

SEARCHING, Fearless, and Moral

Step Four – Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Many of us lost our true identity because we grew up in dysfunctional families where we were forced to assume false survival roles. These roles may have helped us survive emotionally and physically at that time, but the roles became habitual and even self-destructive in adulthood. In recovery, God invites us to the truth that we are loved and that living now in the embrace of His love, we can become the complete person He created us to be. Step Four is about finding both character strengths to build on and character defects that hinder us from being that loving fulfilled individual.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life. (Psalm 139:23-24)

We are most truly ourselves when we live in loving relationship with our Heavenly Father, our Creator. That's how we were created to live. God invites us to live as "Beloved Ones" and to respond as people who know we are cherished and cared for. We've live as unloved and unloving people in our addictions. We learned coping strategies to hide our fear of being hurt and let down. Now God invites us to let go of those strategies and enter fully into a life of love and care.

²⁰ If someone says, "I love God," but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we have not seen? ²¹ And God himself has commanded that we must love not only him but our Christian brothers and sisters, too. (1John 4)

The God who created us has the clearest vision of what living in love looks like. He is more than willing to show that to us in Step Four. But, we have to give up control of what we think works because our best efforts led us to lives of addiction and pain. Now God wants to show us a new way of going about things.

Many of us approach Step four with a desire to change our circumstances, not a desire to change ourselves. The first step toward any kind of change, however, must be to know ourself as we are and to know where

we are now. God invites us to let go of those things that keep us from experiencing the fullness of the love He knows we need to live well.

We really are living in a haze and don't know what those areas are. We've lived in denial and pain too long. We've blamed others and denied our own responsibility so long that we begin to believe our own twisted thinking. We just don't see many of these obstacles ourselves. But as we walk with God, consult wise people, and make a searching inventory of our lives, God will show us clearly where we need to make adjustments.

Once a religious leader asked Jesus this question: "Good teacher, what should I do to get eternal life?" "Why do you call me good?" Jesus asked him. "Only God is truly good. But as for your question, you know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery. Do not murder. Do not steal. Do not testify falsely. Honor your father and mother.'"

The man replied, "I've obeyed all these commandments since I was a child." "There is still one thing you lack," Jesus said. "Sell all you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." But when the man heard this, he became sad because he was very rich.

Jesus watched him go and then said to his disciples, "How hard it is for rich people to get into the Kingdom of God! (Luke 18:18-23)

How often have we felt we were doing pretty well, only to be confronted with a situation that showed us another area in need of attention. We cannot excuse one area of defect by simply pointing to all the things we are doing well. While we need to see growth in ourselves and build on that, we also need to remain humble, recognizing that there are things to learn and put into practice better than we do today. That's the heart of Step Four.

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. What difference would it make in my behaviour if I really believed I was moment by moment cherished and cared for by God?
2. What am I hanging onto to that Jesus would probably name as the "one thing I lack" and invite me to give away?