

MARCH 2026



The Sobriety Gazette

A PUBLICATION OF THE MID-MISSISSIPPI INTERGROUP

Let's begin with a moment of silence for the alcoholics/addicts still suffering, followed by the Serenity Prayer... 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.

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Tradition Three

The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.

Responsibility Statement

I am responsible... When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there.
And for that:
I am responsible.

The Third Step Prayer...

GOD, I offer myself to Thee — to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. 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. May I do Thy will always! AMEN

The Sobriety Gazette is a publication of the Mid-Mississippi Intergroup. The purpose of this publication is to improve communication between local AA groups, inform and encourage participation in service opportunities and events that promote sobriety. Opinions expressed do not necessarily indicate endorsement by the central office or Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole.

The 3rd Step Prayer of AA

By Shannon M

The 3rd step of Alcoholics Anonymous requires each person wanting to make “a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.” (W, Bill, 2002, p. 59) As with so many of the AA steps, there is a prayer to accompany this step. In this case, there are many, but they share a common denominator.

An Overview

If I counted correctly, the site Friends of Bill W contains nineteen prayers appropriate to the 3rd step. (*Friends of Bill W. – Third Step Prayers*, n.d.), including the serenity prayer, but this article will be based on the prayer given in the big book of Alcoholics Anonymous.

God, I offer myself to Thee To build with me & to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy love & Thy way of life. May I do Thy will always.

The prayer accurately reflects the intention of the step and, importantly, details the breadth of the higher power, referring to God’s power, love, and way of life.

God, I offer myself to Thee

The prayer starts with the alcoholic who having admitted their powerlessness over drink hands themselves over to the care of God. The statement reflects a conscious decision to engage in positive action in the remediation of alcohol abuse. This offering is the confirmation of the spiritual awakening that began in step 2 when the alcoholic realizes the true meaning of powerlessness, coming to believe that a power greater than themselves could restore them to sanity. (W, Bill, 2002, p. 59) God is a forgiving God and an understanding God. These are tenets on which 12 step recovery programs are based. The Higher Power alone is capable of transforming life on a daily basis. The alcoholic offers themselves to God and offers themselves a chance to become God’s handiwork.

To build with me & to do with me as Thou wilt

Not only does the alcoholic commit themselves to the care of God, but also to the service of their Higher Power as they understand that power to be. This offers the alcoholic to God’s way and asks that the Deity will lead them to distinguish the right thing from the wrong things of the past.

The important word here is “*build*.” The newly admitted alcoholic does not, after this step, become a complete work. Moving forward to the next step and each step beyond this builds the sober alcoholic into a new being. This step creates the foundation on which to build.

As the alcoholic becomes increasingly addicted. It seems as though their growth as people and as children of God becomes arrested. This line restarts the growth,

Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will.

Every alcoholic is in thrall to their need to drink and to satisfying their desires. The bondage of self is the egocentricity of “Me first” or “Me only” that drives addictive behavior. It removes tolerance of others and is the foundation of any defects of character. It reinforces the confusion of daily life that is the lot of the still suffering alcoholic.

The key idea in this step and this prayer is transition. The alcoholic begins to move on from the imprisonment brought about by the disease of alcoholism into a place of spiritual wisdom as they begin to conquer their greatest enemy.

It is a simple prayer here that encompasses the aims of the third step. It is a prayer for change in the life of someone still drinking. It is a prayer of moving on.

Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy love & Thy way of life.

This is an act of humility as the alcoholic in asking this acknowledges their inability to achieve the right attitude. Later on, the Higher Power will be asked to remove every single defect of character. This line in the prayer is a prelude to that.

It is the promise of complete inner harmony, despite unforeseen events, that can arise with a commitment to a new attitude and with a clear mind. God wants us to become part of the good of this world. This is not just wishful thinking but an idea that can be held with firm conviction.

The action of God on the alcoholic’s life becomes an advertisement for the possibilities that stem from recovery. The victory that God helps the still suffering alcoholic achieve over their difficulties becomes a living example of what can be done through the Higher Power’s intervention.



May I do Thy will always



Here each alcoholic seeks the “way of my usefulness” that they may serve their higher power. One of the elements of this is to consider God’s will and the key to that is that the reformed drinker seeks inner peace through daily prayer and as a result the guidance of correct thought.

As the foundation becomes a house and the alcoholic is built as a new person, the desire to act as a conduit for God increases. A conduit for the Higher Power needs to be in tune with what God wants them to be and what God wants them to be. Slowly, the God of a person’s understanding now offered a foundation, rebuilds and recreates the person in the image that God perceives for that individual.

A Note on Prayer Variations

There are many variations of the 3rd step prayer, each reflecting different understandings of God. These prayers run the range from Eastern Orthodox, Wiccan, Native American, and Jewish. Even if these do not reflect someone’s understanding of God, there is still a beauty in many which make them worth reading even if the reader will not use them as a prayer.

Here are some examples including a personal variation.

- To ease their burden when I can and touch them with a smile of peace (Buddhist Prayer)
- Let my body & soul unite in love & peace to do Your will sincere (Jewish 3rd step prayer)
- But this I know. You do not give love, you are love. (Unitarian Universalist Prayer)
- Fill me with your love and Holy Spirit and make me know Your will for me. (Dr. Bob)

Each of these variations may bring something to a person’s understanding of the Higher Power and that adds to the spiritual foundation that is currently being created.

The prayer from the big book was chosen as it is generic and is easily applicable to all the ways in which God can be understood. Because it is from the major text of the step program it can also be considered to be canonical.

Conclusion

Of all the steps of A.A. other than the first, the third step may be the most important. It is a transitional or gateway step where for the first time the alcoholic performs an active step towards breaking the hold the disease has on their life. This is not to diminish any step of the 12-step program, but simply to emphasize the enormity of the decision to turn problems.

A Diamond Head Sunrise

Susan Gentry

A predawn hike with flashlights to the top of
Diamond Head, a little less than a mile
In and out of lava formation to
An elevation of about 600 feet...
My anticipation fades to concentration
On keeping pace and breathing.
Nearing the top, adrenalin meets excitement.
Dark of night clears to soft daylight. I
Hear the words, "Rarely have we seen..."
Echo. From the colorless world of
Addiction to this vast brilliant and vivid
Display of sunrise is humbling. A
Soft breeze seems to push pillow clouds
Under an azure cover, carrying re-
Newed hope from our sunrise meeting for
Recovery into this breathtaking world...
Into this day... to possibly help someone
Suffering. For today and this experience, I am
Eternally grateful.

Step 3

Make a decision to be open to spiritual energy as we take deliberate action for change in our lives.

Principles: Decision, Acceptance, Action

Steps 1 and 2 call for reflection. They are the mental Steps of the program, calling for insight, honesty, faith and hope. Step 1 gives us in-sight into our faulty thinking and shows us the reality of our powerlessness. Step 2 provides a vision of hope for great positive change in our lives. And then there is Step 3, the Step that takes our recovery into the outside world. Step 3 calls for decision. Our decision is the bridge between the mental part of the program and the action part. The decision of the Third Step connects the possibility of change with the reality of doing it.

Activating Change

Having insight about ourselves and having hope that our lives can improve does not automatically produce change. Only change makes change. Change rarely happens by accident and good intentions don't do the job either. We must decide that things will be different and then follow through with action.

In Step 3 we activate our own winds of change. We decide, we open ourselves to spiritual energy and we commit ourselves to deliberate action. The interplay among these forces sets up a dynamic that soon begins to fuel itself and healing change becomes a true force in our lives.

What It Means To "Decide"

All living is a process of decision. Every waking moment of every single day we decide. We decide whether to get out of bed, what to wear, what to eat, who to talk to and what to say. Right at this instant you will decide whether to read another word of this book.

But we can't "decide" about everything. We couldn't get through the day if we had to "decide" to pick up a pencil or pull up a sock. These are habitual decisions that are grooved into our brain. They are only the background for the real decisions we have to make. Real decisions can be active and examined or passive and unexamined. Most of us guide our lives with unexamined decisions driven by our pain, our denial, our rage – in other words, driven by the roots of our compulsions.

The Third Step teaches us another way. We learn to make active, examined decisions. We push ahead in a time of crisis rather than fall back into our old ways. We learn to step back from ourselves, to take time and to apply new knowledge. With the help of the Third Step, we take full responsibility and begin to guide our own destiny.

Influencing Our Own Destiny Means Letting Go

In Step 3 we take charge of letting go. In order to physically let go, we have to consciously relax our muscles and allow the chattering in our minds to stop. We let go and the spiritual forces of peace, quiet and serenity bring about positive change in our bodies. We do the same sort of thing when we psychologically let go. We deliberately relax our mental grip on our belief in self-power. We let go of this delusion and are free to reach for new, positive energy that replenishes our spirit.

We Decide To Open

Some of us reject the very idea of spiritual energy. We fuss about whether it is good or bad or better or worse or whether it can be proved at all. It is only when we stop trying to evaluate it that we can reach for what helps us. We reach out, and if what we find opens a happier, more serene way, it is power we can use.

When we are open to spiritual energy, we have a serene relationship to life. We are receptive to what's around us – we notice things. We feel eager to learn from life and willing to live fully and happily. We begin to understand where we belong in the natural scheme of things. We adopt an attitude of appreciative openness, the attitude that some people call "living consciously."

We can open to spiritual energy with our emotions, our minds, the action of our bodies or with our whole being. We can draw inspiration from the natural world, from the power of ideas, from the courage of another person, from wisdom, from everyday events in our lives or from a larger purpose. There are many ways to make profound spiritual connections. Drawing from varied and changing sources of strength can give us a rich and fullbodied experience of feeling alive. We open to life, and life opens to us.





The energy for our healing comes from our letting go, from our openness, our reaching and our acceptance. In Step 2, Ann, Tom, Sarah and Jim each made a conscious decision to reach for their own spiritual energy as they faced change. What inspires us and how we experience it is personal. No matter what or how, the energy we gain is real.

We Commit Ourselves To Action

Step 3 is also a commitment to action, deliberate action springing from active decisions. Without action, the dynamic of change is inert theory. Without action, our decision is incomplete and is unconnected to the energy of healing. If we want to change, we must be willing to do change. Committing ourselves to action means we are willing to do hard things and feel hard feelings.

Change is very difficult. It's the very thing we have been steadfastly avoiding. Change takes patient, persistent practice in thinking, feeling and acting in new ways. But eventually, after we've worked at it long enough, we become what we practice – we learn to live well.

We learn To Dance By Dancing

We each have our own life, our own truth, our own power, our own way of experiencing spiritual energy and moving through life. We will each arrange and activate the dynamics of change in our own way.

In *The Dancing Healers* Carl Hammerschlag says if we are to live in peace, we must connect with others and with something outside of ourselves. We can learn the universal, generic pattern of life's dance from the 12 Steps. But in our individual dance of life, we must choose our own music and dance our own dance. Our music must fit our needs and our own particular movements.

We have to consider many things when we choose our music: tempo, rhythm, volume, instruments, melodies and harmony. We must decide carefully. Our choice of music guides our dance and our dance creates our life.

We heal when we dance our own unique dance to our own unique music. All by ourselves we discover and practice our own personal movements. We can change our music and enlarge our form. We experiment and make mistakes. We experiment and succeed. Our dancing muscles get stronger. Our music and our movements become finely synchronized. It all works together and we love how it feels. We practice until we are dancing in a way that is exactly right for us.

Make a decision to be open to spiritual energy as we take deliberate action for change in our lives.

Today, at least once, I will reach out to a spiritual resource as I meet the challenges and opportunities in my life.

aaagnostica.org/step-3



Any two or three alcoholics - Tradition Three

Three—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.

Tradition Three tells me that any alcoholic is a member when they say so. I was terrified when I came to my first meeting. I thought that if you knew me and what I had done during my drinking, you would chuck me out. I was told that if I have a desire to stop drinking, I belong here.

I wasn't sure at first whether I had a desire to stop drinking, but the Long Form of the Tradition tells me that our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism, and I knew I was suffering. It finally sunk in that as well as being united by the fatal peril of alcoholism, there was a solution here that would work for me too.

This Tradition encourages me to consider my conduct. Bill W wrote about not erecting barriers between ourselves and the alcoholic who still suffers, stating that we must enter the dark cave where they are and show them we understand. Am I actively welcoming people to the meeting? Are there any overt or covert barriers to people joining my home group, or attending fellowship? Tradition Three in the Twelve and Twelve taught me that when in doubt, I can ask: what would God do?

I was shown that, just like AA doesn't have any other requirements of me, my only requirement of God should be sobriety. When I had other demands, I continued trying to control that area, rather than handing my will and life over to the care of God. I can work this Tradition in my life by dropping these demands and having sobriety as my only goal. God provides what I need when I make trying to carry the message my primary purpose.

– Cara

alcoholics-anonymous.eu

Tradition Two Checklist

1. In my mind, do I prejudge some new AA members as those who likely will not make it?
2. Is there some kind of alcoholic whom I privately or publicly do not want in my AA group?
3. Do I set myself up as a judge of whether a newcomer is sincere or not?
4. Do I let language, religion (or lack of it), race, education, age, sexual identity or other such things interfere with my carrying the message?
5. Am I overimpressed by a celebrity, a doctor, a clergyman, an ex-convict? Or can I just treat this new member simply and naturally as one more sick human, like the rest of us?
6. When someone turns up at AA needing information or help (even if he can't ask for it aloud), does it really matter to me what they do for a living? Where they live? What their domestic arrangements are? Whether they have been to AA before? What their other problems are?

aagrapevine.org

Announcements

Want to be updated about AA Announcements, Events, and the Sobriety Gazette?

Contact midmissintergroup@gmail.com to get involved!

You can also contact the editor at nfillingane@gmail.com for comments or questions!

Your Trusted Servants

Chair -	Sam C.
Treasurer -	Karen M.
Secretary -	Kurt J.
Corrections -	Daryl R.
Treatment -	Natalie F.
Intergroup Liaison -	Carrie T.
IT/WEB -	Bruce M.
Newsletter Editor -	Natalie F.

Community Resources

NA -	mrscna.net
Al-Anon -	msafg.org
SLAA -	wsw.slaa@gmail.com
Ms. Dept. of Mental Health -	dmh.ms.gov

Feel free to contact Mid Mississippi Intergroup if you have any questions!

Intergroup meets on the first Thursday of each month at 6:30 pm.
6481 Old Canton Rd.
Jackson, Mississippi
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The Intergroup Central Office wants to extend a deep thanks to some of our long standing contributors and our excited welcome to others!

James S.	Susan L.	Henry A.
Al & Donna H.	Tommy L.	Kurt J.
Jeff W.	Hugh B.	Ed C.
Bruce M.	John R.	Andy D.
Will W.	Lawrence D.	Stacey K.
Anonymous 1	Frank P.	David Mc.

Quote of the Month

“To recover is to create a life in which numbness is no longer necessary for survival.”
- Maya Angelou

Shout out to these AA groups for contributions to our Book Fund over the last two years!

Unlimited Traditions	Southgate Serenity
Primary Purpose	Quest
Serenity of Purpose	Way Out

Yes! I Want to Be a Faithful Fiver

Date _____
Here is my contribution of \$ _____ for _____ Months _____
Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Home Group _____
Sobriety Date: Month _____ Date _____ Year _____

**SHALOM MEETING MOVED
TO ST. PHILIPS CHURCH, 5400
OLD CANTON RD**

Recognition of \$1.00 per year for sobriety birthdays welcomed!

Faithful Fivers

Faithful Fivers are AA members who pledge at least five dollars each month to support their Central Office. This idea is catching on around the country. The plan came about when we remembered that many of us had spent far more than \$5.00 a month on alcohol during our drinking days.

As a Faithful Fiver, you support the effects of

Mis-Mississippi Intergroup: to carry the message of hope to still-suffering alcoholics.

To become a Faithful Fiver simply send monthly contributions to

Central Office

Post Office Box 16228

Jackson, Mississippi 39236