all to frequently the result of this failure to acquire sufficient *new knowledge* of how to cooperate with reality. (syn: “God”).

“Sometimes they hurt us, seemingly without provocation, but we invariably find that at some time in the past we have made decisions based on self which later placed us in a position to be hurt.” (pg 62)

Each alcoholic is responsible for their own life. Others are equally responsible for theirs. Whenever one alcoholic assumes responsibility for the life of another alcoholic it occurs by default. (pg 60(b)).

The sober member of AA, may now wish to review their understanding of reality (i.e.: “God” - see Step 11) and how they first recognized their powerlessness over alcohol, and a need to be restored to sanity. (Steps 1 & 2). The power of that *new knowledge* about recovery came from the source of all knowledge. (i.e.: “God” - see pg 59 & Step 3). That *new knowledge* may have been delivered to them by other alcoholics who had already acquired it from the source. (i.e.: “*as equals in the eyes of God*” - review pg 49).

This is a *belief* subject to examination by the intelligence inherent within the reader. (review pgs 55 & 86). However, sharing the power of new knowledge, with other alcoholics (i.e.: “*equal in the eyes of God*”) does improve and enlarge a personal *spiritual life*. (review pgs 14-15, 129, 164, Step 11 & Appendix II).

Having some *new knowledge* is not the same as being “*the source of all knowledge*”. Those who disagree are invited to establish when and how they were transformed from “*a hopeless, helpless alcoholic to a superior human being*” who is now qualified to run the life of another human being. This author suggests there is a major difference between a desire to be “*more like God*”, (i.e.: “prayer” Steps 3 & 11) and the desire to “*play god in the life of another alcoholic*”.

Extreme caution is advised in any attempt to usurp the freedom of choice of another alcoholic. (i.e.: “*equal in the eyes of God*”). **Be aware of the difference between sharing awareness of a principle that works equally well for all, and imposing a personal prejudice upon another alcoholic.**

Those who attempt to trespass into the freedom of an alcoholic by imposing their own choices may do so without sufficient knowledge of reality. (i.e.: “God”). As the result of that ignorance (i.e.: “*ignoring God*”) they may make a mistake. If so, whom do you *believe* should receive the blame, for any errors in judgment? Moreover, **who will live with the consequences?**

“It is better for him to feel fully responsible..... To get over drinking will require a transformation of thought and attitude.” (pg 143)

“Perhaps you are not quite in sympathy with the approach we suggest. By no means do we offer it as the last word on this subject, but so far as we are concerned, it has worked for us. After all, are you not looking for results rather than methods?” (pg 144)

Any observations made in this Study Guide are the result of what has been found in the basic text “*Alcoholics Anonymous*”. They are not intended to be taken as **the answer** to recovery from alcoholism. (pg 164 & Appendix II). What is presented is merely **a answer** which has produced successful results for many.

Those who have acquired sufficient *new knowledge* of the AA program of recovery may wish to utilize some of this experience. Consider advice of early members about working with others:

“If he is sincerely interested and wants to see you again, ask him to read this book in the interval. After doing that, he must decide for himself whether he wants to go on.If he thinks he can do the job in some other way, or prefers some other spiritual approach, encourage him to follow his own conscience. We have no monopoly on God; we merely have an approach that worked with us.” (pg 95)

“Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little.” (pg 164)

For the alcoholic reader, it is recommended that you take freely of what you find. Accept what is useful to you, according to what you are seeking. (see pg 60 (a-c)). No one else can determine **what you want the most**. (i.e.: “*your prayer*”). With the “*gift of life*” you are provided with “*all and everything*” on the basis of a “*daily reprieve*” from oblivion. (pgs 53, 55, 68 & 85). That includes **the power of decision in your life**, (i.e.: “*your direction to the power of God*”) and your own ***freedom of choice***.

This author suggests you use intelligence and “*the wisdom to know the difference*” to choose what you will *believe* is the guiding force in your life.

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SECTION B10c:

Chapter 10

TO EMPLOYERS

MATTERS OF EMPLOYMENT - Cont'd:

RE-READ:

The entire Chapter 10 beginning on page 136 with “*Among many employers nowadays.....*” through to the end of Chapter 10 on Page 150 ending with “*I have enjoyed every moment in getting them straightened out.*”

COMMENTS:

It is now a recognized fact that alcoholics can and do recover from a once seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. Many have become remarkably productive in the workplace. But why not? Those who have followed the path, provided by earlier members of the AA program have acquired a new set of *ideas, emotions and attitudes* as the guiding forces in their lives. (pgs 27 & 58).

At this point, it is recommended the reader define their primary purpose in dealing with alcoholics. The objectives of an employer are expected to be different from those of an alcoholic employee. Similarly, the role of a physician may have physiological priorities concerning the medical treatment of a sick and still suffering alcoholic patient. Some religious members of AA have the conversion of newcomers to their own “*second-hand belief system of a power greater than themselves*” as their primary purpose. Priority concerns may not be identical for everyone. (review AA Preamble).

Established members of AA may be focused upon the needs of a newcomer as part of their own recovery. (pg 94). Personal happiness, joy and freedom (pg 133) and relief from a feeling of uselessness and self-pity (pg 84) may be their priority interest. By AA’s own definition of itself:

“Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.” (AA Preamble)

The reality is that different motives and objectives exist for different individuals. Although they may be people who might never mix under other circumstances, there is one common goal consistent in successfully sober members of AA. It is their personal desire to stop drinking and to stay stopped. (pg 17). They usually desire the same (i.e.: “*as equals in the eyes of God*”) for every other alcoholic seeking *new knowledge* of how to recover.

This is a fundamental difference between the AA approach to sobriety and some of the more traditional approaches which demand conformity to some particular *belief*

system. Significant differences in other areas of life do not preclude harmony, balance and compatibility as far as sobriety is concerned.

As far as AA is concerned, conformity to any rigid pre-set method of behavior and belief is not a requirement. This author recommends the reader clarify, their own objective in their own mind. (i.e.: *“their prayer”*, see pgs 12, 23 & 27). The common denominator, which is equally relevant for all, is the desire of the alcoholic to stop drinking. This common purpose, also provides complete respect for individuality. After that, members of AA are apt to differ as much as the places they drank. (review Appendix I - Tradition 3).

Individuality includes a recognized need to accept personal responsibility for decisions and choices made. How well the alcoholic is able to be happy, joyous and free in their sobriety is the only valid measure of success. Past behavior usually indicates personal judgment has been flawed by lack of knowledge sufficient to obtain that goal. (pgs 45 & 133).

“To get over drinking will require a transformation of thought and attitude. We all had to place recovery above everything, for without recovery we would have lost both home and business.” (pg 143)

The Ultimate Reality (i.e.: *“God’s will”* see pg 133) for the alcoholic is simply that:

WITHOUT RECOVERY, NOTHING ELSE FOLLOWS BUT OBLIVION.

The road to alcoholic oblivion may include jails, institutions and eventually death. However, an alternative option exists which offers close to a 100% guarantee for recovery. That path is available to any individual alcoholic who is capable of being honest with themselves.

“Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves.” (pg 58)

It is difficult for an alcoholic to be honest with themselves if they do not have a conscious awareness of their condition. (see pgs 31-32 & Steps 10-11). This is especially so if they lack sufficient information with which to make an intelligent decision. What is required is *new knowledge of the truth.* (i.e.: *“an improved conscious contact with God”* - Step 11).

Without clearly established motives and objectives, (i.e.: “prayers”), it is not unusual for personal priorities to get confused. (pg 23). As a result, mistakes in judgment occur. When erroneous choices are made, due to an incomplete *belief system,* they will fail to produce the results which were desired. (i.e.: *“prayed for”*). Such mistakes in

judgment can be corrected by acquiring *new knowledge of reality* from the source. (i.e.: "God" - see pgs 12, 14-15, 23, 27, 42, 53, 55, 68, 129, 133, 164, Steps 1-12 & Appendix II).

Without this singleness of purpose, it is easy to *believe* that personal survival is dependent upon continued employment, or certain other material conditions. (review pg 98). This common mistake may include a *belief* of a need for the favorable opinion of others. Some alcoholics even include "*blind faith*" in adherence to a "*second-hand belief structure*" for acceptance into some "*after life*". This *belief* is usually offered to them by "*self-appointed experts*" on that subject. If so, some of the "*AA Slogans*" may have special value. (i.e.: "*Think, Think, Think*";, "*First Things First*"; "*One Day at a Time*").

Establishing intelligent priorities is a mental action which is made difficult, if not impossible with a distorted mind. (see pgs 12, 23, 27, 42, 86, 93-95).

"These observations would be academic and pointless if our friend never took the first drink, thereby setting the terrible cycle in motion. Therefore, the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than in his body."
(pg 23)

Unquestionably, there is a need for *new knowledge* which is capable of producing more answers than those already known by the alcoholic. Hence improved conscious awareness of reality is invaluable when establishing priorities. (Step 11). Because the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind rather than his body, any attempt to shield that individual from reality conflicts with the essentials for recovery. (review Appendix II).

Compassion for the alcoholic is an excuse often offered by well-meaning "*do-gooders*". This is often akin to emotional concern for a puppy needing to have it's tail removed in order to survive. Out of misguided kindness, instead of cutting it all off at once, they only snip off a little piece at a time.

The harsh reality is that the alcoholic either wants to recover from alcoholism or they do not. This author believes avoidance of facing that truth makes the recovery process more difficult.

This author suggests that recovery from alcoholism is the inescapable personal responsibility of the alcoholic. Despite the best of intentions and desires by others, each alcoholic must want sobriety for themselves. No one can do their wanting (i.e.: "praying") for them.

To get over drinking requires a transformation of thought and attitude. (pg 143). Specifically, a change in the *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which are the guiding forces in their life. (pg 27). Nonetheless, the attitude of non-alcoholics has significance. This is so, regardless of their role in dealing with the recovery process, be it employer, physician, family member, or friend. The question remains, can you have every confidence in the ability of the alcoholic to recover? (pg 98).

Honest examination of personal *beliefs* can be useful to identify any erroneous personal prejudices. The degree of confidence displayed in the ability of an alcoholic to

recover is a reflection of *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which are guiding forces in the life of the non-alcoholic.

Any individual can believe anything they want to believe. The choice of *what to believe* can be intelligently acquired from personal experience, or reflect a “*second-hand belief system*” acquired from someone else. Regardless of how much they may think they understand, no individual can transmit awareness of reality (i.e.: “God”) they haven’t got. (pg 164).

ARE YOU HELPING WITH A SOLUTION, OR ARE YOU PART OF THE PROBLEM?

Accordingly, any non-alcoholic reader of this Study Guide is advised to examine their own motives and concern about the alcoholic.

- ?? **What is your role?**
- ?? **Why are you trying to be helpful?**
- ?? **Is there something in it for you?**
- ?? **If so, what?**
- ?? **Is success practical or is it moral?**
- ?? **Are results or methods your primary concern?**

Those who *believe* their efforts impact others, may wish to consider what limitations may exist. For example, are there limits to a personal awareness of *the Great Reality?* (i.e.: “God”). This author suggests there may be more to reality (syn: “God”) than that of which you now understand. (Steps 10-11).

Do you really *believe* you possess the best right answers for another human being?

“The greatest enemies of us alcoholics are resentment, jealousy, frustration and fear.” (pg 145)

Those mental conditions usually stem from something unknown or unfamiliar to the alcoholic. Nothing seems to stimulate them quite as much as attempts by another person (i.e.: “*equal in the eyes of God*”) to manipulate and control their lives.

It is readily apparent to others that the alcoholic, who is consciously unaware of their own alcoholism, (review pgs 30-32), has a serious problem. However, something happens when that alcoholic recognizes it is essential to be honest with themselves in

order to stay alive and carry their own keys. That same alcoholic no longer finds the truth to be significantly threatening. That revelation of the truth opens doors in their mind to a new kind of freedom and a new kind of happiness. (pgs 23, 27, & 83).

On the premise that “*the Great Reality*” is “God”, (pg 55), and that “*God is either everything or He is nothing*”, (pg 53), it would intelligently follow that:

**IF YOU LOSE SOMETHING TO THE TRUTH -
YOU REALLY HAVEN'T LOST ANYTHING.**

Understanding *the Great Reality* requires the use of personal intelligence. (see pgs 53, 55, 68, 164, Step 11 & Appendix II). Some adherents of many traditional religious *belief systems* will disagree about using intelligence when considering the role the *idea of God* plays in their life. (see pgs 12, 27, 55 & 86).

Despite those objections, this author recommends that employers, or others dealing with an alcoholic who is still drinking, take a practical approach to their recovery process. There are three direct and practical questions worth asking any drinking alcoholic who presents a problem. They are:

1. **Do you believe you have a problem with alcohol?**
2. **Do you want to do something about it?**
3. **If so, when?**

The answers received may provide a clear indication on how to proceed in an intelligent manner to resolve your problem. Even with idealistic motives to be helpful, it is well to recognize the desires of the alcoholic may differ from your own. Honest answers will more readily reveal the reality of your situation.

What needs to be determined is if the alcoholic cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program offered by AA.
(see pg 58).

Where an alcoholic has a capacity to be honest with themselves, the advice provided to employers is clear.

“It boils right down to this: No man should be fired just because he is alcoholic. If he wants to stop, he should be afforded a real chance. If he cannot or does not want to stop, he should be discharged. The exceptions are few.”
(pg 148)

A similar recommendation is provided to AA members attempting to be helpful to the still drinking alcoholic.

“We find it a waste of time to keep chasing a man who cannot or will not work with you. If you leave such a

person alone, he may soon become convinced that he cannot recover by himself.” (pg 96)

“We think this method of approach will accomplish several things. It will permit the rehabilitation of good men. At the same time you will feel no reluctance to rid yourself of those who cannot or will not stop.” (pg 148)

“Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us.” (pg 77)

“After all, are you looking for results rather than methods?” (pg 144)

These observations involve the personal motives of those dealing with an alcoholic who is still drinking. Numerous other approaches are also available. When considering any of the methods used by employers, physicians, and religion, there is an old nursery rhyme which has application here.

“PIE MAN, PIE MAN - LET ME TASTE YOUR WARES”

The best results can speak for themselves. (see Appendix I, Tradition 11). This author suggests the reader ask to be shown examples of their recoveries. Intelligent inquiry may clarify and demonstrate their ability to produce results you desire. This can be helpful in choosing the method utilized in resolving your problem with a drinking alcoholic.

A MIRACLE IS SOMETHING WHICH HAPPENS WHICH YOU DID NOT BELIEVE COULD HAPPEN.

Any *miracle of recovery* produced by AA has been accomplished by the alcoholic following a path provided by earlier members. Those principles are to be found in the basic text for recovery, followed by a diverse variety of stories of how they were applied by individual alcoholics. (i.e.: “*equal in the eyes of God*”). Any belief in miracles will find practical improvement by an intelligent examination of the personal belief system which supports it.

No individual AA member (i.e.: “specifically including the author of this Study Guide”) nor the collective experience of AA itself has all the answers. (pgs 53, 68 & 164). Methods used to produce recoveries may be challenged, even by some members of the professional community. Nonetheless, this author contends that **the results of AA still speak for themselves.**

IT IS HARD TO ARGUE WITH SUCCESS

* * * * *

SECTION B11a:

Chapter 11

A VISION FOR YOU

THE PATH AHEAD:

READ:

From the beginning of Chapter 10 on page 151 through to Page 152 ending with “*Where am I to find these people?*”

COMMENTS:

This final chapter of the AA Big Book was written a scant few years after “*The Great Social Experiment of Prohibition*” in the United States of America. Social attitudes about alcohol were confused, and drinking was still primarily viewed **as a moral issue**. Traditional religious groups functioned as the self-appointed spokesmen on public morality. **Political pressure, backed by strong emotion, were the tools used to enforce and control the behavior of others.** Eventually, **intelligence prevailed**, and unrealistically restrictive moral laws were repealed.

Many of those same groups continue their attempts to “**do good all over people**”. Some attempt to force social changes upon others with the self-assured *belief* that they will be rewarded for their efforts. (i.e.: “*in some other life*”). Any **real gratitude** for their efforts (i.e.: “*in this lifetime*”) is largely dependent upon who is the dispenser and who is the recipient of their spiritual largesse.

Regardless of many unquestionable merits found in the numerous traditional religious *belief systems*, most failed to recognize any **physiological differences** in how individuals process alcohol within their system. Medical details of body chemistry are most often left to the scientific community for evaluation. Physicians **who are familiar with alcoholism** still agree, there is no such thing as making a normal drinker out of an alcoholic. (pg 31). However, this does not prevent some from **experimenting on problem drinkers** hoping to find a lucrative cure. The alcoholic reader should recognize that **if and when those experiments fail**, a disappointed scientist is still around to say “*Whoops*”.

There are **physical differences** in the way different individuals process mind altering substances within their bodies. It is critical for any alcoholic to be aware of how they are impacted personally when they consume alcohol. (or other mind altering substances). **Anyone concerned if they may be alcoholic can quickly diagnose themselves.** (review pgs 30-32). It should be self-evident that not everyone reacts to drinking alcohol in the same way.

There are varying degrees of departure from “*normal drinking*” by different individuals. At one end of this scale you find the alcoholic. Over the centuries, numerous methods have been tried to make normal drinkers out of alcoholics. Nonetheless, some

drinkers still get physiological reactions to alcohol that are radically different from the statistically normal average drinker. (see "The Doctor's Opinion"). When the *basic text for recovery* (i.e.: "Alcoholics Anonymous") was first written, this was *believed* to be an inescapable fact of life. Science may one day discover *new knowledge* which will change this, but it hasn't done so yet. (pgs 30-32).

"If a mere code of morals or a better philosophy of life were sufficient to overcome alcoholism, many of us would have recovered long ago." (pg 44)

The alcoholic reader should be alert to primary differences between science and religion. Each takes a limited approach regarding the effects of drinking on an alcoholic.

Science deals mainly with the measurable physical effects of drinking alcohol upon the human body. Traditional religion is primarily concerned with moral and philosophical issues, as they relate to their particular *belief system*. Psychiatry, deals with distorted thought processes, frequently the result of using alcohol (or other mind-alterants). Because every major area in the life of the alcoholic is impacted, none of these separate approaches deals with the entire problem. However, most approaches will agree that individual alcoholics probably should not drink.

Most alcoholics understand the simple truth that whenever they start drinking they are unable to accurately predict when, where or under what circumstances they will stop drinking.

That abnormal *phenomenon of craving* appears to be limited to an allergic class of humans who are identified as being alcoholic. (review "The Doctor's Opinion). Like it or not, **physiological differences do exist**, and some relate to uncontrolled drinking. **Those body processes affect the entire life of a drinking alcoholic** and cut across all social boundaries without any regard for social groupings by race, religion, education or financial status. Despite "*local tribal customs*" or the "**group conscience**" of many AA groups, (see Tradition 3), every alcoholic reader should be aware that:

"NEITHER ALCOHOLISM NOR THE AA PROGRAM OF RECOVERY IS RESTRICTED TO WHITE, ENGLISH-SPEAKING, CHRISTIANS LIVING ON THE NORTH AMERICAN CONTINENT".
(see pg. 95).

The AA program of recovery contains some **universal principles** (i.e.: "God's Laws" &/or "Laws of Life") which cross boundaries separating human beings. It appears that wherever human beings consume alcohol some become alcoholic. **Some of those alcoholics recover using the AA program**. (pg 58).

Because AA has been helpful to so many different kinds of problem drinkers, confusion can arise about the scope of it's application. Similar results are sometimes sought for other problems which are merely a matter of daily living life on life's terms.

Many alcoholics have discovered some universal principles within the AA program. Some of those same principles have had value when applied to other areas of living. The same thing has often occurred with those who utilize some of the many different religious *belief systems*. It is worth noting where limitations exist.

The AA program of recovery from alcoholism does one thing exceedingly well. It has produced more sober alcoholics than the best efforts of science, religion or any judicial system. There is no claim it has the only answer to alcoholism nor “the answer” to all the problems of mankind or the universe.

Because the primary purpose of individuals will differ, it is suggested the reader identify their own personal relationship to alcoholism and the AA program of recovery. Clarify those objectives in your own mind. (pgs 23, 27 & 55). For example, why are you considering the *ideas, emotions and attitudes* outlined in this Study Guide?.

?? **Are you trying to learn how to successfully drink alcohol?**

?? **Are you seeking relief from the effects of drinking?**

?? **Are you seeking preferential treatment from God?**

?? **Are you trying to change someone else?**

?? **Are you trying to escape the realities of life?**

The capacity to be honest with yourself is helpful in finding answers. What you want the most is “*a thought in your own mind*” and qualifies as “*your prayer*”. That thought expresses your dominant and overwhelming desire. (review pgs 12, 23, 27, 46-47, 53, 55, 68, 93-95, 133, 152, 157-159, 164, & Appendix II).

It is suggested that undistorted mental clarity helps to recognize when “*a prayer*” is being answered.

There is a concept in AA that each individual is provided with a daily reprieve from alcoholism if they want it. (pgs 58 & 85). This author *believes* that relief from alcoholism comes from *new knowledge* and *new opportunities* found with “*the gift of each new day of life*”. (i.e.: “*a gift of God*”).

Each alcoholic is free to seek more than they already understand about life by moving toward sobriety at all costs. (pg 60(c)). They are equally free to choose the oblivion which alcohol provides as “*an answer to their prayers*”. (i.e.: “*also a gift from God*”- see pg. 53).

For many AA members, that personal relationship to the Ultimate Reality of life becomes their conception of the word “God”. (see pg 12). **With a “*daily reprieve*” they gain access to all and everything that is *the Great Reality of life***. (i.e.: “*God*” - see pg.

55). **What they choose to accept is what they want the most**. (i.e.: “*the answer to their prayers*”). **What they get is that Ultimate Reality on life’s terms**. (i.e.: “God’s Will”). Some are disappointed when it is not the same as their chosen “*second-hand belief system*” defining how life should be. (i.e.: “*self-will run riot*” see pgs 42 & 62).

When a *lifelong conception of God* (i.e.: “*an old idea*” - see pgs 27 & 58) has validity, it follows that any equal human being can utilize those same principles. When sufficiently motivated, it is possible to learn more of what any other human being has already learned. The motivation to do so reflects a personal *belief* about equality, and what has priority importance.

There appears to be an endless supply of *new knowledge* available within the limits of a single lifetime which is available to learn anything. For many the power of that *new knowledge* (i.e.: “*the omniscience and omnipotence of infinite God*” - see pg 68) fits their conception of a power greater than themselves. (see pgs 12 & 55). With that mental approach, many find *relief* from their alcoholism as they understand more about that source of *new knowledge* of reality. (i.e.: “God” - Steps 3, 10, 11).

Depending upon what is already understood about the *infinite reality of life*, (i.e.: “*God as you understand Him*” -Step 11), some alcoholics may find it more intelligent to give attention to one area of knowledge instead of another. This will vary according to personal preferences.

For example, a large fat man is free to devote himself to learning how to become a race-horse jockey. However, the time spent will have limited value to him unless society races Clydesdale draft horses. Instead, he could have chosen to acquire *new knowledge* about other things that might have enriched his life more effectively.

LIFE OFFERS INFINITE OPPORTUNITIES FOR MAKING INTELLIGENT SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

This author *believes* there is dubious value for any alcoholic to devote very much of their attention to the recreational oblivion provided by social drinking. While any *new knowledge* on the subject may be interesting, it is not very useful when their own life becomes unmanageable due to body processes which are different than with a social drinker. (see “The Doctor’s Opinion” & pgs 30-32).

The alcoholic who is unable to accurately determine when they can safely drink has a serious risk factor involved.

Taking risks with their life may be exciting, but if they are rigorously honest, eventually they may become aware that:

TAKING UNNECESSARY RISKS IS NEITHER INTELLIGENT NOR SANE BEHAVIOR?

(see Step 2)

Fortunately, there is unlimited power of *new knowledge* which is available to any alcoholic who is willing to seek more. (pg 68 & Step 2).

IF KNOWLEDGE IS INFINITE, THEN SO IS PERSONAL IGNORANCE

Even the sum total of all human knowledge is woefully incomplete compared to all that can be known. There are limits to how much *new knowledge* any alcoholic could acquire during a single lifetime. Any *spiritual growth or progress* will be restricted to that available lifetime. (see pgs 14-15, 53, 68, 129, 164. & Appendix II). Using the intelligence of “*First Things First*”, priority attention for an alcoholic is to deal with:

“ONE LIFE AT A TIME”

Despite “*good intentions of others*” the individual alcoholic carries the final responsibility for the free choices they make. This reflects their personal *belief system* about what is important. Sooner or later the risk-taking alcoholic may consider what they stand to gain and what they stand to lose.

“The idea that somehow, someday he will control and enjoy his drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker. The persistence of this illusion is astonishing. Many pursue it into the gates of insanity or death.”
(pg 30)

Pursuing *new knowledge* (i.e.: “*God from the source*” - pg 60(c)) can become a dominate desire in life. Unless an alcoholic is “*all knowing*” (i.e.: “*omniscient*”) old ideas can be always be improved upon by being more in harmony with *the Great Reality*. (i.e.: “*God*” - see pgs 42, & 58). In many cases, the time spent improving *conscious understanding* of one particular portion of that infinite reality could have been spent in a more intelligent manner. (pg 68 & Step 11)

Many alcoholics have improved their *belief system* (Step 11) by honestly asking themselves:

“WHERE DO ORIGINAL IDEAS COME FROM?”

Following a path of self-examination (see pg 64) can be a new experience for many alcoholics. Some equate the process with improving their conscious contact with God’s Will for them. (see pgs 60(c), 133 & Step 11). The natural consequence is *spiritual progress*. (see pg 55). Whenever the alcoholic is better able to cooperate with life on life’s terms, (see pgs 14-15), the tangible benefits are usually preferred over vain attempts to force-fit reality into how they *believe* life should be.

“Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.”
(pg 58)

All these observations are premised upon *physiological differences* between alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinkers. (see “The Doctor’s Opinion”). There are members of the professional community devoting their attention to finding “*a cure*”. Eventually they

may acquire sufficient *new knowledge* to end the debate. **Nonetheless, in reality,** (i.e.: “*life on life’s terms*”) **the alcoholic either does or does not have a *physical allergy coupled with an obsession of the mind*.** That is a concept used in the AA approach to recovery from alcoholism.

The methods used by AA have sometimes been challenged by members of the professional community. The fact still remains that no other approach has demonstrated a comparable rate of success. (pgs 30-32).

For the individual alcoholic, who is betting their life and freedom on a method, this has practical significance. On the basis of statistical odds, the AA approach to sobriety still remains the best and most intelligent choice in favor of continued survival.

There does appear to be some *physiological basis* for the phenomenon of craving which does not seem to occur the same way in normal drinkers. If this is so, then those body processes are not subject to change with more self-knowledge. (see pgs 39-40). **An alcoholic may not be able to change their body processes, but they can learn to reject the first drink.** That is what starts the craving to work upon their *decision-making* processes. (see pg 23). Others have learned how to reject the first drink. Any alcoholic, capable of being honest with themselves, could follow their lead. (see pg 58 & “Frontispiece”).

Taking the first drink of alcohol sets the phenomenon of craving into motion for an alcoholic. **Once activated, the *physiological reasons for the existence of that craving are moot*.** Those reasons will have little significance to the alcoholic unless they take that first drink.

“Therefore, the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind rather than his body” (pg 23)

Few non-alcoholics become mentally obsessed with taking a drink of alcohol to produce something beneficial in their lives. Most choose to drink for reasons which make intelligent “*good sense*” to their mind, or else they will refrain from drinking if “*undesired consequences*” are recognizable.

This is not the same with the alcoholic *who gets something more* out of drinking than the non-alcoholic. (review pgs 30-32). Because of erroneously perceived benefits alcoholics tend to use what they believe works well with increasing frequency. (i.e.: “*self-will run riot*”). However, that same alcoholic will seldom admit responsibility for any destructive consequences nor acknowledge they intentionally selected the actions which caused them problems. Instead, priority importance gets shifted to their freedom to drink, even when the price-tag for drinking is unintelligently high. (review Step 2).

Members of the professional community with an academic interest in alcoholism tend to be more casual and detached. Unless directly impacted in some manner their motivation is often restricted to their professional status or financial interests. A person who is not directly concerned about their own survival when drinking rarely becomes serious about trying to control it.

“VIRGINS SELDOM GO FOR PREGNANCY TESTS”

The **interests of society** about alcoholism primarily revolve around getting the alcoholic **to want what society wants them to want**. This will keep changing and eventually become an exercise in futility. Any cooperation from the alcoholic usually requires society to use **force, fear and intimidation**.

The application of pressure is the result of a *social belief system* about alcoholics and alcoholism. This will differ from one culture to another. Their *belief system* may range from raw emotional ideas, through “*second-hand ideas of morality*” to genuinely *intelligent concerns* for the social group. **All societies will believe that “what they believe” provides “*the best method of dealing with the problem*”**. Without having all the answers, they may be mistaken.

Individuals with ***social concerns about alcoholism*** are encouraged to investigate the Alanon program which utilizes the same **principles** found in the AA program for recovery. Those who do, may discover a simple truth. The main problem with which they are dealing is “***their own belief system***”.

Those individuals, who do not have a personal problem with alcohol, are also **free to discard** old *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which are guiding forces in their lives. (see pg 27). **However, some new knowledge may disrupt any *ethnocentric beliefs about moral superiority***. Few will be motivated to accept any *new knowledge* with an *open mind* if it disturbs their **existing attitudes** or implies the alcoholic might be **an equal human being**. (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”).

More valid information is still available, even when trying to side-step old ideas about *human equality*. Some members of society have already improved their ways of dealing with drinking alcoholics. (Step 11). That *new knowledge* is always available to anyone who desires to seek it.

A drinking alcoholic is often considered troublesome because “they do not respond to your bidding”. This is recognition they have access to some power greater than yourself. Their equal access to “the source of all power” often does not fit “old ideas about God” or else it conflicts with “an ethnocentric belief system”. This is usually based some “second-hand moral code of right and wrong” which no longer applies to reality.

The moment the idea of control exists, whatever you *believe* requires control has your attention. This author has observed that such *belief systems* are more frequently powered by emotions than by intelligence. When that happens:

“ANYTHING WHICH HAS YOUR ATTENTION - HAS YOU”

This author suggests the reader may not be able to control an alcoholic, (i.e.: “*as an equal in the eyes of God*”), but they can improve the *ideas, emotions and attitudes* which are the guiding forces in their own life. (see pgs 23 & 27).

ANYTHING REQUIRING CONTROL IS A PROBLEM

This author suggests that “*the real problem*” is a “*belief*” that personal happiness is being dictated and determined by another human being. (i.e.: “*equal in the eyes of God*” - see pg 133). **In reality, the alcoholic has as much freedom to make their own decisions and choices as you do.**

There is nothing to accept or reject except that which is called “God’s Creation”. A *belief system* of equal access and *human equality* conflicts with many traditional religions which claim that *some humans are more favored than others*. (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”).

Ultimately there are three options available.

1. **Accept things as they are.**
2. **Change your attitude about the problem.**
3. **Get rid of the problem.**

Life is under no obligation to adhere to whatever higher standards for reality may be claimed by the adherents of many traditional religions. It is difficult to understand how any of their spokesmen can make their ethnocentric claims of superiority without being able to reconcile their *beliefs* with reality. (syn: “God”). **What they do believe may or may not be valid.** Ultimately, each individual becomes responsible for what they *believe*.

YOU DON’T KNOW UNLESS YOU KNOW

Nothing in life has pre-set labels on it. Different individuals place different labels upon different conditions. Those labels become “*desirable or undesirable*” according to how much “*the label-maker understands of reality*” (syn: “God” - see Step 11). **Other individual label-makers** (i.e.: “*equal in the eyes of God*”) **are free to agree or disagree.**

Any individual is free to change the labels they create and place upon reality. (i.e.: “God” - see pg 12) They are free to do so if they have a sufficient desire to do so. (syn: “*their prayer*”). For example, alcohol, as a beverage, can be labeled as being either *desirable or undesirable*. (pgs 12, 23, & 27).

IT’S YOUR MIND, AND YOU CAN DO ANYTHING **YOU WANT WITH IT - CAN’T YOU?**

Many non-alcoholics find it objectionable to *believe* the alcoholic is an equal human being. (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”). Someone who is just as capable of making distorted choices as they are. This mental condition can be summarized by a *belief* that:

“MY INSANITY IS SUPERIOR TO YOUR INSANITY”

The only option acceptable to them may be to direct their attention to something or someone else they prefer to have in their life. (pg 96). This too will require *new knowledge* of reality.

“IF YOU DON’T KNOW HOW TO BE HAPPY WITH WHAT YOU HAVE, - YOU WON’T KNOW HOW TO BE HAPPY WITH WHAT YOU WANT - WHEN YOU GET IT”

Making a decision to trade up in the endless stream of new opportunities is frequently difficult and painful. (pg 85). Alcoholics unwilling to accept responsibility for their own choices often prefer to allow matters to unfold by default. That is the an alternative option for those who decline to use their “*God-given*” intelligence and will power. (review pgs 85-86). Traditional religions usually offer them a default relationship to those harsh realities of life.

When their thinking is being done by someone else, many alcoholics *believe* they no longer have any responsibility for their own mistakes. By that chosen belief system someone or something else does everything to them or for them. (see pgs 12, 27, 85-87). Many also use that same intelligence and freedom of choice to recognize and accept that some advice from others may be an improvement over their *old ideas*.

“Be quick to see where religious people are right”
(pg 87)

Designating another human being to be an authority is a personal choice. No individual (i.e.: “*equal in the eyes of God*”) **has more than their own best understanding of the Great Reality.** (syn: “*God*” - pg 55). **This author suggests that no human power, religious or otherwise, possesses all the answers.** (see pg 60(b)).

This author has concluded any *perceived benefits* derived from drinking alcohol are inescapably personal. No one else experiences the same *release from care* which drinking alcohol provides. That is the *true nature* of what alcohol (and other mind-alterants) do to the human body.

Reality itself does not change, only the drinkers perception of reality. (i.e.: “*God*”). That observation is self-evident when applied to alcoholics. The **price paid** for that dubious luxury **will differ** among individuals. Only the alcoholic can decide if the benefits they receive are worth what they pay for them.

The first few drinks unquestionably provide release from care for most people. However, once the *phenomenon of craving* has been activated, (see “*The Doctor’s Opinion*”) the value system of the alcoholic (pg 27) gets impacted as well. The consequences often lead to jails, institutions and death. (see pgs 30-32). While others may be indirectly affected, the results eventually become very personal for the alcoholic. Those

who are not alcoholic do not experience this same lack of caring for otherwise important matters.

Most alcoholics will lose control over their ability to care about benefits or consequences of their choices once they begin drinking. This may occur quickly or slowly depending upon uniquely individual *physiological differences*. However, **before taking that first drink**, any alcoholic is still free to decide if the benefits offered are worth the risks involved. This is why attendance at AA meetings and *intensive work with other alcoholics* can help improve personal immunity from drinking. During those times, more *new knowledge* of reality can still be revealed. (see pgs 14-15, 43, 45, 58, 89, 164 & Appendix II).

Non-alcoholic people who drink may frequently find some measure of personal fulfillment in doing so. Alcohol offers them the companionship and conviviality that comes with social drinking. Many eagerly seek out such pleasures and have mixed experiences of success. However, non-alcoholics will seldom repeat destructive choices in order to enjoy social drinking.

By contrast, alcoholics are more like the schoolboy at summer camp who was taken on a “snipe hunt”. It may take them a long time to become aware they have been “the brunt of a practical joke”. Out of ignorance, they can “waste a lot of time in the bushes of fantasy, waiting for someone to drive the bluebird of happiness into their sack”.
(review pgs 30-31).

The *belief* the alcoholic can drink normally becomes **a cruel practical joke from life**, and the promised happiness is only an illusion. It can be a painful and rude awakening to realize that **“what you believed from people you trusted”** is not really so. Because of *physiological differences*, the ability of an alcoholic to drink socially is an *illusion* only existing in their own mind **because they wanted to believe it**. (see pgs 23 & 27).

Alcohol has promised happiness, joy and freedom to many alcoholics who ultimately discover they had been played for a sucker.

Instead of getting their lives enriched, they got the *Terror, Bewilderment, Frustration and Despair* that accompanies uncontrolled drinking. (see pg 151). It is worth mentioning that reading this Study Guide is apt to have very limited value to anyone who drinks and has not experienced those mental conditions. (pg 23).

“We alcoholics are men and women who have lost
the ability to control our drinking.” (pg 30)

For those alcoholics who ask if there is another way to experience companionship, conviviality and inspire a colorful imagination without the use of alcohol, the answer happily is “*yes there is*”. **There are certain promises made in the basic textbook for recovery**. (see pgs 83-84). It is recommended the reader review them now. Only you can decide if those promises are worth working for.

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SECTION B11b:

Chapter 11

A VISION FOR YOU

THE PATH AHEAD: Cont'd

READ:

From page 152 beginning with “*You are going to meet these new friends in your own community.*” through to page 161 ending with “*Being a large place, we think that some day its Fellowship will number many hundreds.*”

COMMENTS:

The Big Book “*Alcoholics Anonymous*” was written for alcoholics who were personally interested in recovery. To make the change from a “*drinking alcoholic to a sober alcoholic*” requires *new knowledge*. (review pgs 26-27). Obviously such a significant change of how to live life requires motivation. This author has assumed the alcoholic reader wants to stay alive and carry their own keys. The AA program was designed to accommodate that desire (i.e.: “*prayer*”) in alcoholics who recognized continued drinking was incompatible with their own survival.

Enlarged awareness of reality is beneficial when deciding if present *ideas, emotions, and attitudes* governing life are valid. Personal mistakes in judgment can be embarrassing. Where harmony, balance and compatibility exists with life, on life's terms, personal happiness, joy and freedom will follow more readily. (syn: “*God's will*” - pg 133). Improving conscious awareness of “*the Great Reality*” (syn: “*God*” - see pg 55 & Step 11) is an intelligent choice to make..

This may require seeking to be free of indecision. That freedom may require letting go of old ideas to seek *new knowledge* which is always available from the “*source of all knowledge*”. (i.e.: “*God*” - see pgs 59, 60(c), & 83). Any embarrassment of being mistaken will have little intelligent significance when compared to continued life and freedom. Only the reader can place priority importance upon their emotions over their “*God-given*” intelligence. (see pg 86).

An obsessive desire (i.e.: “*prayer*”) **to both control and enjoy drinking has been a *motivating idea, emotion or attitude* in the life of every alcoholic.** (review pgs 23, 27, 30-32)

Any alcoholic, who is able to be rigorously honest with themselves, will recognize that they are gambling their own life and freedom against the questionable benefits of drinking socially.

Though coldly realistic and potentially dangerous and life-threatening, there is a suggested way any problem drinker can acquire new knowledge about their personal relationship with alcohol.

“We do not like to pronounce any individual as alcoholic, but you can quickly diagnose yourself. Step over to the nearest barroom and try some controlled drinking. Try to drink and stop abruptly. Try it more than once. It will not take long for you to decide, if you are honest with yourself about it. It may be worth a bad case of jitters if you get a full knowledge of your condition.” (pg 31)

Both alcoholics and non-alcoholics alike will benefit from clarifying other interests separately from the primary purpose of the AA group. Few AA groups intend to be “phony”, but some do drift away from AA’s own definition of itself to focus upon “other special interests”.

*A group conscience with other special interests” can easily and gradually change an AA Group into a gathering of exclusive alcoholics. Hopefully, as a group, they will be rigorously honest in identifying those ethnocentric objectives. (see pg 58 & Appendix I, Tradition 3). When the primary purpose of the group is within the definition AA, they will likely wish to continue as an AA group. To do so may require they correct any departures from “the primary purpose of AA”. (see “*The AA Preamble*”, & Appendix II).*

Confusion can easily occur when recovery from alcoholism gets mixed with secondary interests. The AA program has no such boundaries and there is no “second requirement for membership”.

Established AA members will recognize this can easily occur over matters concerning narcotics, gambling, “clean-speech”, smoking, political, racial or cultural beliefs. Strong emotional attitudes about religious ideas also separate AA members from each other, as individuals. Accordingly, AA’s own definition of itself which gets read at most meetings clearly states that:

“Our primary purpose is to stay sober and to help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety”. (AA Preamble)

This author desires to re-emphasize that **the only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking**. Once again, it is emphatically clear that use of the word “only” means:

THERE IS NO SECOND REQUIREMENT FOR AA MEMBERSHIP
(review Appendix I - Tradition 3 - “The Long Form”)

In order to recover, anyone who is alcoholic has a practical need for rigorous self-honesty. (see pg 58 & Appendix II). This author suggests that self-honesty extends to their primary purpose for personal involvement with AA .

Personal anonymity and involvement with “*other interests*” also have a direct relationship to continued personal survival. (see Appendix I - Tradition 12). The importance of this is recognized by the recommendation that individual members identify themselves publicly simply as being “*a member of Alcoholics Anonymous*”. (see “Forward to First Edition”).

It is similarly desirable for a group to be equally clear about their primary purpose in order to avoid confusion and survive as a group. AA groups can easily drift into involvement with “*other areas of interest*”. The “*primary purpose of the group*” gets confused when this happens. To maintain integrity as an AA group requires individual members to constantly evaluate “*the primary purpose of the group conscience*”. This can be difficult when “*a numerical majority have exclusive special interests*” and a group has become “*phony*”. This can occur as result of subtle or direct demands by the group for conformity to objectives “*other than sobriety*”. (review Appendix I - Tradition 3).

“For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority--a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.” (Appendix I - Tradition Two)

AA provides a remarkably effective solution for individuals with a physical allergy to alcohol and a mental obsession to drink it. (see “The Doctor’s Opinion”). At the same time, alcoholics who are “*self-absorbed*” with other personal problems, (i.e.: “*self-will run riot*”), easily divert their attention away from their primary reason for involvement with AA. The reader is reminded that the fundamental AA message is that:

THE AA PROGRAM DOES ONE THING EXCEEDINGLY WELL.

AA continues to demonstrate effectiveness in freely helping alcoholics who have a desire to stop drinking, regardless of the occasional critical or “*fault-finding*” comment about AA’s methods. (see pg. 95). This includes professional observations by the medical and scientific community who are unable to duplicate AA’s results, and rarely try without charging a fee for services. (review pgs 30-32).

The basic AA text emphasizes a continuing need for “*spiritual growth and progress*” for recovery from alcoholism. (see pgs 14-15, 35, 53, 55, 60(a-c), 68, 164, Appendix II). The “only requirement for progress or improved understanding of reality” is a desire to seek that *new knowledge* from the source of all knowledge. (i.e.: “God” - see Step 11, pgs 12, 53, 55, 68, 164 & Appendix II). An endless supply of that *new knowledge* is available to anyone. However:

To apply AA to “all the ills of mankind” dilutes the effectiveness of what AA does best.

The attitude that “*a problem is a problem is a problem*” is a naive *belief* when it expects AA to be some universal panacea to solve all problems. This tends to occur when social attitudes mix what AA does best with religious *belief systems*. While every alcoholic is free choose their own conception of “*the word God*”, (pg 12), for the integrity of AA, it is critical that each AA group be clear about their primary purpose.

Any group of individuals, as a group, either is or is not within the definition AA provides for itself. That definition is usually read as the “Preamble” for most AA meetings. Regardless of explanations or justifications, “anything else is phony”.

There are several questions any member should be free to ask of an AA group. Is the primary purpose of the group to:

?? **Change others who don’t want to change?**

?? **Maintain some special racial or cultural identity?**

?? **Promote a religious idea as superior to others?**

When the *beliefs* and *behavior* of an AA group are what they say they are, the group is integrated. Without group integrity there is conflict. When there is conflict within a group, as a group, it is difficult for individual members to maintain personal happiness, joy or freedom. (i.e.: “*God’s will*” - see pg 133).

Only rigorous honesty by individual members can maintain the integrity of an AA group. Each member of AA, (i.e.: “*as an equal in the eyes of God*”), has a stake and some personal responsibility in maintaining the integrity of AA. It is for their own “*enlightened self-interest*” to do so. (review pg 66 & Appendix II - Tradition 2). It will help prevent a diversion from the primary purpose of their lifeline with AA.

If a group is dominated by “*other interests*”, then arguments and resentments lead to mental confusion and emotional turmoil. Under those conditions it is easy to lose sight of the primary objective to “*stay alive and carry your own keys*”. When that happens, the insanity of alcoholism can return, and to drink again is to die. (“First Things First” see pgs 23 & 66).

Alcoholism is a personal problem which cuts across all social, political, ethnic and religious barriers. Within AA, you will encounter individuals who would likely not mix cooperatively under other circumstances. They are bound together by their desperation to find an effective solution to a common problem.

The common goal of personal survival is a powerful bond which is seldom equaled by “*other interests*”. (see pgs 17, 30-32). That is what “*AA groups with integrity*” provide exceedingly well for those who want what they have. (pg 58).

However, not every alcoholic is quite so desperate about survival when they first encounter AA. For many their drinking has not yet threatened to destroy all things that make life worth living. Due to lack of experience with uncontrolled drinking, (Step 11) many display only a casual interest in recovery. Others consciously recognize the direction they are going. (pgs 14-15, 30-32).

SOME ALCOHOLICS ARE MOTIVATED BY INSPIRATION INSTEAD OF DESPERATION

Being directly involved in personal recoveries from human misery can be a heady brew. For many alcoholics active involvement with AA opens the doors to an infinite variety of new living experiences. Some of those experiences produce rewards better than alcohol ever did.

Without first experiencing reality, no alcoholic can intelligently separate what they *believe* from what is reality (i.e.: “*God as you understand Him*” see Steps 3 & 11). Any other comparison would be what someone else *believes* will allow an alcoholic to be *happy, joyous and free in sobriety*. (i.e. “*God’s will*” -see pg 133). That means as an equal (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”) it can also happen to you. If that is what is most desired by the reader, (i.e.: “*the answer to a prayer*” - see pg 58), it has already happened with other alcoholics. However:

YOU DON’T KNOW UNLESS YOU KNOW

For many alcoholics, personal recovery first appears to be a miracle. It is as if something magical has occurred in their life and is often referred to as “*the miracle of recovery*”. However, consider the way miracles or magic are perceived by the mind. Both defy that which the mind *believes* to be possible. (pg 23).

“*Performing miracles*” exceeds “*logical or reasonable expectations*” for personal abilities. (see pgs 39, 42, 49 & 53-54).

Consider the magician who pushes a coin through a handkerchief into a glass of water or shuffles cards and then deals them into some *unbelievable* sequence. Those actions are *believed* to be impossible, (pgs 45-48, 52 & Step 11), yet are being demonstrated before your own eyes. **It must be magic, - it must be a miracle.**

When given access to *new knowledge* of “*The Secrets of Magic*”, a conscious understanding of “*the Great Reality*” is improved. (Step 11). It then becomes possible to consciously observe the process by which the magician performs his miracles. (review Step 11).

As more of reality is understood, (syn: “*God*” - pg 60(c) & Step 3) there is “*improved conscious awareness*” of what is possible. (Step 11). The inescapable result is improved understanding of *the Great Reality*. (syn: “*God*” - see pg 55).

Changes to *old ideas* (i.e.: “*existing belief system*”) will occur to accommodate that *new knowledge*. (pg 23). As a natural consequence, the individual enlarges their *spiritual life* **by expanding the horizons of their own mind**. What they once *believed* impossible they now understand is possible.

UNDERSTANDING REALITY PROVIDES FREEDOM FROM THE LIMITATIONS OF OLD IDEAS

This requires *willingness honesty* and *open-mindedness* to seek *new knowledge* beyond old ideas and existing *belief systems*. (see pg 60(c) & Appendix II). With improved awareness, “*the miracle of magic*” gets converted into “*new knowledge of reality*” and is available to anyone willing **expand the horizons of their own mind**. (pgs 23, 58). The action of moving coins or aligning cards requires constant practice to produce the illusions of magic. Those actions are awkward at the start, but with continued practice the personal proficiency of the novice is improved. (pgs 14-15, & Step 12).

To duplicate what “*miracle workers*” have done requires practice. Improved understanding alone is not enough. (review Steps 11 & 12).

Those who are persistent will recognize they have tapped an endless *source of knowledge and power* which is greater than their *old ideas*. The basic AA text suggests “*there is One who has all power - that One is God*”. Access to that *source of all new knowledge* includes the power to do something previously *believed impossible*. (review pgs 42, 45, 53, 59, 68, 84-84, 164, & Appendix II). It occurs *on life’s terms* rather than on the basis of *old ideas* or *false beliefs*.

After sufficient practice in shuffling the cards or moving coins, consider what happens next. **To those who do not yet understand what is really going on, the actions appear to be both *magical and miraculous* because. something is happening their mind does not believe is possible.** However, the person with *awareness of reality* knows it is only their *belief* which is not true.

This author contends that for those who are ignorant of “*the Great Reality*” (i.e.: “God”), that:

KNOWLEDGE IS THE POWER TO PERFORM MIRACLES FOR THE IGNORANT.

It should be self-evident that any person with both knowledge and practice (i.e.: “*of magic tricks*”) has gained an advantage. Gamblers, card-sharks, *plus some other more reputable occupations* are consciously aware of this **universal principle** of their **personal power over the ignorant**.

Those who understand this universal principle have freedom to take advantage of the ignorant. Anyone increasing their *new knowledge* (i.e.: “*their conscious contact with God*” - Step 11) will be able to deceive and control the ignorant to gain that personal advantage. That principle is well established and has been demonstrated as part of the history of some traditional religions.

Those who understand that same universal principle also know they are free to use that same power in a different direction. They are free to share “*the power of*

new knowledge” with others **as their equal**. (i.e. “*in the eyes of God*”). In AA, some alcoholics recognize the *spiritual value of freely sharing* with others **as equals**. They are aware it is “***the working of the good will of one human being for another***”. Because “***greed, power and control***” so often conflict with “***equality***”, it has been accurately recognized that:

“MONEY WOULD LOUSE IT UP”

That was *new knowledge* about human nature which was freely offered by an interested non-alcoholic during AA’s formative period. It provided AA with an intelligent basis for being “*self-supporting*”. (review Appendix I - Tradition 7). Those who recognize and understand this *spiritual value* are able to cooperate with *the Great Reality* (i.e.: “God”) on an improved basis. **They will experience an improved happiness, joy and freedom as a result.**

Many who deal with alcoholics do not yet possess this awareness. Until they acquire a conscious understanding of this aspect of human nature, they will likely have other priorities as their dominate desire. (i.e.: “prayer”). **Under those conditions they will be seeking other ways to be happy, joyous and free.** (i.e.: “*God’s will for them*” - pg 133).

If what they seek is available in life, they will find what they want most. However, the results, (i.e.: “*the answer to their prayer*”), will be on life’s terms not their own. The results will reflect their *belief system*, and their “*fundamental idea of God*”, (pg 55) according to their chosen concept of “*a power greater than themselves*”. (pg 12).

When a *belief system* is valid, the results will be “**their version of being happy, joyous and free**”. It will include the power of *new knowledge of the Great Reality*. (syn: “God”). By enlarging their understanding of their own human equality (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*” - Step 11) they have acquired *new power*. (see pgs 45 & 133). Those who are mistaken will experience different results.

This author contends that “*a conscious contact with reality*” is the only thing which separates human beings from each other. (Step 11). For individuals who are equals (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”) their only differences are between:

THOSE WHO KNOW AND THOSE WHO DON’T KNOW.

After that, it is only a matter of what. Everyone has access to unlimited knowledge and “*the infinite power of God*”. (see pgs 53 & 68).

This universal principle can be emotionally disturbing to many who are professionals in the field of alcoholism. The recoveries produced by AA are often reluctantly accepted because they do not fit neatly into an existing *belief system*. The recoveries produced by AA are baffling to many professionals. Though they are not likely to label them as “*miracles*”, their understanding is always finite and usually limited to

their particular area of professional expertise. The success of AA takes them beyond that limited range of their understanding.

However, the alcoholic reader should be cautious not to reject legitimate knowledge from any source. Do not “*throw out the baby with the bathwater*” when evaluating the wisdom and advice of the professional community. (pg 89). A finite or limited approach does not deny validity to what they know, or even think they know about alcoholism. Recognize the professional community is often confronted with results they cannot explain. This can be a frustrating experience because it focuses attention upon the inadequacies of their professional knowledge and understanding.

Most professionals have spent many expensive years in training, just as the alcoholic has with their drinking. Using the tools of their chosen field of knowledge, most professionals are sincere in their desire to help the alcoholic. Then, their best efforts get compared with results they are unable to duplicate. (see pg 18). To make matters worse, those results get produced by seemingly unskilled novices.

The emotional response of some professionals to AA is often similar to an adult fumbling with a Rubik’s Cube, only to have some child quickly align it properly for them. What is even more devastating is when it gets done with apparent ease and confidence.

For the alcoholic, it is helpful to be clear about what they seek from the professional community. Many prefer to look for results which they can understand. It is difficult to argue with success, therefore first ask to see some samples of their work:

“PIE MAN, PIEMAN, - LET ME TASTE YOUR WARES!”

It is worth noting that many doctors, social workers and religious leaders have become alcoholics despite their professional training. Many have found recovery by practicing the principles in AA. While AA may not be the only path to recovery, it still remains the most successful. This adds emphasis to the *belief* that some valid basic principles of life are to be found in the AA program. Those principles appear to have universal application.

Today there are sober members of AA who are also professionals in both science and religion. Part of early AA history involved one individual with no professional medical qualifications assisting in the recovery of another alcoholic who did.

This unorthodox “*miracle of recovery*” has occurred over and over again. With changes in names, dates, and locations, those same principles continue to produce similar results. In the simplest of terms, the power of *new knowledge* has made this possible.

This author *believes* whenever one alcoholic shares the secret of their own success with another alcoholic they reinforce whatever *new knowledge* they have acquired.

When they do this, they demonstrate the “*magic and miracle of their own recovery*” with an equal human being. When that *new knowledge* is freely given and joyfully received it becomes the working of good will based upon the principle of human equality.

By contrast, imposing a personal *belief system* upon another person denies their equality, (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*” - review Appendix I - Tradition 12), and implies their personality is what is of primary importance.

However, when an alcoholic freely gives of their experience to an alcoholic, as an equal, their feelings of uselessness and self-pity are quickly reduced, dissolved and eventually eliminated. (review pgs 83-84). Sharing “*the miracle of their own recovery*” with an equal human being produces a genuine feeling of personal accomplishment. This is especially so, if their “*magical secret of success*” gets recognized and accepted to produce mutually desired results.

“Most of us think this awareness of a Power greater than ourselves is the essence of spiritual experience. Our more religious members call it “God consciousness.”
(Appendix II)

It can be a “vital spiritual experience” to discover value and usefulness to another alcoholic as an equal. For some alcoholics, such a personality change may appear to be a “*miracle*”. (review Appendix II).

“We finally saw that faith in some kind of God was a part of our make-up, just as much as the feeling we have for a friend. Sometimes we had to search fearlessly, but He was there. He was as much a fact as we were. We found the Great Reality deep down within us. In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found. It was so with us.

We can only clear the ground a bit. If our testimony helps sweep away prejudice, enables you to think honestly, encourages you to search diligently within yourself, then, if you wish, you can join us on the Broad Highway. With this attitude you cannot fail. The consciousness of your belief is sure to come to you.”
(pg 55)

* * * * *

SECTION B11c:

Chapter 11

A VISION FOR YOU

THE PATH AHEAD: Concluded

READ:

From page 161 beginning with “*But life among Alcoholics Anonymous is more than attending gatherings and visiting hospitals.*” and ending on page 164 with the conclusions of Chapter 11 and the basic text of the AA Big Book with “*may God bless you and keep you - until then.*”

COMMENTS:

AA IS THE WORKINGS OF GOOD WILL OF ONE HUMAN BEING FOR ANOTHER. MONEY IS NOT A KEY ELEMENT FOR RECOVERY. AA DOES NOT ACCEPT “OTHER PEOPLE’S MONEY”. (see Appendix I - Tradition 7- The Long Form).

The *spiritual value* of avoiding distractions created by *money, property and prestige* got recognized early and was understood by earlier members of AA. (review Appendix I - “THE TWELVE TRADITIONS (The Long Form)). This is frequently “*a missing spiritual element*” in the *belief system* guiding many non-alcoholics dealing with the recovery process. (see pg 27). Some professionals in the field of alcoholism are like “nice honest street-walkers” because:

“THEY ONLY DO IT FOR MONEY !”

First there was formal public legislation which acknowledged the disease concept of alcoholism. (review “The Doctor’s Opinion”). Then, efforts were made to duplicate the success of AA with grants for social programs. Public, corporate and private funds have been used. This reflects a *belief system* that large amounts of money, when given to the professional community, will resolve one of mankind’s oldest social problems.

Acquiring “*other people’s money*” has motivated the professional community to want to help alcoholics (i.e.: “*the answer to their prayers*”) instead of working in some other direction.

MONEY MOTIVATES ACTION

Spending money has produced some limited results worthy of praise from any alcoholic who might otherwise experience insanity or death as the result of their

uncontrolled drinking. (see pgs 30-32). Nonetheless, the vast majority of recoveries still occur within the AA program. **Once again, AA does not rely upon “other people’s money”.**

During AA’s earliest development, a wealthy philanthropist was solicited for funds to establish recovery facilities. With his wisdom of human nature he said of AA:

“Gentlemen, this is a project which does not require money. It is the workings of the good will of one human being for another, and money would louse it up!”.

As the result, AA became self-supporting through voluntary contributions from individual members. (Appendix I -Tradition 7). **In San Francisco in 1951, the then surviving co-founder of AA, related that quote as his experience of AA’s beginnings. This author was present to hear that important message.**

Notwithstanding AA’s refusal to rely upon “other people’s money”, some publicly funded social programs use AA. They attempt to link up with AA as part of “their treatment”. This can create confusion. (See “Preamble” & Appendix I - Traditions 3-8, The Long Form).

The objectives of public programs may include personal recovery, but usually on “their terms”. Their primary purpose is more often to solve some “social problem” created by alcoholism. **Personal interests** of individual alcoholics become **secondary issues**. Those same alcoholics, (i.e.: “*equal in the eyes of God*”), could have achieved **cost-free lasting recovery** by voluntarily going directly to AA. They do not always want what society wants them to want.

Anyone is worthy of gratitude who helps alcoholics recover. Time was when few people cared. Due to indifference, alcoholics died unnoticed and unmourned. Today many public agencies direct attention to the recovery process. **Recognizably, some may be primarily interested in receiving funding for research, or to maintain staff salaries.**

The lives and freedom of millions of alcoholics are at stake because they cannot afford expensive treatment programs. One day public funding of social programs may discover superior cost-free results. (pg 31). If successful, indigent alcoholics will have a wider range of choices for their recovery and survival.

Monetary and “other objectives” dilute AA’s effectiveness. Reasons for AA to avoid linking up with “other activities” are clearly defined. (see Appendix I “THE TWELVE TRADITIONS - (The Long Form)). **They should be studied carefully by anyone seriously interested in helping alcoholics to recover.**

AA works best without distractions from it’s primary purpose. When “other people’s money” is introduced, the main focus tends to shift. When the primary purpose is no longer the good will of one human being for another, it is easy for personal greed to take it’s place.

Success within AA occurs by alcoholics “*freely sharing the secrets of their own success*” with other and equal alcoholics. In so doing, any feelings of their own

uselessness and self-pity get reduced. There is “less fear” of personal inequality. (i.e.: “in the eyes of God” - see pgs 67-68 & 84). Money is not required for that “fearless spiritual progress”. (review Appendix I -Traditions 3, 5, 6 & 7).

Education, wealth and *beliefs* of moral superiority alone have seldom produced lasting recoveries. (see pgs 43, 60(a-c), 68, 164 & Appendix II). The realistic significance of an erroneous *attitude* gets illustrated by the widow of an alcoholic. When asked why her dead husband had not gone to AA to recover, she indignantly replied “*well he wasn’t that bad!!*”.

Some alcoholics believe they are too intelligent, too wealthy or too morally good for AA. This author has never known any alcoholic too dumb, too poor or too bad to recover.

Placing personal priority for recovery over other considerations is an *intelligent choice of attitude* for success in the AA program. (review pgs 27, 30-32). That dominate desire (i.e.: “prayer”) is a *personal choice*.

“Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program. (pg 58)

Accordingly, this author asks alcoholics, having difficulty with the AA way of life, if it is because you

?? **CANNOT**, - or because you

?? **WILL NOT**

completely give yourself to this simple program? (review pg 58).

The choice pits the value of a distorted mind over one that is free to think clearly and sanely. (review Step 2). Oblivion from reality is readily available to anyone (i.e.: “equal in the eyes of God”) who chooses to drink enough alcohol. Any intelligent desire to drink would include having something of value in that “*recreational oblivion*” which alcohol provides.

That same choice is potentially life threatening for alcoholics who have *physiological differences* and a *phenomenon of craving* activated by taking that “*first drink*”. Everyone is unique in some different way. Some people have alcoholism, and some sunburn easily. However, no one knows or completely understands why those differences exist. (review pgs 42-43, & 46).

When the dominant desire (syn: “*the prayer*”) of an alcoholic is to escape from reality, they will seek some way to get drunk and usually find it. (i.e.: “*God answers their prayer*” - review pgs 60(a-c) & 133). The personal preference to stay alive and carry their own keys can replace the desire to drink. If it does, then “*sobriety*” instead of “*recreational oblivion*” is equally available. (see pg 58)

Any alcoholic (i.e.: “*equal in the eyes of God*”) is free to “*want what they want*”. (i.e.: “*do their own praying*”). **Just remember who’s life is forfeit because of an erroneous *belief system* about what will provide the results you desire. Only the results will have any real significance.**

The lengths alcoholics are willing to go for survival reflects their personal priorities and a guiding force in their life. (pg 27). Many alcoholics really do prefer to withdraw from life using “*booze*” (or “*other mind alterants*”). It is the experience of this author that eventually “*their prayers get answered*”. Until the alcoholic makes a decision and uses free choice to pick up “*a bottle of booze*”, it will just sit there gathering dust. Seldom does anyone sit on their chest and force a drink down their throat while they scream “*rape*”.

For this reason, recognizing the *physiological phenomenon of craving* is a primary consideration for survival by an alcoholic. (see the Doctor’s Opinion”, Steps 1 & 2). It becomes operative by taking the first drink. Once activated, freedom of choice is dominated by an obsessive desire for more. (syn: “*an obsessive prayer*”)

“The idea that somehow, someday he will control and enjoy his drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker.”
(pg 30)

Often, the interests of society require them to protect alcoholics from insanity or death. **To protect those interests may require society to create medical or judicial controls.** Realistically, any resourceful alcoholic can usually outwit their protectors and drink again.

How to control other people is a social, political or religious problem. It is a problem far beyond and outside of the clearly stated primary purpose of AA. (review the AA Preamble & Appendix I, Traditions 5, 6, 10). Although AA has no opinion on such issues, it should be recognized that *individual members* do. Some have strong and diverse personal views. Those personal differences often conflict with views of other AA members. (review Tradition 12).

Sadly for some and gratefully for others, no one can dictate the desires of an alcoholic. (i.e.: “*their prayers*” - see pg 58). When the physical effects of alcohol wear off, the *phenomenon of craving* is reduced. Then an alcoholic can **intelligently consider** the value of another drink. (review pg 86).

No judicial, scientific or religious approach has demonstrated ability to coerce an alcoholic to be a normal drinker.

“Physicians who are familiar with alcoholism agree there is no such thing as making a normal drinker out of an alcoholic. Science may one day accomplish this, but it hasn’t done so yet.”
(pg 31)

Some alcoholics require *new knowledge* before making an intelligent decision to stop drinking. Other people (i.e.: “*equal in the eyes of God*”) may try to help, but only the alcoholic decides what lengths they are willing to go to stop. (pgs 30-32 & 58). A problem drinker may wish to weigh the benefits gained from drinking against the risks

involved. The answers, if given honestly, may indicate just how important alcohol has become. (pgs 30-32).

“Therefore, the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than in his body.” (pg 23)

In this Study Guide, the reader has been provided with comments about the experience of the first members of AA. They were the alcoholics whose experiences produced the program of recovery outline in the basic text “*Alcoholics Anonymous*”. **This Study Guide is only supplemental information offering the personal perspective of one single member for consideration.** Other AA members (i.e.: “*equals in the eyes of God*”) express different views. When they are made available, it is recommended they be evaluated intelligently with an open mind. (review Appendix II).

NO INDIVIDUAL MEMBER IS QUALIFIED TO SPEAK FOR THE ENTIRE FELLOWSHIP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS.

“When writing or speaking publicly about alcoholism, we urge each of our Fellowship to omit his personal name, designating himself instead as “a member of Alcoholics Anonymous.”

(see - Foreword to First Edition)

Each alcoholic decides what has validity in their own life, however that decision may get made by “*a distorted mind*”. (pg 23). Although “*well-meaning*” people may try to be helpful, no one else can decide what the alcoholic wants the most. (i.e.: “*their personal prayer*”). Accordingly, no one else controls the results. This author *believes* that intelligent decisions produce superior results to those made with “*a distorted mind*”.

Because anyone can *believe* anything “*they want to believe*”, the “*answer to any prayer*” occurs on life’s terms, (i.e.: “*according to God’s will*” -see pg 133). The desire of an alcoholic to *believe* something does not determine it is reality or is valid on life’s terms.

This author *believes* that life, on life’s terms (i.e.: “*a fundamental idea of God*” see pg 55) has already provided alcoholics with what they want the most. (i.e.: “*the answer to their prayers*”). It may be “*sobriety*”, it may be “*oblivion from reality*”. Both are equally available. Spokesmen for traditional religions may disagree.

By improving conscious understanding of reality (i.e.: “*God*” - see Step 11) intelligent access to “*the power to have a prayer answered*” gets improved. (see pgs 59 & 60(c)). Some power, which is part of *the Great Reality*, (i.e.: “*God*” -pg 55), is capable of fulfilling that desire. First, however, what is wanted must be clearly defined in the mind of the alcoholic. Then it must be desired above all the other options which are available. (see pg 23 & Step 2). This author *believes* such personal fulfillment is available. It can be claimed by any alcoholic who clearly understands what they want the most. (see pg 133 & Step 11)

**THERE IS ALWAYS A WAY TO GET DRUNK,
AND
THERE IS ALWAYS A WAY TO GET SOBER.**

With freedom of choice comes inescapable responsibility for the consequences of choices made. Due to ignorance of reality (syn: "*ignorance of God*") those consequences may not be recognized. This author suggests any oversight is due to lack of understanding of life, on life's terms. (i.e.: "God" - review pg 45 & Step 11). Correction may require *new knowledge* before being able to let go of old ideas. (see pgs 27, 42, 58, 68, Appendix II).

When an alcoholic seeks to become a social drinker, it is like asking for "*fat-free chicken fat*". Life on life's terms, (syn: "*God's will*") does not provide for such contradictions of terms. The phenomenon of craving is part of what makes the alcoholic a unique individual. (i.e.: "*but nonetheless equal in the eyes of God*"). To the disappointment and frustration of many, there is still no such thing as making a normal drinker out of an alcoholic. (pg 30-32). Or, as one sober member of AA commented:

"IF I WASN'T AN ALCOHOLIC, I'D BE DRINKING ALL THE TIME".

Like it or not, some individuals have a physical craving coupled with a mental obsession to drink more alcohol once they take the first drink. Thus far no one knows **why** this condition exists. However, it is self-evident it is that way for some individuals. The term "*alcoholic*" has been applied to drinkers who are in that class. (see "The Doctor's Opinion"). When that condition is recognized, individuals can be identified and "labeled as being alcoholic". However:

NOTHING WHICH IS REAL CHANGES

In AA, there is a basic premise that, if left to their own devices, some drinkers cannot start drinking and then intelligently control when they will stop drinking. (pg 30-32).

This author *believes* anyone with a drinking problem has a *need to know* if they fit that description of an *alcoholic*. It is essential information for making intelligent changes. This has importance when choosing *moral values and beliefs* as guides for life. (see pgs 23 & 27). Others will *believe* they are **victims of life**, and they may be right. (review pg 53). **They may also just be victims of their own ignorance of reality.** (i.e.: "God").

The choices of any alcoholic will reflect their *beliefs* about life. For the problem drinker, that *belief system* ultimately will require answers to the following questions.

?? DO YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH ALCOHOL?

?? DO YOU WANT TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT?

?? WHEN?

Those capable of being honest with themselves, will find their own answers are limited by their personal knowledge and understanding of reality. (i.e.: "God" - Step 11). The power of that knowledge comes from the source of all power. (syn: "God" - see pg 59). Fortunately, there is more power available. (see pgs 45 & 60(c)).

When power is lacking, (pg 45), some alcoholics place their trust in a "*second-hand belief system*" provided by others. (i.e.: "*equal in the eyes of God*" - see pg 68). Their "*belief system*" may include emotional satisfaction from "*wishful thinking and hoping*". However, unknown reality can also be "*filled with fear*". (pg 67). This author believes that "*an idea, emotion or attitude of fear*" is not the most intelligent way to approach recovery from alcoholism. (pg 27). Instead of being "*happy, joyous and free*" (i.e.: "*God's will*" -pg 133) the alcoholic is "*running scared*". (i.e.: "*self-will run riot*").

Seeking *new knowledge* which is compatible with reality (i.e.: "God") is often the preferred choice of those who desire (i.e.: pray) to recover at all costs. (see pg 58). For them, it is self-evident the required power has been lacking. (pg 45). Alcoholics seeking *new knowledge* with an open-mind, soon discover there is always more. (review pgs 60(c), 68, & Appendix II).

IF KNOWLEDGE IS INFINITE - SO IS IGNORANCE.

This author recommends alcoholics use their own intelligence when they evaluate what is gained or lost by drinking. A thinking person will consider the statistical odds of getting what they want the most. That would be the intelligent approach for someone who cares what happens but cannot control the outcome once they start drinking. An alcoholic who is using intelligence will quickly recognize they are gambling with their own life and freedom. (pgs 30-32).

Regardless of any philosophical or moral convictions found in "*other approaches*", the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous still provides the best practical "*long-term odds*" in favor of recovery.
(review pgs 44-46)

Notice that AA does not attempt to offer the last and final word on any power required for recovery from alcoholism. This is a significant departure from most traditional religious approaches to "*moral issues*".

The basic AA text provides the alcoholic with a practical approach to a very real physical and mental problem. Your attention is directed to the AA Big Book Frontispiece. It points out a direction where success has been achieved and results are being demonstrated.

IT IS DIFFICULT TO ARGUE WITH SUCCESS.

The AA program of recovery does not claim to have the final answer for alcoholism, nor for any other problem affecting the lives of alcoholics.

“Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us.” (pg 164)

This author suggests the reader utilize their own “*God-given brains*” when choosing a *belief system* as a guiding force in their life. (pgs 12, 23, 27 & 86).

Of necessity, the spokesmen for any “*second-hand version of God*” will be using their own limited intelligence. Some of them may claim to have **the only answer** instead of just having **a answer** for alcoholism. By using your own intelligence, (i.e. “*as an equal in the eyes of God*”), you, the reader, are free to choose the results you most desire. (i.e.: “*pray for*”). This freedom of choice is especially important, when selecting someone as an authority on life. (pgs 12, 23 & 27).

Ask yourself why you *believe* another person might be better qualified to run your life than you are. (see pg 60(a-c)). **Could it be because they have the power of knowledge you do not yet possess?**

For some, a more intelligent choice might be to seek *new knowledge* by going directly to the same source the chosen authorities got their power and knowledge. (pg 59). Some people *believe* they already know everything worth knowing about reality. (i.e.: “*God*”). Not everyone agrees. This author *believes* there is more to be understood than has yet been discovered by the entire human race. (pgs 42, 68 164 & Step 11).

Admittedly, continued *spiritual progress* (pg 60) does not conveniently fit into many traditional religious concepts of “*the power of God*”. There have been some successful recoveries produced within the limited scope of those *belief systems*. This author suggests that neither they, nor AA have all the answers.

“We have no monopoly on God; we merely have an approach that worked with us.” (pg 95)

Professionals in the scientific community also have demonstrated some limited success helping alcoholics. They tend to have different ideas about the power responsible for any of their results. (review pg 55).

There is no attempt here to establish that only science or religion has access to “*the source of all new knowledge*”. (i.e.: “*God*”).

“But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven’t got” (pg 164)

For the alcoholic, it is results which are of primary concern. Any alcoholic with a strong desire (i.e.: “*prayer*”) to “*stay alive and carry their own keys*” is more interested in results than “*second-hand theories or wishful thinking*”.

Many become willing to go to any lengths for survival. (pg 58). This author considers “*letting go of old ideas*” in favor of “*something that works*” to be the more intelligent choice for those seeking successful results. (pg 60(c)).

Anyone with an open mind who studies the basic text “*Alcoholics Anonymous*” can find what AA has to offer. (review pgs 46, 58, 98). **Comments made in this Study Guide are merely the offering of one individual member who is deeply grateful for the opportunity.** The AA program has enabled this author to enjoy a personal life which has been realistically happy, joyous and free. (see pg 133). It has been the result of discovering **principles** available within the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. (see Step 12).

Life on life’s terms **is the Great Reality.** (i.e.: “God” - pg 55). That Ultimate Reality of All Life is infinite. (pg 68). In an infinite universe there are no shortages of anything which is real. The only lack is a conscious understanding of sufficient *new knowledge* to claim what is already there. (pg 45 & Step 11).

Each individual is responsible to seek whatever *new knowledge* they require in order to claim what they want most. (i.e.: “*the answer to what they pray for*”).

Those answers get provided on the basis of a **daily reprieve** from the ignorance and the misery, sorrow and bondage of alcoholism. (pgs 85 & 133).

Continued spiritual growth is essential for continued recovery from alcoholism. (pgs 14-15). ***Willingness, honesty and open mindedness* are indispensable for those who want** (i.e.: “*pray for*”) **and seek more than they have already found.** (pgs 27, 42, 60(c) & Appendix II).

The author of this Study Guide sincerely hopes the reader has found something of value and usefulness in it. (see pgs 77, 129 & 153). **Once again, remember it is only the individual and personal view of *one single member of Alcoholics Anonymous.*** (see Forward to First Edition, & Appendix II - Tradition 12).

Other alcoholics may discover something different and are encouraged to share their perspective **as equal individuals.** (i.e.: “*in the eyes of God*”).

“Give freely of what you find and join us”

(pg 164)

* * * * *

EPILOGUE:

Many individuals find value in using prayer and meditation to enrich their daily lives. However, there are some alcoholics who have difficulty in reconciling “*the concept of God*”, as it is presented by many traditional religions, with their own natural intelligence.

Instead of blindly accepting a “*second-hand belief system*” which has been developed by other equal human beings, there are some alcoholics who prefer “*a concept of God*” which makes intelligent sense to their own mind.

For them, the author of this Study Guide offers a morning meditation, or “*daily prayer*” which may be of value. It seems to qualify as “*a prayer*” because it originates in the mind of the individual, and reflects a dominant desire for that which is good.

A NON-RELIGIOUS PRAYER

I accept the gift of life for this day by opening my mind to the endless flow of new knowledge which comes from the Source of All Knowledge and Power. I seek to improve my conscious understanding of that Great Reality of Life which is God by enlarging my spiritual life to cooperate with life, on life’s terms.

I know that God is all and everything, and should I lose something I have not lost anything that was really mine. Therefore, I freely and willingly let go of any and all old ideas or false beliefs which are blocks, barriers or obstacles to my greatest Good and highest Happiness being provided to me as a gift from God during this day.

I choose to live this day with an attitude of gratitude for that constant flow of new lessons which improve my personal understanding of that Ultimate Reality which is God. I joyfully end this day with a quiet mind, knowing I have done my best, according to my understanding of the infinite options life has provided during this day. I give thanks that tomorrow will offer new opportunities to further improve cooperation with life, on life’s terms.

I accept that it is my responsibility to decide what I ask for in prayer, and learn to accept the answers to my prayers when given to me on life’s terms. This is my prayer for my life for this day. And, so it is.

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SECTION B: The Basic Text of AA (Chapters 1 - 11)

Chapter 1 - Bill's Story

B01 Pages 1 - 16

Chapter 2 - There is a Solution

STEP ONE:

B02a Page 17 beginning with "We, of Alcoholics Anonymous ..." to page 26 ending with "and were willing to make the effort."

B02b Page 26 beginning with "A certain American business man"...to end of Chapter 2 on page 29.

Chapter 3 - More about Alcoholism

STEP TWO:

B03a Page 30 beginning with "Most of us have been unwilling to admit..." to page 32 ending with "It may be worth a bad case of jitters if you get a full knowledge of your condition."

B03b Page 32 beginning with "Though there may be no way of proving it..." to page 39 ending with "This is a point we wish to emphasize and reemphasize, to smash home upon our alcoholic readers as it has been revealed to us out of bitter experience."

B03c Page 39 beginning with "Let us take another illustration..." to end of Chapter 3 on page

43 ending with "His defense must come from a Higher Power".

B03d Having completed Chapter 3, this section is preliminary to reading Chapter 4.

B03e Scan entire Chapter 4 pages 43 through 57 to gain familiarity with contents.

Chapter 4 - We Agnostics

B04a Entire Chapter 4 from page 43 beginning with "In the preceding chapters..." to page 57 ending with "When we drew near to Him He disclosed Himself to us!" plus awareness of two previous sections.

Chapter 5 - How it Works

B05a From beginning of Chapter 5 on page 58 with "Rarely have we seen a person fail..." to page 60(c) ending with "That God could and would if He were sought."

B05b Same as Section B05a above.

STEP THREE:

B05c Starting on page 60 beginning with "Being convinced, we were at Step Three..." to page 64, ending with "Our liquor was but a symptom. So we had to get down to causes and conditions."

B05d Same as Section B05c above.

STEP FOUR:

B05e Starting on page 64 beginning with "Therefore we started upon a personal inventory."

to page 67, ending with "We admitted our wrongs honestly and were willing to set these matters straight."

B05f Same as Section B05e above.

B05g Same as Sections B05e and B05f above.

B05h Starting on page 67 with "Notice that the word "fear" is bracketed..." to page 68 ending with "At once, we commenced to outgrow fear."

B05I Same as Section B05h above.

B05j Starting on page 68 with "Now about sex..." through to page 71 ending with "That being so you have swallowed and digested some big chunks of truth about yourself."

Chapter 6 - Into Action

B06a The first paragraph on page 72.

B06b Same as Section B06a above.

B06c Page 72 beginning with "This is perhaps difficult..." to page 73, ending with "...until they told someone else all their life story."

B06d Page 73 from "More than most people,..." to bottom of page 73 ending with "...have a low opinion of alcoholics and their chance for recovery!"

B06e Same as Section B06d above.

B06f Page 73 beginning with "We must be entirely honest with somebody..." to page 75, ending with "...they will be honored by our confidence."

B06g Page 75 beginning with "We pocket our pride..." ending on page 75 with "Have we tried to make mortar without sand?"

STEP SIX:

B06h Page 76, the first paragraph beginning with "If we can answer to our satisfaction..." and ending with "...we ask God to help us be willing."

STEP SEVEN:

B06I Page 76, the second paragraph beginning with "When ready, we say..." and ending with "We have then completed Step Seven."

B06j Same as Section B06I above.

STEP EIGHT:

B06k Page 76, beginning with "Now we need more action..." and ending with "...we would go to any length for victory over alcohol."

B06l Same as Section B06k above.

STEP NINE:

B06mPage 76, beginning with "Probably there are still some misgivings..." to page 83, ending with "As God's people we stand on our feet; we don't crawl before anyone."

B06n ("THE PROMISES") Page 83 beginning with "If we are painstaking about this phase of our

development..." and ending on page 84 with "They will always materialize if we work for them."

STEP TEN:

B06o Page 84 beginning with "This thought brings us to Step Ten, which suggests we continue to take personal inventory..." and ending on page 85 with "But we must go further and that means more action."

STEP ELEVEN:

B06p Page 85 beginning with "Step Eleven suggests prayer and meditation..." to page 86, ending with "After making our review we ask God's forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken."

B06q Page 86 beginning with "On awakening let us think about the twenty four hours ahead..." through the remainder of Chapter 6 ending on page 88 with "The next chapter is entirely devoted to Step Twelve."

Chapter 7 - Working with Others

STEP TWELVE:

B07a Page 89, the first paragraph, beginning with "Practical experience shows..." and ending with "Remember they are very ill."

B07b Page 89 beginning with "Life will take on new meaning..." to the bottom of page 95, ending with "Let it go at that."

B07c Page 96 beginning with "Do not be discouraged if your prospect does not respond at once..." to page 98 ending with "Burn into the consciousness of every man that he can get well regardless of anyone. The only condition is that he trust in God and clean house."

B07d Page 98 beginning with "Now the domestic problem..." through page 100, ending with "The story of how you and your wife settled your difficulties is worth any amount of criticism."

B07e Page 100 beginning with "Assuming we are spiritually fit, ..." to end of Chapter 7 ending on page 103 with "After all, our problems were of our own making. Bottles were only a symbol. Besides, we have stopped fighting anybody or anything. We have to."

Chapter 8 - To Wives

B08a Entire Chapter 8, beginning on page 104 with "With few exceptions, our book thus far has spoken of men..." through page 121 ending with "Good Luck and God bless you."

Chapter 9 - The Family Afterward

B09a Entire Chapter 9 beginning on page 122 with "Our women folk have suggested..." to end of Chapter 9 on page 135 ending with "Here they are:

*First Things First
Live and Let Live
Easy Does It."*

B09b Same as Section B09a above.

Chapter 10 - To Employers

B10a Entire Chapter 10 beginning on page 136 with "Among many employers nowadays..." through to end of Chapter 10 on page 150 ending with "I have enjoyed every moment in getting them straightened out."

B10b Same as Section B10a above.

B10c Same as Sections B10a and B10b above.

Chapter 11 - A Vision for You

B11a Page 151 beginning with "For most normal folks, drinking means conviviality, companionship and colorful imagination..." to page 152, ending with "Where am I to find these people?"

B11b Page 152 beginning with "You are going to meet these new friends in your own community..." to page 161 ending with "Being a large place, we think that some day its Fellowship will number many hundreds."

B11c Page 161 beginning with "But life among Alcoholics Anonymous is more than attending gatherings and visiting hospitals..." to the end of Chapter 11 and the basic text, ending on page 164 with "...may God bless you and keep you - until then."

EPILOGUE: Concluding comments on prayer and meditation.

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