

Prayers from WA Conference-Approved Literature

The Serenity Prayer

God grant me serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference. Amen.¹

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.²

Seventh Step Prayer

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.³

Eleventh Step Prayer

Lord, make me a channel of thy peace—that where there is hatred, I may bring love—that where there is wrong, I may bring the spirit of forgiveness—that where there is discord, I may bring harmony—that where there is error, I may bring truth—that where there is doubt, I may bring faith—that where there is despair, I may bring hope—that where there are shadows, I may bring light—that where there is sadness, I may bring joy. Lord, grant that I may seek rather to comfort than to be comforted—to understand, than to be understood—to love, than to be loved. For it is by self-forgetting that one finds. It is by forgiving that one is forgiven. It is by dying that one awakens to Eternal Life. Amen.⁴

Notes

1. From the suggested script for WA meetings (*Workaholics Anonymous Book of Recovery*, 1st ed., 2005, p. 172; 2nd ed., 2015, p. 202). The Serenity Prayer—as worded most commonly for Twelve-Step meetings—was first introduced to Recovery circles in a 1941 obituary and then, in 1948, to wider readership through Alcoholics Anonymous’s publication the *Grapevine*. It is now a basic Twelve-Step prayer. Although the origin of the prayer’s wise, three-point message is unclear and may have ancient origins, the wording used in Twelve-Step circles has often been attributed to American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr (1872-1971). Niebuhr frequently used these three ideas in prayers and publications, expressing them in a variety of ways. However, Winnifred Wygal, a theologian on the YWCA Board’s professional staff who studied with Niebuhr, may have been instrumental in shaping the wording now used in Recovery. For the prayer in Alcoholics Anonymous, see Nell Wing, “Origin of the Serenity Prayer: A Historical Paper,” Alcoholics Anonymous Service Material, 1981 (https://www.aa.org/sites/default/files/literature/assets/smf-129_en.pdf [accessed 6-15-2024]). On the attribution, see Fred R. Shapiro, “Winnifred Crane Wygal,” in Fred R. Shapiro, editor, *The New Yale Book of Quotations*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 2021, pp. 907-908. William T. FitzGerald of Rutgers University currently (2024) is writing a book about the prayer, titled *Becoming the Serenity Prayer: A Textual Biography*.
2. *Workaholics Anonymous Book of Recovery*, 1st ed., 2005, p. 120; 2nd ed., 2015, p. 48; *Workaholics Anonymous Book of Discovery*, 2010, p. 61. Originally published in AA’s foundational “Big Book” in conjunction with Step Three, this prayer is now common to most Twelve-Step Recovery programs (Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 1939 and subsequent editions, p. 63).
3. *Workaholics Anonymous Book of Recovery*, 1st ed., 2005, p. 137; 2nd ed., 2015, p. 66; *Workaholics Anonymous Book of Discovery*, 2010, p.122. Found in the AA “Big Book” for Step Seven, this prayer is also now adopted by most Twelve-Step Recovery programs (Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 1939 and subsequent editions, p. 76).
4. *Workaholics Anonymous Book of Recovery*, 1st ed., 2005, p. 157; 2nd ed., 2015, p. 85; *Workaholics Anonymous Book of Discovery*, 2010, p. 179. This beloved prayer has had many names, among them the “Prayer of St. Francis” (Catholic Saint Francis of Assisi, who lived about 1182-1226), although the prayer is not in the saint's known writings. Evidence suggests the prayer originated in France, around 1912, as a prayer for peace and was first translated into English in 1936 (Christian Renoux, “The Origin of the Peace Prayer of St. Francis,” [2001]; <https://www.franciscan-archive.org/franciscana/peace.html> [accessed 6-15-2024]). The prayer came into Recovery literature and practice through the suggestions for Step Eleven in AA’s “Twelve and Twelve” (Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, 1952 and subsequent editions, p. 99).