

Taking Inventory With God

Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind and love your neighbour as you love yourself. (Mark 12:30-31)

Purpose of Taking Inventory: A searching, fearless, and moral inventory of ourselves is a tool to recognize ways to open ourselves to more of the love we so desperately long for. It reveals blocks and obstacles that God says keep that love from flowing gently and freely in our thoughts and our emotions. Jesus clearly demonstrated that the only route to real life and satisfaction was through surrender of His way of doing things to the will of His Heavenly Father, even when the path before him seemed the less convenient. He loved His Father, accepted that His Father loved Him, and so He willingly chose to suffer and die for us.

Love Description: What does it mean to love someone? For some of us it means knowing a person so well and liking what we see so much that we love to be with them and choose to do so as often as possible. We experience how they are thoughtful, gentle, and generous to us and to others. Loving someone includes respecting them for who they are and for their way of life. Loving them means accepting them as humans with shortcomings just like us and offering forgiveness and acceptance for wrongs they've done to us. Try taking inventory around these items:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. (1 Corinthians 13:4-8)

Loving God: Loving God and trusting Him with our lives means giving God a chance, on a regular basis, to demonstrate His love and goodness to us by surrendering to His principles for living whether we understand them or not. God is the creator and the sustainer of life. Do we really believe God loves us more than we love ourselves? Do we want to please the God who loves us by doing what He says He likes? Do our actions demonstrate this?

He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8)

God's Inventory: Jesus said that He came to fulfill all of the law that God had previously spoken to His people. One of the most respected summaries of what God required is known as "The Ten Commandments." These were inventory items that Jesus affirmed as truth. How do I line up with these standards? To turn my will and life over to God is to actually

live as He directs. To pick and choose from the list is to have retained some part of my will over God's will.

1. ***Worship no god other than me.***
2. ***Do not make yourselves any idols: You must never bow or worship any objects or images.***
3. ***Do not use the name of God irreverently, nor use it to swear to a falsehood.***
4. ***Remember to observe the Sabbath as a holy day.***
5. ***Honour your father and mother that you may have a long good life.***
6. ***Do not murder.***
7. ***Do not commit adultery.***
8. ***Do not steal.***
9. ***Do not lie.***
10. ***Do not be envious of your neighbour's house, or want to sleep with his wife, or own anything else he has.***

General Confession: Another form of inventory used in many churches Sunday to Sunday says words like these: ***Most merciful God, We confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart. We have not loved our neighbour as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us, that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your name. Amen***

It's important to look at not only what we do but what we fail to do. We let ourselves and others down, including God by just not bothering, by procrastinating, by focusing only on our own agenda of needs. We make efforts only as long as it doesn't inconvenience ourselves. What does it mean for me to live for God and others wholeheartedly?

Feeling Bad: Do we take inventory to beat up on ourselves? No. Should we feel badly when we take inventory and see how far short of God's standards we fall? Yes. ***Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.*** (2 Corinthians 7:10 NIV) We need to carefully evaluate if the "bad feelings" we have are negative, accusing and condemning thoughts from the devil or if they are Godly sorrow that is leading us to repentance and a change in action.

Let's remove the things that block us from receiving all the love and care God wants to pour into our lives. Awareness, acceptance, and action are all required.

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. What's the purpose of a step four inventory?
2. Have I given the principles of God a real chance to see if what God says really works?
3. To do inventory with God, what items would I need to include?