

Legacy Wording Discussion Guide

July 2022

Traditions One, Two & Five, and Concepts Four & Five provide a possible framework for group discussions. This document presents a variety of views to begin a dialogue, opening up the conversation to all participants without prioritizing or judging. The following material reflects input from the survey of Al-Anon members in Maine; the Thought Force report; the Area World Service Committee; and Conference Approved Literature.

Tradition One reminds us that everyone has an equal voice and it's important to listen and learn. We also have a responsibility to share our views and opinions. Our common goal is to find solutions that are best for the greatest number.

Member Comments:

- The topic about the use of the word of God and use of the male pronouns is very divisive and is not healthy for the unity of the Maine Area. We must avoid controversial issues that separate us and divert us from our primary spiritual aim and from our primary purpose.
- With an approved set of Legacies, there is great power in the notion that when any meeting is reading the Steps, Traditions and Concepts of Service, hundreds, if not thousands of others are reading them simultaneously. That is unity.
- From the Legacy Thought Force survey, over half were bothered by use of male pronouns and over a third by the use of the word "God." One third of the respondents changed the wording of the Steps or Traditions when reading, which is not recommended because it violates our spiritual principle of unity.
- We may come from many different backgrounds but we have one thing in common. We focus on our commonality and not our differences. It doesn't matter what kind of Higher Power we have – it only matters that we have one. It doesn't matter what we call that Higher Power or whether we assign it a gender – it only matters that we have one that we can call on for help.

(Invite members to share their perspectives.)

Tradition Two focuses on mutual respect and guides us to invite a Higher Power into our conversations. We are free to think and feel as we choose, but we remember that our Higher Power is with us as we put aside our anxieties and agendas and listen with an open mind.

Member comments:

- Why would the way we describe the power greater than ourselves interfere with his expressing himself in our group conscience?
- Gender neutral language promotes equality and allows members to define their higher

power as they understand it. I am very upset that those who are even more uncomfortable/feel excluded with/by these pronouns and the use of “God” are not coming to, or returning to the program. I am especially concerned about teens and the future of Al-Anon.

- Since I do not believe in the supernatural, I am uncomfortable with the word God. It makes me feel like a liar if I recite it. And it makes me feel like an outsider if I don't. I substitute Higher Power for God.
- A discussion about the dissatisfaction with the wording of the Legacies would cause confusion and would not further this purpose but have the opposite effect, especially if there was disagreement among the members about how the wording should be kept or changed.

(Invite members to share their perspectives.)

Tradition Five invites us to ask how issues in the fellowship affect our focus on our primary purpose. It reminds us not to judge what is or isn't appropriate, but rather to look at our fellow members with thoughtfulness and see that they also want what is best for our program.

(Invite members to share their perspectives.)

The principle of participation is central to Al-Anon. **Concept Four** calls us to offer respectful, self-disciplined consideration of every other member, ensuring every person is heard and unity is fostered. Participating toward harmony will broaden our understanding of ourselves and others, even as we may have different views on the wording of our Legacies.

(Invite members to share their perspectives.)

Members with minority viewpoints are able to freely share their thoughts and feelings and have a duty to do so. The purpose of **Concept Five** is to ensure access to everybody's ideas so decisions are based on the best information available. Listening to all voices may result in a determination that we have never considered, one that serves all parties and offers resolution.

While minorities, whether groups or individuals, have the right to be heard, it does not mean they will prevail. In cases where substantial unanimity still overrules the minority members, respectfully hearing and carefully considering minority suggestions assures each of us that we will always be a valuable participant.

(Invite members to share their perspectives.)