Example #13 — The Church

This is a worked example of an inventory against an institution. The Big Book says to list resentments against "people, institutions and principles" (p.64-¶3). This example shows how the BBA format applies when Column 1 is an institution rather than a person.

Columns 1 & 2

#13) The Church *(Catholic Church — the institution, not any individual)*

- **A)** Told me I was sinful and going to hell.
- **B)** Covered up abuse scandals.
- **C)** Controlled my family with guilt and fear.
- **D)** Took money my family couldn't afford.

Column 3 — Resentment Inventory

> *"God please help me see the truth about my resentments"*

#13) A — The Church / Told me I was sinful and going to hell.

Affects my:

SELF-ESTEEM — *"I am..."* | Fear of being...

- I am a good person who doesn't deserve to be shamed. *(not good enough, fundamentally flawed)*

PRIDE — *"Others should..."*

- The church should build people up, not tear them down. *(judged, condemned)*

AMBITION — *"I want..."*

- I want to have a healthy relationship with God without shame. *(forever damaged by this)*

SECURITY — *"I need...to be okay"*

- I need to know I'm not going to hell to be okay. *(damned, beyond redemption)*

PERSONAL RELATIONS

- Religious leaders should practice what they preach. *(hypocrites, can't trust authority)*

SEX RELATIONS — *"A real man..."*

- A real man thinks for himself and doesn't let institutions control him. *(weak, controlled)*

POCKET BOOK

- No institution should take money from people who can barely afford it. *(exploited, taken advantage of)*

#13) B — The Church / Covered up abuse scandals.

Affects my:

SELF-ESTEEM — *"I am..."*

- I am someone who trusted an institution that didn't deserve it. *(naive, foolish)*

PRIDE — *"Others should..."*

- The church should protect the vulnerable, not the powerful. *(betrayed)*

AMBITION — *"I want..."*

- I want institutions to be held accountable. *(powerless to change anything)*

SECURITY — *"I need...to be okay"*

- I need to know the institutions I trusted are safe to be okay. *(unsafe, nothing is what it seems)*

PERSONAL RELATIONS

- Organizations should be honest with their members. *(deceived)*

Column 4

> *"God please help me see the truth."*

The Realization — Modified for Institutions

When Column 1 is an institution, the Realization is modified. We don't pray for the institution as a "sick person," but we do still ask: "Where was I at fault? How have I done similar things?"

- I have used shame and guilt to control others — my children, my spouse.
- I have covered up or minimized my own wrongs to protect my image.
- I have taken from others when I couldn't afford to give back.
- I have been part of groups that I knew were wrong but stayed silent.
- I have judged others harshly — told people they were wrong, sinful, or bad — based on my own rigid beliefs.

> *"God, help me see where I have done the same things this institution has done to me. Help me see my own wrongs. Thy will be done."*

Fourth Column — "Where had I been…"

SELF-SEEKING: *My selfish actions or activities were…?*

- Used the church's failings as an excuse to reject all spirituality — threw out the baby with the bathwater.
- Argued about religion at family gatherings, causing tension and division.

- Made sweeping judgments about all religious people based on institutional failures.
- Refused to examine my own spiritual life because it was easier to blame the church.
- Used my resentment as armor against vulnerability — "I'll never trust an institution again."

SELFISH: *My selfish attitudes were…?*

- All organized religion is corrupt and anyone who participates is a fool.
- I'm smarter than people who believe.
- No one gets to tell me what to do spiritually.

DISHONEST: *I was in the delusion that…?*

- I was in the delusion that because the institution was wrong, I didn't need to look at my own spiritual condition.
- I was in the delusion that rejecting the church entirely was the same as having my own spiritual path.
- I was in the delusion that my bitterness toward the church was protecting me, when it was actually blocking me from God.

AFRAID: *I was afraid…?*

- Afraid that the church was right — that I am bad, sinful, beyond redemption.
- Afraid that if I open up spiritually, I'll be controlled or deceived again.
- Afraid that without the certainty of knowing who's right and who's wrong, I'll have to face my own uncertainty about God.

The Chain

AFRAID: Afraid the church was right about me — that I really am flawed and damned. ↓ drives → **DISHONEST:** In the delusion that rejecting the church entirely meant I was free. ↓ produces → **SELFISH:** All religion is corrupt; I'm above it all; no one tells me what to think. ↓ generates → **SELF-SEEKING:** Argued, judged, divided, rejected all spirituality, used bitterness as a shield.

Harm

- **My family** — caused division at family gatherings; dismissed their faith; made them feel foolish for believing.
- **My children** — denied them any spiritual foundation because of my own bitterness.
- **Myself** — cut off from spiritual growth for years; used the resentment as an excuse to avoid looking inward.
- **People of faith I encountered** — treated them with contempt; made blanket judgments about their intelligence.
- **My recovery** — the resentment against the church blocked my ability to find a Higher Power, which is the foundation of the program.

Sources & Attribution

Direct Big Book text: p.64-¶3 (“people, institutions and principles”), p.67-¶2 (SDSF questions)

BBA workshop methodology: Seven areas of self, Column 4 SDSF format, The Chain

Note: This is a constructed example created for this guide to demonstrate how the BBA format applies to institutional resentments. The Realization section is modified for institutions — the personal prayer is replaced with a general prayer, but the self-examination still applies.

From the Big Book Awakening Step Four guide at bigbook.it/step-4/ · a page of the guide, not the workbook itself: the workbook's own pages are linked from “Originals & sources.” · source examples/13-the-church.md