



STEP THREE

I make a decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of God, as I understand God.

Step 3 culminates a process begun in Steps 1 and 2. In Step 1, we came and admitted that our lives were out of control and that we were powerless to change things through our own power. In Step 2, we came to realize that a higher Power could restore us to sanity. In Step 3, we came to believe in God as that higher Power and ask Him to assume control over every aspect of our lives.

A common recovery phrase used in 12-Step groups is "Turn it over." For the recovering person, that means turning over to God's care not only the major, conspicuous addictions, like alcoholism. It also means turning over every aspect of life—even the small frustrations involved in handling children, or trying to make a faulty appliance work, or dealing with congested freeway traffic. In the face of these irritations, the recovering person will say time and time again, "Turn it over; turn it over."

A Step 3 recovery paradox is that codependent or addictive personalities are often quite willful and egocentric, and yet that egocentricity often camouflages a deep sense of insecurity. In AA's oral tradition, an alcoholic or codependent is defined as being "an egomaniac with an inferiority complex." Step 3 invites us to get out of the center of our universe and hand that place back to God. As we move into any addiction or dependency, we tend to become more self-centered, self-absorbed, and self-preoccupied in trying to address the pain driving the addiction. Paradoxically, this self-preoccupation only draws us more deeply into the addiction. We become more self-centered and self-preoccupied as we seek to address the pain, yet self-preoccupation itself creates more pain, loneliness, and isolation. The addiction pulls us more deeply into its pain cycle. In order to surmount the pain cycle, ultimately we must step out of ourselves and look beyond ourselves.

Breaking out of this bondage of self does not mean we ignore or deny our needs. In fact, quite the reverse is true. If we can discover healthy, God-directed ways to meet our emotional and physical needs, then we become less needy, less selfish, less self-preoccupied individuals. This is another recovery paradox. Discovering what our needs are and asking to have those needs met may be one of the most unselfish things we do. All of us have needs, and all of us have choices as to how those needs are to be met. Addictions, compulsions, and co-dependencies are counterfeit means of trying to meet our most basic physical, emotional, and spiritual hungers. With God's help, we can find genuine ways of satisfying them.

We want to turn ourselves over to God, but how? How do we get out of the driver's seat? The key is willingness. If we crack the door just a little bit, then God will direct us in the process.

Revelation 3:20 says: "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me."

AA's Third Step Prayer is an excellent way to formalize our commitment to this new willingness:

"God, I offer myself to You—to build with me and to do with me as You will. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Your will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Your power, Your love, and Your way of life. May I do Your will always!"



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What are your greatest fears about giving up control over your life to God?

What does *make a decision* of this step mean to you?

What does it mean to surrender, or to turn over *my will and my life*? (FULL PAGE ANSWER)



What is the meaning of *God*, and what does God mean to you?

Does this step mean being Born Again?