

Life With God In Recovery

STEP FOUR:

RELATIONSHIP: THE FOUNDATION OF A MORAL INVENTORY



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

Let's take a good look at the way we're living and reorder our lives under GOD. If we claim that we're free of sin, we're only fooling ourselves. A claim like that is errant nonsense. On the other hand, if we admit our sins—make a clean breast of them—he won't let us down; he'll be true to himself. He'll forgive our sins and purge us of all wrongdoing. (Lamentations 3:40; 1 John 1:8-9 MSG)

Our life in addiction was shaped by a controlling relationship with a destructive substance, a habit, a person, or a combination of these. Our behaviour was rooted in self-absorption that was fueled either by a desire to seek pleasure or avoid pain. At some point we began to believe that we were entitled to whatever would give us pleasure and keep pain at a distance. We became focused on ourselves and our needs to the exclusion of every other relationship. We did not know how to love others in a healthy way, and we believed because of our feelings of self-rejection, that we were unlovable. With our chosen addiction we sought to cover the pain of broken relationships with God, with our family, and with others.

'...no matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love. Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than for self. Love doesn't want what it doesn't have. Love doesn't strut, Doesn't have a swelled head, Doesn't force itself on others, Isn't always "me first," Doesn't fly off the handle, Doesn't keep score of the sins of others, Doesn't revel when others grovel, Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth, Puts up with anything, Trusts God always, Always looks for the best, Never looks back, But keeps going to the end. (1 Corinthians 13:4-5 MSG)

When we come to God for life in recovery we must humbly acknowledge that we don't know how to live in relationship. We must bring a willing heart in order that we may learn how to receive and give love. We need to allow God to take this broken person that we have become and change us into the person He created us to be. We need to form a loving relationship with God, and by so doing, learn how to live in wholesome loving relationships with others.

The framework of our searching and fearless moral inventory is identifying how we've missed God's plan for a life of loving relationship. We must be willing to make the necessary adjustments so that a relationship with God becomes our new reality. The basic questions we ask ourselves are, "God what does my life look like to you? How

have I strayed from your loving plan for me? What do I need to let go? What needs to become a priority and sought after with everything I have in me so I can really live?"

So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you. (Romans 12:1-2 MSG)

Many persons come to recovery longing for a new way of life in relationship with God, family and others. In the first three steps they acknowledge their powerlessness, their need for a higher power, and even begin a life of surrender to God as they understand Him. Life appears to be going in the right direction but then the challenges begin to surface as they consider making an inventory of their lives. Who gets to decide what is moral and right and good in my relationships?

It is at this point that the radical nature of a “searching, fearless, and moral” inventory is revealed. Some of God’s ways will seem like minor adjustments. At other times we will be shocked by how different God’s view of life in relationship is from what we’ve known. A searching, fearless, and moral inventory that is controlled by God will challenge us, both in terms of what we do now, and what we must no longer do.

Jesus said, ***“It is what comes out of you that makes you unclean. For from the inside, from your heart, come the evil ideas which lead you to do immoral things, to rob, kill, commit adultery, be greedy, and do all sorts of evil things; deceit, indecency, jealousy, slander, pride, and folly—all these evil things come from inside you and make you unclean.”***(Mark 7:20-23 GNT)

Our addictive behaviour was rooted in mistaken beliefs about relationships. A relationship with someone in our past may have deeply wounded us and our subsequent beliefs and actions flowed from the painful brokenness of that event. Consequently, a step four inventory that is searching, fearless, and moral must take us back to the foundation or our errant thinking and ask – “What does life in a healthy relationship actually look like?”

In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient

endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone. (2 Peter 1:5-7 NLT)

Our behaviour is rooted in what we really believe. That is why we must look at not only what we did, but why we did it. This may cause us pain as we uncover what we have tried to cover up, but now we can take comfort in the fact that we take this inventory in the safety of God’s love and care. Like a skillful surgeon He will remove those things that have hindered us from living a good and pleasing life.

No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us. (Philippians 3:13-14 NLT)

We will come to know what real life is when we inventory our behaviour in the light of God’s word.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What does life in healthy relationships look like?
2. What’s my experience of life in relationships – more using relationships to meet my own needs or a balanced experience of giving and receiving love?
3. Have I come to admit that I don’t know how to live in relationships as God intended?
4. Do I believe God can change me so I can have a loving and meaningful relationship with Him?
5. What is the challenge for me as I consider making a searching, fearless, and moral inventory based on God’s way of life as revealed in the Bible?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I bring my life to You so you can examine and re-order what is in me. I want to come completely clean with You, admit my sin, and receive forgiveness for my wrongdoing. Search me, O God, and know my heart. Test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life. I embrace what You have done for me on the cross. I fix my attention on You and Your plans. Change me from the inside out. I commit myself to Your care and trust in your unconditional love. I will follow You. Amen