

Background and KBDM Questions for “Just for Tonight” Bookmark Discussion

KBDM—Should the Literature Committee recommend that the World Service Conference (WSC) give conceptual approval for development of a “Just for Tonight” Bookmark?

Framing/Background:

During August and September 2016, the World Service Office (WSO) received three written requests (as well as several phone calls) suggesting the WSO produce a new bookmark using the “Just for Tonight” article from the August 2016 issue of *The Forum*. Below is the article, as it appeared in the August 2016 issue of *The Forum*:

Just for tonight...

By Robin T., Florida

I have used the *Just for Today* Bookmark (M-12) for many years to orient my thoughts in the right spiritual direction, and to keep me busy through difficult daytime hours. In a recent crisis, it occurred to me I also needed something to help me rest at night when I was feeling troubled. I started cataloguing and examining the thoughts and feelings that were interfering with my sleep and pairing them with the spiritual principles of the program.

Just for tonight, I will be grateful. As I prepare for sleep, I will give thanks for the passing day—its failures as well as its successes, its sadness as well as its joys, and its pain as well as its pleasures. I will take comfort in the knowledge that no event occurred, or circumstance arose today, that God could not use for my good and the good of others.

Just for tonight, I will accept that I have done the best I could, remembering that my goal is “Progress Not Perfection.” I will let go of any disappointment, shame, or guilt I feel for not having achieved perfection today, or any day in the past. I will offer up my shortcomings to God, in the belief that God can bring about changes in me I could not bring about in myself.

Just for tonight, I will try not to solve tomorrow’s problems or rectify today’s mistakes. I will remind myself that I am better able to receive guidance about right actions and right amends when my mind and body are rested and refreshed.

Just for tonight, I will set aside my fears, frustrations, and aspirations. I will take a few minutes to review the abundance that exists in my life today and place my future in the care of a loving God, trusting my needs will be met at a time, and in a way, which is best for me.

Just for tonight, I will turn my loved ones over to God's care. I will free myself from trying to do the impossible—changing the actions, attitudes, or future of anyone other than myself.

Just for tonight, I will set aside all anger, resentment, envy, and hurt feelings. I will ask God to bless those whose actions I feel troubled by, and to change my attitude toward them, myself, and all other human beings to one of love, acceptance, and compassion.

Just for tonight, I will try to find a safe, comfortable place to lie down and close my eyes. I will remind myself I am a precious child of God, and that I am both deserving and in need of rest.

I will look forward to awakening to the new day, feeling rested, ready to seek and follow God's will, and accept the blessings God has in store for me.

Each member making the request described the article as very powerful, and that it could be a wonderful companion piece to the *Just for Today* bookmark (M-12) already included in the Newcomer Packet (K-10). In October 2016, after considerable discussion, the Committee agreed that further discussion was needed, but that Committee members should first complete the five Knowledge-Based Decision-Making (KBDM) questions via the discussion board on AFG Connects.

The following is a summary of Committee responses to the five KBDM questions. Please note that the answers to the KBDM questions were used as a springboard for discussions that continued over two Committee meetings and are not a summary of the discussions that followed or inclusive of every point brought up in those discussions.

The Five KBDM Questions

1. **What do we know about our fellowship needs, wants and preferences that are relevant to this discussion/decision?**
 - It's a thought-provoking article. Many *Forum* articles are.
 - We know that the *The Forum* article received a fair amount of positive feedback and that the *Just for Today* bookmark is widely used.
 - Serves as a continuation of living one day at a time throughout the entire 24-hour period. Has been requested to be in THE FORUM BOOK (working title).
 - We know that our fellowship is made up of people whose lives have been affected by someone else's drinking. We know that the members of our fellowship are seeking recovery through the application of spiritual principles. We know that the bookmark *Just for Today* has been popular with the fellowship.
 - We have had several requests for this new bookmark.

- The older generation is still reading hard cover books and fewer eBooks. They like the “feel” and availability of them.
- This piece struck a wonderful chord with people who saw it in *The Forum*. We know spirituality is a core piece of our program. It could add another simple and useful way of practicing “One Day at a Time.”
- Could be useful for a Step Ten review. Members are encouraged to review their day, and this could help. *Just for Today* has been useful to many members, diverting their minds from problems, and this is similar.
- “Just for Tonight” could be a fast and easy way to remind us, at all hours to continue to live “One Day at a Time” when we are tired and maybe not at our strongest mentally.
- This *Forum* article has touched the hearts and brought comfort and peace to many of our members. Bookmarks with messages provide simple and easy access to the tools of the program, especially when one is in crisis or needs a lift.
- We know that some members may not be avid readers and a bookmark with salient points can be very appealing to them. We know that with busy lives many may not take the time to look through books and this could be at their fingertips.
- We know we are in the business of bringing hope to seemingly hopeless situations. We know that our fellowship needs, wants, and prefers messages of hope for their lives. We know that our collective Higher Power has the best interest of our fellowship as a whole and our newest member in mind. We know that we get to earn the title “trusted servant” by serving especially when it seems difficult and inconvenient. That hasn’t changed.

2. What do we know about the “capacity” (resources) and “strategic position” of our fellowship that is relevant to this discussion/decision?

- We know that this article was popular with our fellowship and that it is already produced and available.
- Our capacity is whatever we need it to be. We are a program of abundance.
- Currently, there are many Al-Anon sources for prayer and reviewing our day, i.e., *Paths to Recovery* (B-24). Sales on many items are down. Would members purchase this? Our membership is evolving along with society in general. Do we understand the wants/needs of younger people?
- I love the message of this new idea. However, I think our resources are already stretched with four pieces in process. I'd like to defer this decision for a while until we feel able to consider another piece.

- The material is already written. The only need is to adapt it as a bookmark.
- We know that literature is an available means of getting material to our fellowship. This bookmark would be a good resource for persons to review their Tenth Step each evening before going to bed and/or when they awake in the middle of the night.

3. What do we know about the current realities and evolving dynamics of our fellowship's environment that is relevant to this discussion/decision?

- The world is changing, and Al-Anon must make changes to keep up with the times in order to be available for perspective members, newcomers, and longtime members. The *Just for Tonight* bookmark is “spiritual,” not “religious,” inclusive, not exclusive.
- Bookmarks appear to be used less due to electronic media.
- We know that our fellowship is made up of members whose lives have been affected by someone's drinking. We know that this *Forum* article is very popular with the fellowship.
- The current reality is that several people have expressed interest in this article becoming an official piece of Al-Anon literature.
- We know that the article could also be available to members in THE FORUM BOOK (working title). It would not be as easily accessible in the new book as it would be as a bookmark.
- We have been discussing our evolving dynamics regarding younger members and those who are less traditional in their approach to spirituality. I want to be sensitive to those who may not choose to call their Higher Power “God” in any move forward.
- Many members are limited by time restraints and this small review may be easily used in a short time to review the day and end the day on a positive note.
- Although many members take great comfort in their Al-Anon books and the notes and information they may have written in them, some younger members use Kindle or some other electronic means to access their Al-Anon literature, so a new bookmark might not be popular.
- What we know is that most of our literature is still in print form, so bookmarks are still useful at this time. That might not be so in ten years.
- We are a very diverse society that utilizes different forms of communication and ways to access our materials. Most everyone uses a bookmark from time to time.

Those that depend on electronic devices could still carry a bookmark in their pocket, purse, or on a night stand. Our fellowship enjoys tools that help bring spiritual guidance.

- Our message is still one of hope, that anyone, anywhere impacted by someone's drinking can find help. We know that we still reach out to a diverse population with different needs and skills including familiarity with today's technology. We know some people still prefer a hard copy while others prefer reading a screen.
- We do know that many members may have limited time to read. We do know that not as many groups and members are buying literature.

4. What are the ethical implications of our choices? (Pros/cons)

Pros

- This article offers hope and comfort to those who read it.
- A bookmark fits in your wallet, purse, or pocket, or even a book or magazine.
- Fiscally prudent, less expensive than producing a book or magazine.
- It may provide a message of hope when it may be inconvenient or not safe for a new member to talk to someone and reason it out.
- Simple, handy piece. Fellowship is already excited about the article in *The Forum*.
- This article could be helpful to many people who struggle with trying to work a program at 2:00 am.
- The *Just for Today* bookmark has been a valuable tool in our program. A companion bookmark might be just as popular and as valuable a tool.
- The original article has generated a lot of discussion that a simple article doesn't. Many members are currently excited and have indicated they would use it. Having something simple, but profound, on a sleepless or fretful night could be an incredible recovery tool.
- Pros are the positive view of reviewing ourselves, possibly daily, and having another simple tool to use.
- When, I, myself, have a sleepless night, this will be a useful piece to have next to my bed. I can see others viewing it similarly – much more than digging out a book or an old *Forum*.

- Handy size, ideas to clear mind and provide serenity for night, already pretty much done, so not a lot of gathering of information or time by staff to put together.
- The article has already garnered major attention this year and could be produced in some form with little effort.

Cons

- I see no cons.
- We have other literature projects in the works, maybe too many for the time being.
- The Newcomer Packet is now a booklet. Attaching another bookmark may not be feasible.
- Given our current culture, we may want to consider “electronic” bookmarks with our message of hope.
- Is it necessary if it is available in *The Forum* and may be in the new THE FORUM BOOK (working title)?
- Do we need another bookmark?
- We’re talking about yet one more piece of literature with the unknown factor of “Will it sell?”
- Question—is the best use of article as a stand-alone piece that can be reflected upon in the middle of the night or do members of the fellowship already turn to “invitation only” Al-Anon Facebook pages for late- or middle-of-the-night sharings?
- If the article is available elsewhere, perhaps it does not need to be a separate bookmark.

5. What do we wish we knew, but don’t?

- Do people really want this piece of literature enough that they would buy it?
- Would the fellowship embrace this new bookmark as much as the *Just for Today* bookmark?
- Will it be cost effective to make? Is the bookmark the best format for this material or would some other format work better?

- Wish we knew a way to get information from our newest members to address their needs specifically. Wish we knew if we were still hitting the mark in meeting the needs of our newest members.
- Will we use the article the way it is written and just make a bookmark of it or will we adapt it?
- Can AFG afford to keep printing new literature?
- Can we make it more inclusive?
- Will this bookmark be as popular as the *Just for Today* one is? Will the Conference and the Board approve it?

During its September 2017 meeting, having read the KBDM responses, Committee members had further discussion. Members expressed concerns regarding whether this would be a straight reprint of the article, or a bookmark based on the article, in which wording could be adapted to be as beneficial as possible to all members. All members were in favor of developing a bookmark based on the article. The Committee unanimously carried a motion to recommend to the 2018 WSC conceptual approval to create a bookmark based on an August 2016 *Forum* article titled “Just for Tonight,” using more generic wording for a Higher Power than the article.