

Defects of Character vs Shortcomings

AA's are often asked "What is the difference between 'defects of character' in Step Six and 'shortcomings' in Step Seven?"

According to G.S.O.'s archives Bill W. commented about his use of "Defects of Character" and "Shortcomings" interchangeably in the Steps in a personal letter he wrote dated March 7, 1963.

"Thanks for your inquiry, requesting to know the difference between 'defects of character' and 'shortcomings' — as those words appear in the Steps. Actually I don't remember any particular significance in these phrases. In my mind, the meaning is identical; I guess I just used two ways of expression, rather than to repeat myself. It's just as simple as that".

In another letter, dated November 16, 1965, Bill again responded to a similar inquiry. His letter read, in part:

"When these Steps were being done, I didn't want to repeat the phrase 'character defects' twice in succession. Therefore in Step Seven, I substituted 'shortcomings', thereby equating 'shortcomings' with 'defects.' When reading most people do equate that way and there seems to be no difficulty. I used them as though they both meant exactly the same thing — which they appear to many people".

Defects of Character – Clarence Snyder

The following is an excerpt from the pamphlet "Going Through the Steps – A.A. Sponsorship Pamphlet" by Clarence Snyder 1944

"In Step 4, we're asked to take a searching and fearless moral inventory. We must find out what we've got, what we need to get rid of, and what we need to acquire. There are 20-character defects to ask about — the individual wrongs are not necessary to go over, just the defects that caused them. Going over the questions, you ask that the person be honest and admit his defects to himself, to you, and to God (where two or more are gathered in His name, there shall He be.) By

admitting, the person also takes Step 5. The inventory is of our defects, not our incidents”.

Here are the defects of character:

1. Resentment, Anger
2. Fear, Cowardice
3. Self-pity
4. Self-justification
5. Self-importance, Egotism
6. Self-condemnation, Guilt
7. Lying, Evasiveness, Dishonesty
8. Impatience
9. Hate
10. False pride, Phoniness, Denial
11. Jealousy
12. Envy
13. Laziness
14. Procrastination
15. Insincerity
16. Negative Thinking
17. Immoral thinking
18. Perfectionism, Intolerance
19. Criticizing, Loose Talk, Gossip
20. Greed