

**Missouri Input Re Just for Today Bookmark**

(District \_\_) has met at a district, group and individual level to discuss the KBDM proposal to remove the "Prayer for Today" from the *Just For Today* book mark (M-12) and wallet card (M-10), page 101 of *How Al-Anon Works* (B-22) as well as removing the word "prayer" from our suggested closing. The majority conscience of the district is for all (the prayer on the Just for Today book mark and wallet card, *How Al-Anon Works* text as well as the word prayer) to remain in our literature as currently written with no changes. It was suggested that these recommendations were made to quickly and more feedback from the fellowship would give greater clarity and unity. One idea was to survey the membership as the WSO has done with other questions. Another idea was to consider who was *not* at the KBDM table and invite them to participate in the discussion to capture a more diverse perspective. A third suggestion was rather than taking the prayer away, add to it by providing more choices for the fellowship to experience the "seeking prayer" in our Eleventh step.

There were some who supported going forward with the KBDM recommendations for removal or amend the prayer to something that felt less "Christian". For instance removing the last sentence or amending it to keep the essence of the prayer. Also expressed was the idea that some members who practice other faiths find the prayer difficult based on its' wording. Another idea was to use Higher Power rather than Lord or Divine Master. A third idea was to remove the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph altogether.

That said, the overall feedback and feeling was that the Prayer for Today has been deeply meaningful and effective for the membership as a whole for decades supporting a commitment to develop a relationship with a Higher Power. Removing it or removing the word prayer from the suggested closing would weaken our spiritual program, lessen the understanding and impact of our Eleventh step and reduce our ability to understand what it means to build a relationship with a Higher Power.

Many felt that those who sparked this KBDM should consider taking what they liked and leaving the rest. Few of us, when we came into recovery, liked or felt comfortable with all aspects of the program but as we grew we understood the history and wisdom of those who came before us. These pieces of our literature and closing are not broken so there is no need to "fix" them.

We appreciate the efforts by the committee to create a suggested replacement but it was felt that it "pales in comparison" to what we have in offering hope to those affected by someone else's drinking.

The recommendations speak of "chipping away" at the principles and there is question about what outside motives may be present in the requests for removal. Many of our meetings in the world wide fellowship are held in churches, yet there seems to be no association between the structure of where our meetings are held and what our program stands for, spiritual, not religious. Removing the prayer and word prayer seems to reduce our choices rather than increase them to support increased diversity of membership.

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Certainly the KBDM Process is essential in approving the removal of any part of our treasured literature. It appears to me the WSC delegates have the daunting task of deciding if they are going to base their decision on knowledge of opinions, feelings, personalities or knowledge of the principles of

our legacy.

The KBCM Questions we received earlier reported the Literature Committee began discussing requests from two different members in different Areas for changes. References were made that many members in our Area have comments on prayers in general asking for less religious prayers to be used. In my experience negative voices typically speak louder than positive voices, yet represent the minority. Therefore, my question is, what is the definition of many and how was it obtained? If KBDM is to be used based upon personalities and experiences, it would appear all members need to complete a survey regarding the use of prayers in general.

The other option is to use KBCM based upon knowledge of the principles of our legacy. Tradition Twelve, clearly states ".....ever reminding us to place principles above personalities." Ours is a spiritual program! References to God and prayer are woven throughout our literature and are far too numerous to mention at this time.

One of my personal shortcomings is people pleasing. I am ever grateful to our program for making me aware perfection is an illusion and I can be free to be who I am. Is this request to remove the "Prayer for Today" from Conference Approved Literature an attempt to please everybody? As (another member) said, it's stated in the suggested closing, "Take what you like and leave the rest." Our program is free to be what it is and those who are willing to go to any length to achieve sanity will embrace our program.

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At our Group Conscience. yesterday, our Group voted to turn down any changes made to our Literature.  
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- Keep the prayer as it is
  - I feel this is a no. Your time line is just not acceptable. It is rude to have such a restriction given the fellowship has not had ample time to discuss this subject
  - I vote no to changing the wording of this prayer
  - Too little time allowed to be discussed. Keep the prayer as it is
  - Too short a time for discussion. This is one of the oldest and best pieces of lit we have - leave it alone. All newcomers regardless of their religion or non religion don't like the God "stuff". Leave what works alone
  - Take what you want and leave the rest. We can't change prayers because it offends a few!
  - I do not agree with changing the prayer. First your time line is so far off base this is at least a six to 12 month process. Secondly, a lot of prayers are in or literature some are offensive to me, but that's my deal. If they (just 2 people) don't like it, then don't read it.
  - I prefer to discontinue the Lord's prayer
  - I prefer that we discontinue the Lord's prayer
  - We need at least 1 year to discuss this. Checked on the origin of the prayer and also the Serenity Prayer. It is possible that St. Francis wrote that as well. The Serenity Prayer was most likely written by a minister.
  - I vote we keep this prayer as it is
- .....

My thoughts are that although I understand the world to be a place where spirituality is accepted but religion is not so much, we started with this and should continue until a replacement might come to light that could help us move slightly away, not completely away from, the prayer. In other words, it's worked this long, it will work until we can come up with something better.

My input would be to omit the prayer from the Just For Today card. No replacement for the prayer are necessary. Additionally, when I put out public information CAL, I'm cautious to omit any pamphlets that contain Christian prayers or references. Unfortunately, this includes the Just For Today card. By the way, "God" is NOT a Christian reference.

It has been my opinion for quite a while that our program has Christian overtones that I believe are off-putting to new members. While I am very aware of our Oxford Group origins through AA, they are more than a detriment than an attraction in today's global world. While our CAL states that ours is a spiritual program, not religious, it's verbiage does not support this statement.

As a group we do not object to the prayer on the back of the Just for Today pamphlet or anywhere else it appears in our CAL. Take what you like and leave the rest!

I think leaving God out of literature or prayer is a HUGE mistake. We should not cater to the minority if they don't want to say "God" then be silent or use "higher power" to themselves. I realize than some people when coming into the program do not have a GOD of any kind but most find GOD after a time. That is what is wrong in the schools and many other areas that they have left GOD out of the picture and look at our world.

Let us not be part of the problem but part of the solution.

The information that was shared raises many questions for me and causes great concern as to what direction Al-Anon is headed in. I will try to be concise in stating both questions and concerns.

It is my understanding that the content in Al-Anon literature is approved by Al-Anon to become Conference Approved Literature (CAL). If this is true, then there must be a record of when "The Prayer for the Day" was submitted and what rationale was used to include that in the document. I feel that a review of this information would be of great value to the committee in their recommendation as to whether or not to keep this prayer in the document. This finding would also be beneficial for Al-Anon members to know.

Additionally, as stated in the suggested closing - "Take what you like and leave the rest" - has been a recommendation for members that allows each individual to make their own determination as to whether any sharing heard, any page read, or any suggestion made is right for them. Who are we to say that a particular quote in the "Thought for the day" in our daily readers, or a prayer printed in a pamphlet interpreted as religious much less how and if that individual would interpret it as religious.

Would it not seem more likely that the individual would read it, interpret it, and apply their interpretation to their particular situation in order to achieve a better way of life? Are we forgetting that

we are spiritual people living in a human world, not humans trying to be spiritual? Have we any proof that " The Prayer for the Day" has actually harmed someone or has kept someone from attending Al-Anon? Would it not seem more likely that anyone who has read that particular prayer has found comfort , guidance and a new way of living?

My greatest fear is that if we start to interpret items such as this as religious and not spiritual, where will we stop? Will we then look at the Twelve Steps that were given to us by Bill W. and decide that we need to remove from them words such as God, prayer, meditation or anything else that someone might or could interpret as religious? Will we decide that The Serenity Prayer need not be part of our opening because it is a "prayer" ? Will we determine that the Third Step Prayer that Bill W. gave us should be stricken out because it is a prayer? Will we decide to remove all mention of prayer from all of our CAL? Will we never accept writings from our members for The Forum or any of our other literature because they talk about prayer ? How many times in sponsorship do we suggest to sponsees to pray for God's guidance? Could this be interpreted as being religious?

I have been an active member of Al-Anon for over 28 years. This program in its current format and with the CAL as it is has saved my life!!!!!! I have never felt that any of the CAL was religious, promoted religion or demanded that I follow a certain religion. Many of our members, as did I, come into Al-Anon being angry with God, not wanting to hear about God or believing that there is a God or that God loved us. Is it not the greatest gift of the Al-Anon program that members are able to share their experience, strength, and hope at meetings and through our literature and that this is seen as spiritual and not religious!

I pray that the God of my understanding will allow the Al-Anon representatives to keep those items that have been so important to me. Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts with both of you.

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I do not agree with the request to take prayer out of the closing and to remove Prayer for Today from *Just for Today* bookmark and card as well from page 101 of *How Al-Anon Works* . As we say in the closing, take what you like and leave the rest. If this has worked for 60 years why change it?? A God or Higher power of your understanding I think that I have been helped by that prayer for today many times and it has changed the way I treat other people. We are all different but that is was is so beautiful about Al-Anon we learn to accept and love all people no matter who they are and by using the tool of our Group Conscience we resolve problems. For our group purpose there is but One Authority - a Loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience, our leaders are but trusted servants they do not govern.

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(Group) voted unanimously that NO changes should be made regarding removal of the word prayer in our literature. Personally I feel the minority should not win over the majority.  
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Our Group Conscience agreed that we would like to leave the prayers as is. Some comments:

- 1) Serenity Prayer begins with "God"
- 2) Even our one admitted non-Christian member said she would also vote to leave the literature as is.

3) A change opens us up to take a trip on a slippery slope. Even the 11<sup>th</sup> step states “sought thru prayer and meditation. Do we end up taking out the 11<sup>th</sup> step?

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Our Group Conscience was 18 (members) tonight. We voted unanimously to leave the literature and closing as is. Their general sentiment was "take what you like and leave the rest."

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For the most part, our group felt that we should leave the prayer on the bookmark and other references to prayer in CAL as is. They were curious as to where this request came from or started. Even several unreligious members in our group said it didn't bother them. As a group we felt it was OK to leave it and not try to be too overly concerned with weeding out references to prayer or try to please a certain part of our membership by removing all references to prayer. We have a variety of Religious beliefs in our group and some not religious at all. Again, if they can also give more information such as who wants this change and why. Especially with things like the serenity prayer – wouldn't that be included to?

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(Group) is unanimously opposed to taking the word prayer out of the places suggested. 14 voted. The discussion sited Step 11 and the spiritual basis for al-anon. A member asked what is behind the suggestion...This is a huge issue that could effect all of our literature, including The Steps. A person pointed out that it's against the traditions to have to rush a decision...wouldn't making a 'knowledge based decision' include more info. Although more info would not alter the vote of our group but it is strange that this is going to the WSO without more input from our groups.

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(Group) felt there was not enough information and that this decision seems rushed for an AI-Anon decision. Considering the time and discussion that goes into a new piece of literature to start a discussion about removing something from our literature should not be rushed. That this was just brought to the Literature Committee in June of 2015 by just 2 members and a recommendation is already being voted on seems out of step with the AI-Anon way of doing things and is limiting the voice the groups should have in this decision. As far as the issue: Because this information was delivered to the groups at such a late date only 5 people were at our business meeting. Two of our younger and newer members could see removing the prayer although they also offered some other suggestions. One was just putting quotes around the prayer and citing the author as St. Francis of Assisi. Another was just removing it from the bookmark but leaving it in the literature. The biggest concern that was raised and was a consensus among all who attended the business meeting and best reflects our group conscience is that once you start removing things from the literature you loose the foundation of our program and where do you stop. It seems like this is the beginning of a slippery slope. This prayer and more reflects the foundation and roots of our program which is a spiritual program. Even the newest member (less the year) pointed out that we say “take what you like and leave the rest.” One other point made is that it is a group's autonomy to use or not use a piece of literature. To remove this from the literature seems to be usurping group autonomy. In the end I would say although we differing opinions if this would have to be voted on at the WSC we would opt for no.

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Regarding the proposed revisions to CAL, the members of (Group) that attended a business meeting came to the following group conscience:

We are unified in opposition to removing the word “prayer” from the Suggested Closing. Members indicated they don’t see any reason to delete it. The Closing already contains the phrase “if you care to, join me in the Closing Prayer”, which implies it’s optional. In addition, it was pointed out that members can take what they like and leave the rest.

A substantial majority was opposed to removing the “Prayer for Today” from literature, although there was also a minority opinion that indicated they didn’t have a preference one way or the other. The majority indicated that taking this prayer out could lead to a slippery slope where *every* reference to prayer (including the Serenity Prayer) could also be open to removal. Also, it was brought up that our daily readers contain many Thoughts for the Day that quote Biblical passages or other overtly religious materials. Would those also have to be edited to remove the references?

Of 15 members replying concerning the questions related to changing or keeping the Prayer for Today. 13 people want to keep the prayer and most of those would be okay to editing the prayer. 2 people say to remove the prayer from the bookmark, small pamphlet, and reference to the prayer in *How Al-Anon Works*. I have attached the comments and used initials of the person who gave them for anonymity. Let me know if you have any questions. Everyone was grateful to being included in this decision.

- I can see where there is on the second part of the Prayer for Today a religious part to the prayer. If they are going to do anything, I would go along with cutting the 2nd half of the prayer out of the literature. BUT - my greatest concern is that if we open that can of worms - it will lead to the possibility of changing MANY, MANY OTHER THINGS IN THE LITERATURE. For that concern, I do not want to plant an idea of such and let the horse out of the barn.
- I vote to keep the prayer. I would approve in editing the prayer. Leaving out "Oh, Divine Master" and " it is in dying that we are given eternal life". And I've always liked what Al-Anon taught me early on: "Take what you like and leave the rest!"
- I hold fast to the growth encouraged in Al-Anon with two simple statements: "Take what you like and leave the rest" and "Live and Let Live". So much of our pre-recovery included reacting to everything that came our way and trying to control it or change it. One of the greatest lessons I learned in Al-Anon was tolerance of different views. In the learning process, I recognized when I felt uncomfortable I often wanted to change outsiders - other people, situations, etc. I wonder if removing this prayer isn't more of the same? And if we remove this prayer, will next steps be removing every reference to prayer or every quote in our meditation books that is prayer-like?

The truth of the matter is Al-Anon began out of a spiritual tradition based on humans who had been involved in or exposed to religious endeavors. These humans took what they liked and left the rest and as a result millions of people have been helped by this spiritual program.

- While I understand the concerns raised regarding some of the wording in this prayer, it seems to me that removing the entire prayer as well as all references to prayer from CAL is actually counter to the basic principles of Al-Anon. Are we not instructed in the 12 Steps to improve our conscience contact with God through prayer and meditation? Is God not mentioned throughout the 12 Steps

upon which our Al-Anon fellowship was founded? I did not recognize this prayer to be from St. Francis of Assisi, but I will admit that the reference at the end that "in dying we are born to eternal life" did make me think that it was referring to Christ's death and resurrection, hence I was surprised to see that wording in an Al-Anon prayer.

My thoughts are basically as follows:

- Don't throw out prayer as a whole from CAL- it is completely part of the foundation of AA and Al-Anon, and is referenced in multiple places as essential to our spiritual growth for a successful journey into recovery. My understanding of the difference between prayer and meditation is that prayer is when we talk to God, and meditation is when we listen to God. Both are important for spiritual growth, no matter who (or what) one's "God" may be. Not talking to God (praying) and merely listening (meditating) would be akin to sitting in a large lecture hall where the Professor is doing all the talking and no one in the audience is allowed to ask any questions or offer their own insights. There's very limited opportunity for growth in that.
- Do not remove all references to God in our CAL- for all the same reasons I've listed in #1 above. The word "God" is not specific to Christians, as pretty much every civilization throughout the millennia have worshiped at least 1 if not multiple deities whom they have referred to as "gods" by multiple names. Calling God "Jehovah" or "Jesus" or "Yahweh" or "Allah" or "Buddha" would be religion-specific, whereas simply referring to our Higher Power as "God" is not.
- The prayer at the heart of this controversy can be very easily modified without diluting the powerful non-denominational message it delivers by putting a period after the word "pardoned" in the last line, and leaving off the rest of the sentence that references death and resurrection; changing the words "Divine Master" to "God" should alleviate any further angst over confusing this for a specific religious reference.

I feel that the overall message of the prayer is one of hope, peace, and joy. Being able to look past the past (which invariably included plenty of hatred, injury, doubt, despair, darkness, and sadness) and focus on a more positive mindset helps us move the focus away from the alcoholics in our lives and onto our own peace and serenity. Isn't that the ultimate goal of the Al-Anon program? Shouldn't we have the courage to stand up for the positive effects derived from the use of this prayer (perhaps in the modified format that I've mentioned above) and the wisdom to not throw out the baby with the bathwater by completely deleting all references to God and prayer from all CAL? All we have to do is look back at the 12 Steps to know that they would not work well without including God and prayer.

- My opinion is mixed but in the end, I believe we should keep Al-Anon pure to its roots and leave the prayer in.
- I vote that we make no changes.
- if I only have the 3 choices - yes, no, maybe/undecided then my vote must be YES, REMOVE the prayer. The long attached document is very interesting to read but did not get to my main concern until the very last entry - the problem, if there is one with terminology, is NOT the use of God, Master, HP or whatever. Those are terms used in all religions on the planet. however, the concept of being reborn to eternal life is not universal and is very Christian. It does not personally bother me although I am not Christian, but I do not find it in keeping with the non-religious principles of the A's.

- Thank you for surveying our group on this. As much as I love this prayer, I do think it should be removed because of its religious ties.
- I feel we should leave it & not touch the prayers because in the daily readers there are quotes from all different religious authors
- I will cast a ballot for NO, leave it the way it is now.
- this is stupid...keep the prayer
- keep the prayer. It's worked for us a long time.
- don't change....take what you like and leave the rest....tolerance.

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 I am opposed to removing the word "prayer" from the suggested closing, from the "prayer for today" from the Just for Today Bookmark, and from Suggested Closing.

When I came into AI-Anon ## years ago, I had fallen away from my religion and from God. It was BECAUSE of AI-Anon, BECAUSE of the Our Father that was said as the closing prayer, BECAUSE of the foundation of AI-Anon as a spiritual program, rooted in prayer, that I not only have a personal relationship with God, but also an active religious life.

Our program promotes democracy and accountability. If this decision is made democratically, with the necessary thought and discussion needed to make an informed decision by individuals in their home groups, then gathering the results and given equal voice to our WSO delegates, who are OUR trusted servants, and is then voted on by a majority, then I will accept that decision.

Concept One, as you know, states, "The ultimate responsibility and authority for AI-Anon world service belongs to the AI-Anon groups."

It scares me that the AI-Anon leaders and WSO would try to get around this concept and be so easily swayed by the whims of our society.

I urgently request that this foul smelling, devious action be brought out for all members to see. There must be transparency if this is going to remain an honest program.

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 Thank you, for providing the opportunity to share my view on this matter. I have been an AI-Anon member for about ## years. I was lucky enough to be introduced to adult children of alcoholics meetings very early in my tenure and have profited immensely. I never particularly appreciated the *Just for Today* bookmark as many of my cohorts have. Now, I realize it might have been because of the ending prayer. I'm a big believer in prayer, go to church every Sunday, and think that probably no prayer is farther from the AI-Anon message than the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi. It is SO other-oriented! There is no need for a prayer on the bookmark and feel free to cut out any reference to it.

As far as "prayer" in the closing, I'd like to keep that. Several meetings I attend have chosen through group conscience to say "The Serenity Prayer" instead of "The Lord's Prayer." Either one, or some other, is fine with me. Since I doubt the word "prayer" is going to be deleted from Step 11, it's nice to end a meeting with a prayer to send us on our way...just not the one "from" St. Francis.

I've noticed a comment about "it is in dying that we are born to eternal life." - I don't know where it is in the literature, but surely I have no spiritually uplifted feeling after saying it. It must be religious...who cares which specific one.

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Here are the results of a quick vote in our group:

Keep prayer-9

Remove prayer-1

Needs more info.-2

I also attend (another group) and asked if they would like to vote on this issue. (I did not vote in this group) They do not have a GR at this time.

Keep prayer-8

Remove prayer-0

Needs more info-1

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Just for today, I will save myself from two pests: hurry, and indecision. Stop! Think! First things First , I will pray ,and meditate (Step 11) for AI-anon as a whole. Prayer AI-anon taught me is talking to God, and Meditation listening. I learned pushing is my will, and gentle calm acceptance is God's. That there are two doors my door, or God's, I close mine, and open God's, and there's usually nothing behind it. Be still and know I am God, I have all wrapped in my Loving care, for the unity and Harmony of AI-anon and AA as a whole.

I delivered literature messages to my home group, many are upset, prayer is a core of our fellowship, if we take away this what's next STEP 11, all prayer words in our literature, the word God (of our understanding) , are we like the government taking God, and prayer out of schools. This is a spiritual program not religious we understand, yet the spirit of My God, Higher power, ultimate authority lives within me, and speaks thru me in human form.

I may be only one voice (a minority), yet that one voice maybe the voice God uses to be heard to speak His truth. AI-Anon has given me choices, and hope that there's a better way. "together we can make"

We may not be there at AWSC, or WSC , yet our spirit of support, prayer, and love are with you as our trusted servant leadership.

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At the group conscience members engaged in a thorough discussion of whether the WSC should give conceptual approval to remove the "Prayer for Today" from Conference Approved Literature.

In an effort to adhere to the principle of Knowledge Based Decision Making, it became apparent more information was needed. As a result, the following questions were raised:

- Have groups been polled to enable the Literature Committee to reach a unanimous decision to recommend removal of the "Prayer for Today" from the *Just for Today* Bookmark and Wallet Card, as well as from *How AI-Anon Works*. If not, how was that decision reached?
- Who is in the e-Communities and do they represent the majority of membership?
- If this decision is made, will all Biblical quotes be removed from our literature?
- Will quotations from philosophers, theologians, historians, and Chinese proverbs also be removed so as not to offend anyone?
- The word prayer is often associated with religion. Will all references to prayer or God be removed?

It was agreed that if this proposal is approved, it will necessitate revision of the Twelve Steps and the very foundation of the AI-anon program will be eroded.

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(Group) unanimously agreed that Prayer for Today should remain. The only question raised was re:

the origin but all stated it has enhanced their recovery and in no way was offensive. We too were concerned about where this would lead.

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I am not a politically correct person. I honestly feel like those of us who do believe in God are being discriminated against. Our voices are being silenced so that others are not offended. They want their voices to be heard--what about ours?

I guess I feel like if we start down this road because of a few members, eventually the spirituality of the program will be in jeopardy and that would be a tragedy for all. None of it would work. I know that doesn't help anything but I needed to say it to someone. You were it!!"

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I have found more comfort and guidance here than anywhere else I tried turning to for help. I have become closer to the God of my understanding and AI-Anon has helped me to do so. The prayer for the day has not kept me from coming. Growing closer to the God of my understanding is one of the main reasons I keep coming back. Marilyn is right, if we start taking prayer out of one area then how will we not take it out of the steps? I believe each individual can interpret the literature and meetings as they so choose and as it is stated in meetings, "take what you want and leave the rest."  
I am thankful for AI-Anon and for the God of my understanding.

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I vote to leave the "Prayer for Today" as it is. One of the definitions of prayer is "earnest or urgent request" or "appeal". Doesn't that fit what we are about, especially when we first come to AI-anon. We definitely are appealing for help of any kind. Why is it that two people seem to be able to upset the process that has worked for 65 years. If they are unhappy let them find a group that does not say that prayer or skip that page in the book. In one of our closings there is a sentence "Take what you liked and leave the rest." In this case it is talking about opinions of others but I think this could apply to the "Prayer" issue also.

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What was the Literature Committee's rationale for removing these items?

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I don't really care about the closing, except how are they going to word it? I would suggest, "Will you join me in closing with \_\_\_\_\_." Under the line could be a statement: Using the AI-Anon Declaration or whatever the group conscience has determined at this point.

As far as the Just for Today bookmark and page 101 of How AI-Anon Works, I say absolutely NOT! Just as the sentence at the end of the paragraph before it on page 101 says, nowhere is the spirit of AI-Anon service more clearly articulated than in the prayer on the back of the *Just for Today* bookmark:

That is a true statement. If we remove the prayer because of someone's God phobia, we do a disservice to ourselves and to our program. Our program has stood the test of time with the prayers. We rely on our Higher Power at every turn, this prayer reflects what our attitude should be.

Just for the record, Lois criticized Bill when he was going to leave "God" out of the Big Book, pointing out to him that without God he wouldn't be sober. I doubt that she would be in favor of these suggestions.

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Thoughts though just from my heart- It's hard to know why this needs to be changed after all this time. It seems we have always been open and welcoming to anyone who wanted to join, but now we seem to believe we have to change who we are (or what we do) to try to be open to everyone. We tell people to get closer to their higher power through prayer and meditation but then can't even say the word prayer in the closing? It is a SUGGESTED closing...people can change it themselves if their group does not want to have it in there. And there is nothing wrong with the prayer that is on the Just for Today bookmark. It's just a prayer. It prays for many worthy things. I was at the St Louis AIS office meeting of IR's when a discussion came up about the fact that we close that meeting with the The Lord's Prayer. Yes, it is a Christian prayer but, as one Jewish gentleman pointed out, it's a good prayer. Nothing wrong with it. And the roots of AA and Al-Anon spring from a Christian group, so I believe it is more a matter of our tradition than trying to force anyone to be Christian. Maybe instead of removing the prayer from the bookmark, have several versions of the bookmark, with different prayers. But if they are going to do that, it needs to be as open, and as non-specific as the prayer for peace is.

I also have a problem with an item in the service manual - it says "the group conscience is the will of the group". Well, I was taught that there is but one Authority...our higher power as he expresses himself in our group conscience - that to me says the group conscience should not be the will of the group, it should be the will of our Higher Power as expressed through the members of the group.

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If they remove the word 'prayer' from the Suggested Closing what will they replace it with? I understand that not everyone shares the same Higher Power and prayer may imply an organized to religion to some, but it seems to me in that case we're trying too hard to be politically correct. I once spoke to a member from another Area, who said her group had wrestled with the concept of not offending someone by saying the Lord's Prayer. After much discussion they decided to keep the prayer, but added a coda to their closing that the prayer was used not for religious purposes, but as a homage to the early days of the program. (I wish I had gotten her to write down the exact words-they were lovely.)

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I have read your attachment about the literature committee recommendations and it saddened me to see that more spirituality is being considered to be omitted from our literature. I realize that it sounds very Christian and not everyone is Christian but the ideas are universal and what happened to take what you like and leave the rest? I think these words and the prayer have served many people well for many years and those of us who don't like them do not have to use them. It just feels to me like the spirituality of the program has been neglected a lot in the last few years and it saddens me.

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A couple of questions for you to (maybe) bring to the discussion:

- What part of the prayer is objectionable? The prayer is public domain and could be edited to reflect fewer Christian concepts, such as "Master" and "eternal life."
- If the term "prayer" is objectionable, will the Eleventh Step be changed?
- The *How Al-Anon Works* reference speaks so strongly that "nowhere is the spirit of al-Anon service more clearly articulated than" in this prayer, that it seems very radical to completely drop it.

I could support editing it though.

- Does dropping the word "prayer" from the closing really change anything? It might make it clearer that groups could close in whatever way they choose, with the Declaration, for example, which is not a prayer. I could support this minor change.

Thanks for allowing me to have a voice.

.....  
One member writes, " I think this over thinking things, but that's my own personal thought. Are we supposed to give up the prayer then?"

My personal opinion is that I hope the suggestion is defeated. If relying on evidence based decision making, (which I know is important) the AI-anon program is about turning your life and will over to a Higher Power. It appears to me communication with HP/prayer is crucial to that process!

.....  
All I can say is, for me, that Prayer tells me exactly what my character defects are and what positive qualities I can use to replace those defects. If we believe in a "Higher Power" then I would assume that we would pray to a "Higher Power". I would be very sad and upset if the WSC chose to remove the Prayer from numerous pieces of literature. We already have financial problems, reprinting literature isn't going to solve those problems. Whatever happened to take what you like and leave the rest? The last page of the book First Steps have some very powerful words from Lois on our Spiritual Program. It's worked for 65 years, I see no reason to change. Ugh!

.....  
I have 'cooled' off but still feel like our Just For Today Prayer should not be taken off even though it is a spiritual prayer. In fact, we even sing that prayer in church. My first thought when I attended my first AI-Anon meeting (date) & the Lord's Prayer was the closing prayer, my thought was my church will not object for me to attend these meetings. My home group still says the Lord's Prayer & AI-Anon Declaration for closing. I feel that way all members are respected for their spiritual beliefs. When the discussion begins at the AWSC & WSC, all heads are kept cool & respect everyone's feelings & viewpoints. Unanimity should prevail. This will probably be a good topic at the Delegates meeting.

.....  
All things have a beginning. I think it's important to filter this factor in to the discussion. Where will this beginning take us?

In my previous work I became familiar with resistance. Resistance is what keeps a potential member from walking through the doors of his/his first meeting; it's what keeps a member from working the Steps, getting involved in service or asking someone to be their sponsor. RESISTANCE is also the culprit that allows a person to focus on the single word or reference that results in a closed mind. There will always be RESISTANCE. We can adapt our literature; we can sacrifice parts of our foundation but resistance will remain. How much are we willing to sacrifice? And in the end we will have sacrificed what is traditional for what?

Where will the beginning take us?  
.....

Was most saddened to hear of these changes, taking out prayer. Our program does not need changes, regardless of our Godless society. The reason the program has saved so many lives is due to the fact that God was still in it.

I had no religious backing when I came in, and the only piece of literature I got my first meeting was the just for today bookmark! The prayer was beautiful even then, and I felt its power even without understanding any of it.

I am very concerned as we continue to get rid of the Lord's prayer closing in meeting after meeting. I see this as weakening of beloved program of any real power to help people. Taking the word prayer out of the closing just further pushes it to the curb for even more groups. Getting rid of the serenity prayer will of course follow next.

After ## years of dedicated service to this program, these changes may make me rethink my priorities. I have always been in love with our program, but these changes jar me deeply. I pray these proposals be given a lot more prayer and consideration. I do not believe this is In any way an informed group conscience.

.....  
(Group) conscience thoughts:

1. Read the prayer and don't find it "offensive"
2. Read the prayer and feel it IS religious
3. This is the St Francis prayer that a number of religions use...perhaps North American anomaly. "Lord" is not used in reference to God in Europe.
4. The prayer could be changed to reflect our reference to "God of our understanding"
5. Eternal life reference definitely makes reference to religion
6. Don't want to begin down the road of changing "other references" for the sake of "political correctness"

The group unanimously felt: "Take what you like and leave the rest. Our vote is #2 - leave all as is.

.....  
I would like to keep the prayer with these revisions. These words open(ed) my heart to compassion for others and detachment with love. Prayer is communication with my Higher Power letting me know that I am never alone. These are just 3 of Al-Anon's gifts to me.

**PRAYER FOR TODAY**

**Version 1** - ~~Lord, m~~Make me an instrument of ~~Thy~~ peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury - pardon; where there is doubt - faith; where there is despair - hope; where there is darkness - light; where there is sadness - joy.

~~O, Divine Master, g~~Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console; to be understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love; for it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned. ~~, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.~~

**Version 2** - . . . make me an instrument of peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury - pardon; where there is doubt - faith; where there is despair - hope; where there is darkness - light; where there is sadness - joy.

. . . grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console; to be understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love; for it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are [born again].

.....

I read the KBDM report on the Prayer on the back of the Just For Today bookmark and I'm surprised more people haven't complained about this prayer in the past. I was raised Catholic so I am not bothered personally by the Christian/Catholic prayers, but can see how people from other religious backgrounds may be put off or feel excluded.

I support the removal of this prayer. I like the idea of Al-Anon developing generic prayers specific to the goals of this program and more geared toward a HP of each persons understanding. I do love the Serenity prayer and do not perceive that to be directed toward a specific religion. It definitely encompasses the goals of our program for ourselves.

I write many of my own prayers that focus on my personal worries and requests for guidance and support from my HP, so I do not rely on the ones in print but I think it would be helpful for members who are learning how to rely on a HP to have help if needed.

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I do agree with the changes in the literature, as I have had several comments made to me about this. This program is not a religious program and some have seen these as an endorsement of religious. And they are uncomfortable with it.. I suggested if it bothered them that much to mark it out of those pieces of literature for their personal use. Higher power is not a problem to them. as each of them can use that as they see fit.

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85 total responses

68 - Do Not Change = 81.5%

8 - Yes, change or omit = 8.6%

9 - have more questions/need more info = 9.9%