

STEP SEVEN

"Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings"

In the doing and living of Steps One and Two, a degree of humility, no matter how slight, was necessary when we admitted that we (the acquired false self) were powerless over lust and came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity (the true Inner Self). In Step Three humility allowed us to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him. Without humility as our guide, the uncovering and discovering of the acquired character defects (Step Four), along with the admission of the exact nature of our wrongs to God, ourselves and another human being (Step Five), could not have been possible. In Step Six, the readiness to have God remove all these defects of character was once again in proportion to the degree of humility that we had. At least, through doing and living the first six steps, we have attained some humility in spite of the acquired false self.

In Step Six, we first made a detailed look at the acquired character defects and then proceeded to become ready to have God remove them. Step Seven is similar in nature. Looking at the exact nature of our wrongs, which we are now aware of by having done Step Five thoroughly, should make us eager to be rid of our shortcomings. The key to Step Seven is developing enough humility to ask Him to remove these shortcomings, without any reservations whatever.

The whole emphasis for Step Seven is on humility. This step is where we make the change in our attitude which permits us, with humility, to begin the destruction of the acquired false self. Humility is a part of the true Inner Self (God's image in us) which allows us to move from being self-centered to being self-less. This then produces harmony with God and with other people. The basic ingredient of all humility is a desire to seek and do God's will. In order for us to be able to do God's will, we humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings.

Since humility is the basic principle in each of S.A.'s Twelve Steps, we might ask what is humility? In the past we may have associated humility with humiliation. Certainly, each of us had experiences with being humiliated. Also, we may have thought that being humble was a sign of weakness. As we grew in S.A.'s program, we came to recognize humility as being absolutely necessary to our survival. Humility or the attainment of greater humility, no matter how little of it we may have now, is simply the growing awareness that, "Of myself I am nothing, the Father doeth the works." Only by a deeper awareness that of myself I am nothing can we truly, with genuine humility, ask Him to remove our shortcomings.

In working through Step Seven, *Recovery Continues*, this "top plate" exercise has been very helpful to many SA groups:

What is this "sending away of the top plate" exercise? It was first used as a practical way of working Steps Six and Seven as a group exercise. Think of the spring-loaded plate dispenser in cafeterias and salad bars -- a stack of plates whose weight brings the level of the stack down to about counter level. As the top plate is picked up, the stack rises, exposing the next plate underneath.

There often seems to be one thought, attitude, or behavior in our lives that's standing in the way of further recovery or growth -- one sticking point in our wills, one thing we're consciously hanging on to that obstructs, that's holding everything else down. Of course, at first, this was our addiction itself; without picking it up off the stack, so to speak, and dealing with it, we weren't about to go anywhere. It covered what was underneath. Once we got sober though, we could then see and acknowledge the next defect on which we could work the Steps.

Often we discover the next plate to be a particular resentment, dependency, or other form of our drug. Usually these are merely different manifestations of the ego-force that underlies our addiction -- the Big I. We're always faced, it seems, with something too precious to let go of, "self-will which has always blocked the entry of God." (*Twelve and Twelve*, Step Three, page 34):

Even the best of us will discover to our dismay that there is always a sticking point, a point at which we say, "No, I can't give this up yet." And we shall often tread on even more dangerous ground when we cry, "This I will *never* give up!" Such is the power of our instincts to overreach themselves. No matter how far we have progressed, desires will always be found which oppose the Grace of God. (*Twelve and Twelve*, Step Six, page 66)

I can't let it go!" we say. But we are the only ones who can -- and do. And when we do, the grace and love and peace of God flood back in and restore us and make us whole and joyous again.

But there must be someone to send them away *to*. That's why we may need some such special experience with each other and the One who has the only remedy for our wrongs, the only One who can bear them. Our experience seems to be validating the very heart of our program -- Steps Four through Ten -- the forsaking and righting of our wrongs. It seems to be showing us powerfully that whenever we bring out into the light of one another and send away to God such thoughts, attitudes, and behavior, we connect in a very powerful way with the larger presence, and the light then floods into our souls. We are freed, and we are cleansed. That which was in the way is out of the way. The peace of God prevails within and fills our hungry souls with goodness. And, we are one with each other.

WRITING GUIDE

The purpose of writing the seventh step is to help us become aware of the acquired shortcomings, the ones we must take action on. In doing this, an attainment of a greater degree of humility will come if you are sick of being sick and tired, of being controlled by the acquired false self. Only through humility can the True Inner Self start to flow forth.

Go through each of the following examples in as thorough and as honest a manner as you are willing to at this time. You are after the destructive, acquired false self.

1. What is your definition of the word humility?
2. In what ways have you attained a greater degree of humility through working individual steps in this program?
3. In what ways has your attitude toward God changed since you began to work and live the steps on a daily basis?
4. What do the words, "Of myself I am nothing, the Father doeth the works," mean to you?
5. Do you believe the chief activator of the acquired character defects has been self-centered fear? What are you doing to eliminate this acquired self-centered fear?
6. What does "Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings" mean to you?
7. How are you going to *live* Step Seven?
8. Now, using the Seventh Step Prayer as a guide, humbly ask Him to remove your shortcomings.

HERE IS THE SEVENTH STEP PRAYER. AGAIN, YOU MAY WISH TO RE-PHRASE THIS USING YOUR OWN WORDS AND ASK ANOTHER PERSON TO HEAR YOU PRAY IT.

"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." (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, Page 76)