

WEEK #14: Chapter 6 — INTO ACTION (Step 6 & Step 7)

[READ: Page 76, Paragraph 1]

That's all of Step 6. You will notice that he didn't mention "**defects of character**" in there at all. What he did mention were those things which "**we have admitted are objectionable.**" Now surely in taking Steps 4 and 5, when we saw Resentments, Fears Harms Done to other people, when we saw that those things stemmed from our basic character defects of Selfishness, Self-Seeking, Dishonesty, Frightened and Inconsiderate character and when we could see what those things did to us, that caused us to do the things that hurt other people and caused them to retaliate against us and **blocks us off from God**, then surely by now those things have become objectionable to us. If they aren't, then the book, recognizing that **self cannot overcome self**, says **we ask God to help us be willing to be willing to have those things removed.**

Let's face it, sometimes during Step 6, even though we see what those old **defects of character** are doing to us, sometimes we don't want to turn them loose for a couple of reasons:

Number One - some of them are fun; **Number 2** - we don't know what life's going to be without them. I went to my sponsor and I said, "**If God removes all my character defects, I won't have any personality left!**" And he said, "**You are just about 100% correct.**" "**But**", he said, "**What you don't understand is that when God takes those away, God replaces them with something better.**" That something better will be better than you've ever had before, and you are going to have a lot better life by doing so." But I'm still afraid. Sometimes we human beings would rather sit here in today's pain than take a chance of changing for the future because we don't know for sure what that's going to be - and we understand today's pain.

My mind is nothing more than a set of mental habits. Throughout my lifetime those habits have been ingrained in my head. It's automatic for me to **react with fear**. It's automatic for me to **react selfishly** and it's automatic for me to **react dishonestly**. It's automatic for me to be **inconsiderate** of other people. I don't know how life will be reacting differently. How can I now react different? I have been that way before but I've forgotten how. Sometimes fear stops us from reacting differently if we are not ready and if my reactions are not objectionable by now, then the only thing to do is to ask **God to help us be willing to get rid of those things. Slowly, as God takes one away and I practice the other, my character changes.** Contrary action is required. **Actions against my will, actions contrary to the way I have always lived my life.**

Step 6 is a very difficult Step to do. If you want to **change**, then Step 6 says **don't do what you want to do**, because **if you feed action to your old thought patterns and your old character, they're going to grow and grow.** But if you feed action to your new thought patterns and your new character, the old patterns and character will die in your mind. It is very, very hard. Just don't do what you want to do. We can only do that with God's help.

[READ: Page 76, Paragraph 2]

We have then completed **Step 7**, and Bill didn't even mention "shortcomings". Bill uses "shortcomings" and "character defects" interchangeably. I have found my character defects and shortcomings in **Step 4**, I talked about them to another human being in **Step 5** and became ready (willing) to turn loose of them in **Step 6**. I asked God to remove them in **Step 7**. Now I have completed Steps 6 and 7. But if I'm not careful, I'll fall into a trap. We tend to feel after Steps 6 & 7 that God is going to reach in and pluck out these defects of character and just make us as pure as the driven snow. We turn to God and hand them over and say, "Here you are. Give me the \$29.95 special" and everything will be all right. NO! These were not the Steps God took.

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God doesn't need these Steps, He's okay already. God does not reach into my head and remove these character defects leaving another hole in my head. God replaces them with the opposite. If I want God to take away my **selfishness**, then I'm going to have to start to practice being **unselfish** with God's help and all the willingness I can muster through prayer. **Slowly, over a period of time, an old habit will die and it be replaced with a new habit.** If I'm willing to let God take away **dishonesty**, then I'm going to have to try in every given situation to be **honest** with God's help and all the willingness I can muster through prayer. Now that's hard for me to do. It's alien to my nature. But, when God helps me by removing these character defects and I practice the opposite, slowly the old habit dies and it's replaced with a new one.

Sometimes we wind down on Steps 6 and 7, maybe because the Big Book has only two paragraphs on these Steps. However, we begin to see that Steps 6 & 7 are the **real tools of change in the program.** Steps 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 are seeing the problem and solution and making that decision and then the inventory, and once we take the inventory we see these things and then talk them over with another person. The first 5 Steps prepare us for these two great tools to apply to our lives daily. **Our future life is really based on how we apply these Steps.** God doesn't take these steps, He doesn't need to, but we do need these Steps to change. They are very difficult steps to work at first. Easy to understand but they are very hard. The Big Book says, "**Simple, but not easy.**"

Our mind is a set of mental habits that we have used all our lives. We have developed old patterns. The way we got these mental habits is that we worked on them. We worked for years to get sick. We didn't get sick overnight. So we are going to have to work the same way to make these changes. It's with the use and application of these two tools (Steps 6 & 7) that we can change.

Step 7 can be a hard tool you use. When you don't do what you naturally want to do and make yourself do what you naturally don't want to do, pretty soon, your old ideas will begin to fade away and a new set of motives will begin to dominate your mind. When we begin to do the things we naturally don't want to do, we begin to see the good results we get from doing those things. Those things will become a part of our personality, and the old things will become less important and the new part will become your way of life. It's just a matter of working against your self.

There was a student years ago in the BIG, BIG, BIG BOOK, who said that saving your life meant **daily dying to self.** You have to die somewhere in your life, so that you can live somewhere new. Only we can do that job on a daily basis and that's what Step 6 and Step 7 are:

Daily dying somewhere, so we can live somewhere new.

We have to do that job!

LEADER: Discuss **Willingness** and **Humility** with the group and what they mean in context with these Steps.

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BIG BOOK WORKSHOP HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

- 1) Read Chapter 6 “**Into Action**” (p76-p84 par.1) in the “Big Book” (1st Time) –
USE HIGHLIGHTER! (Just read and highlight the 1st time you read through the chapter.)
- 2) Read Chapter 5 “**Into Action**” (p76-p84 par.1) in the “Big Book” (2nd Time).
Answer the “Work Assignment Questions” below as you read the assignment the 2nd time.
- 3) Be prepared to discuss the material.

**WORK ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS
"INTO ACTION – Step 8 & Step 9"**

*Always Write
an Example!!*

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1. Do you have any misgivings about these Steps?
2. Do you feel diffident (distrustful or unduly timid) about going to some of these people?

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3. What is your real purpose?
4. Can you approach the people on your Eight Step list in a helpful and forgiving spirit?

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5. Do you see that nothing worthwhile can be accomplished until you clean your side of the street?
6. Is it important that you be praised for your Ninth Step efforts?
7. Do you understand the importance of losing your fear of creditors?
8. Have you discussed any criminal offense you may have committed and which may still be open with your sponsor? If not, should you do so?

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9. Do you understand how your Ninth Step may harm other people?
10. Have you studied your domestic troubles and the harm that may have been caused in these areas?

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11. Do you understand the importance of not creating further harm by creating further jealousy and resentment in a "tell all" session?

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12. What does Bill mean when he says that the spiritual life is not a theory – we have to live it?
13. Do you see that in taking the Ninth Step you should be sensible, tactful, considerate and humble, without being servile or scraping?
14. Are you experiencing the promises set forth on pages 83 and 84?