

CLA STEP THREE

"Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God."

In the preceding steps we were engaged in reflection. In Step One, we saw that we were, are now, and will remain powerless over clutter. Also, in Step One we came to recognize that our lives have been, are now, and will remain unmanageable by us alone. Step Two made us aware that we could be restored to sanity by a Power greater than ourselves if we rightly relate ourselves to this Power. These conclusions did not require action; they required only acceptance. At this point, we should have accepted the unmanageability and insanity of our lives.

The first requirement in doing Step Three is that we become convinced that any life run on self-will can hardly be a success. Obviously, the first two steps show, in no uncertain terms, the confusion caused by using self-will (self-will is part of the acquired false self). Self-will includes selfishness -- self-centeredness. This self-centeredness is the root of our troubles. So our troubles are basically our own making. Above everything, we clutterers must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us. We found that we could not reduce the self-centeredness much by wishing or relying on our own power. Thus, we had to quit playing God. It did not work.

Step Three calls for affirmative action, for it is only by action that we can cut away the self will which has always blocked the entry of God into our lives. The key that will allow God to enter our lives once again is willingness. The thinking mind and its self-will may block the entry of God into our lives once again, as it frequently does. However, the key of willingness will open the door.

The thinking mind, using instinct and logic to bolster our egotism, would have us believe that, if we turn our will and life over to the care of God, we become nothing. We lose something that appears to be important to us. The truth is, the more we become willing to depend upon a Higher Power, the more independent we actually are! Therefore, dependence, as CLA practices it, is really a means of gaining true independence of the spirit.

Step Three asks us to make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand God. This decision can only be made by us. All by ourselves, being convinced that self-will has ruined our lives, we need to develop the quality of willingness. By becoming willing, we can make the decision to exert ourselves. Doing this is an act of our own will. Remember, all of the steps require our sustained, personal, and intentional cooperation to conform to their principles and to God's will.

The effectiveness of the whole CLA program will rest upon how well and earnestly we try to come to "a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand God." The other steps of the CLA program can be practiced with success only when Step Three is given determined and persistent trial. Thus, we try to make our will conform with God's so that we can begin to use it lightly.

Once we are convinced we have no choice but to turn our will and our lives over to God, then it is easy to begin the practice of Step Three. In time of confusion, we pause quietly

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and say: "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference. Thy will, not mine be done."

The purpose of writing the third step is to help us "make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand God." Go through the following examples and be as honest and specific as you are able at this time. Give specific examples and situations from your own life.

YOU ARE IN THE PROCESS OF MAKING A DECISION.

1. In what ways are you aware that clutter and problems in your life are a result of the acquired thinking of your mind?
2. In what way does Step Three call for action on your part?
3. How have you blocked God from your life? Give examples.
4. Explain your understanding of God at this point in the program.
5. What do you think self-will is? List some of the ways it has caused havoc in your life.
6. "Dependence on God is really a means of gaining true independence." What does this mean to you?
7. How did Steps One and Two prepare you for Step Three?
8. Do you feel you are now truly willing to turn your will and life over to the care of God as you understand Him? Explain.

HERE IS THE THIRD STEP PRAYER. YOU MAY WISH TO RE-PHRASE IT IN YOUR OWN WORDS AND TO ASK ANOTHER PERSON TO HEAR YOU PRAY IT.

"God, I offer myself to Thee -- to build with me and 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!"