

Step Four

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

First Week - Introduction

My dear friends, we are moving right along. What have we learned so far? There is a God, and we are not Him! We learned some of our weaknesses and strengths. We learned to have hope for the future. We learned to trust (some of you for the first time). Some of you have met Jesus for the first time. Some have been reintroduced or made a re-commitment to the greatest Friend you will ever have. We have learned the need to be HONEST! This will be the most important word in your vocabulary. Only by living it and practicing honesty can we really heal.

This 4th Step is where a lot of people run! Many people do not want to face the truth about themselves and be honest. They seem to think they are different than everybody else - that somehow they have suffered more, hated more, loved more, sinned more, have more shame, are more unlovable, are not as good as anyone else, or maybe even think they have been so bad that God could not love and forgive them. That kind of thinking is wrong and self-defeating. Our Heavenly Father loves you very much, and wants to heal any and all shame and pain in your life. Satan is a murderer and a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44), and he does not want you to get honest with yourself and with God. Don't believe his lies! As you dig down deep, go back in time, and honestly work the 4th Step, you will begin to uncover some shame, hurt and pain, but it must be brought up into the light so that you can heal. Satan wants you to procrastinate, put it off, or just refuse to do a 4th Step altogether, because he can only work in the darkness.

These are some of the benefits of completing a personal inventory: eliminating the power the past has over us; learning humility; learning honesty; laying the groundwork for further Steps. Step 4 is an IDENTIFICATION action. It will identify things to be worked on in Steps 5,6,7,8,9 & 10. It is used to gather information for the next actions. The next actions can be no better than the knowledge gained in Step 4, so you need to be thorough. It will be extremely unhealthy to go on to further Steps without completing Steps 4 & 5 - the Twelve Steps are in order for a reason. This is a written fearless moral inventory of ourselves. You supply the details and your sponsor or accountability partner will aid you in finding any behavior patterns that have been destructive to you. By working together, you will continue making progress in recovery over a lifetime. So write it down, discuss it with your accountability partner in the 5th Step, and it will lose its hold on you.

Jesus said in John 8:31-32 "If you abide in My WORD, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the TRUTH shall make you FREE." God's word is TRUTH, and the more we study and take in His word, the more freedom we will experience. However, there is another kind of truth that will help to set us free, and that is facing the truth about ourselves. If we fearlessly make an inventory of our lives, and search for the truth behind some of our actions and attitudes, God can use that knowledge, together with His truth from His word, to set us free from old habits, wrong ideas, etc.

If you do an honest and thorough 4th Step, you will bring up a lot of things that MUST be brought up, so that you can face it, confess it, and give all the bad to your Heavenly Father so that He can forgive it (see I John 1:9). You will at the same time bring up some good things, and those you keep. With God's help through Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, the good will just get better, because you are not dragging around all that baggage from the past anymore. Remember, you give the bad to God in the 5th Step, and He and you do not

have to remember any more of that stuff. It is gone! What a relief! I truly believe the 4th and 5th Steps are the turning point in a person's recovery, and the place where we find out what makes us tick. It certainly is not easy - it takes WORK, FAITH, TRUST, HOPE and complete HONESTY! No more denial, no more cover-ups, no more lies. God knows it all anyway! We are only deceiving and harming ourselves by failing to do a thorough inventory. By doing an honest 4th Step, you will learn some things you have needed to know about yourself, and praise God! With a good accountability partner the knowledge can only result in positive things for the future. God bless!

Second Week's Lesson - Step 4

Getting Started

Pray first, and ask God for direction and the ability to be honest. Determine to be thorough, and go back as far as you can. Some of the thoughts may be painful, but these are the thoughts and emotions that you have been "stuffing" all this time. Now is the time to get them out and expose them for what they are, and turn them over to the Lord once and for all! Remember, you have a support team with you: your accountability partner, other members of the group, and Dottie and myself anytime. The Lord is wanting to help you in any way you will let Him.

1. Decide WHERE you will go for a quiet time to begin your inventory.
2. Decide what date, and what time you will start - keep that appointment with yourself.
3. What are some of your fears as you begin your inventory? Do you know WHY you have these fears?
4. Do you have an Accountability Partner yet? If not, why?

As you answer the questions in the inventory, think and meditate on your answer, and write down all of it! This inventory needs to be written down, not just thought about. These questions will trigger memories both pleasant and painful. No matter what the thought and feeling, capture it and write it down. The only person being hurt by the thought or feeling is you. Write about fears, hates, resentments, guilt and sexual hang-ups. Sometimes the feelings seem overwhelming and we have difficulty writing them down. At other times, the question will trigger a memory not related to the question - write it down also, to be included later on. Keep a small notebook in your pocket, as sometimes thoughts will hit in the middle of the day from questions you answered last night. All items are important - this is an inventory, it doesn't change things, it simply lists them.

We will be doing a question-and-answer form of 4th Step for the most part, but you may want to add things of your own as they come up. Some people do a column-type inventory, which would go as follows: First column - you list the NAME of a person or group of people against whom you had (or still have) resentment, bitterness, anger, envy, etc.; Second column - the CAUSE - write what they DID to you to cause the anger, fear, resentment, hurt, etc.; Third column - the EFFECT - what was your reaction, how did the hurtful act affect you at that time?; Fourth column - the DAMAGE - which basic instincts were injured, and what was the long-term damage? For instance, how were you damaged in the areas of relationships, physical safety, financial loss, loss of innocence, being able to trust people, etc.; and Fifth column - YOUR PART - what part of your resentment towards another is your responsibility? Ask God to show you (see Psalm 139:23-24).

Everything that has happened in your life is recorded in your memory and can be retrieved. You may not know what patterns in your life have developed, but you have recorded within your memory the circumstances and all reactions brought about by these circumstances. You will write down the experiences of your life. No one tries to consciously injure themselves - we learned defense mechanisms that worked sometimes. If they didn't work at least part of the time, we would never have hung on to them. A pattern of responses has developed - we tend to respond over and over again in the same pattern. The problem is that the defense

mechanism now controls us rather than us controlling it. It has become by the dictionary definition compulsive behavior - an irresistible, irrational behavior. Examples are: alcoholism, drug addiction, eating disorders, sexual acting out, co-dependency, compulsive lying and being excessive in areas such as work or gambling.

Remember when you are doing your inventory to list the positive as well as the negative. You want to list both the good and the bad things of the past. Lamentations 3:40 says, "Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord." We have all "missed the mark" in some areas of our lives. In recovery, we are not to dwell on the past, but we need to understand it and see it for what it is. Then and only then can we let the Lord work in us to change us for the better. That takes total honesty and trust!

What about CONFIDENTIALITY? Don't worry about information you put down. It will be for your eyes and your accountability partner's only. Your counselor is skilled and has read many case histories. He or she is not interested in the experiences or incidents in your life, but is looking for PATTERNS of behavior, character defects or misuse of instincts that may have caused them. You are responsible for details and the counselor is responsible to help you find patterns and behaviors which are constructive or destructive to you.

Finally, remember that this step is necessary for NOW, to get to the root causes of your problems, in order to find healing. However, you will NOT be dragging your Fourth Step around with you for the rest of your life! The Fifth Step is where you GIVE IT ALL UP TO GOD, and you don't have to let the past control your future any longer. Remember, God's word says you are a "new creation in Christ Jesus" (II Cor. 5:17) and in Ephesians 4:22 it says you are to PUT OFF that "old man" and the old way of life! We will study that and go into more detail when we get to Step 5, but it may give you something to look forward to, as you bring up many painful things from the past. Go ahead and FEARLESSLY do your inventory, because you will be able to give it up entirely to God, and He has promised you a clean slate, a NEW BEGINNING!

Love in Christ Jesus,

Pastor Tom and Dottie

Step 4 is an action step. There is no "homework lesson" other than you actually doing the inventory. If you need help, or if you would like to use our Fourth Step Inventory Questions, please call Tom & Dottie (310) 821-8677