

Lesson 9- Inventory

Celebrate Recovery

11/23/18

Principle 4: Openly examine and confess my faults to myself, to God, and to someone I trust
"Happy are the pure in heart" (Mt.5:8)

Step 4: We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves
"Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord." (Lamentations 3:40)

- I. **Tonight we are going to look at how to start your searching and fearless moral inventory.**
 - A. An inventory for those who have never done one, is a list we create of our past that identifies both the positive and negative actions that have impacted our lives.
 - i. We talked about this moral inventory two lessons ago focusing mostly on the "moral" part of moral inventory. Today we are going to get a lot more practical and talk about how you actually write it when you get to that spot in your recovery.
 - ii. Many of our addictions, we said before, have been our way of avoiding looking at ourselves honestly. We do not want to look at that stuff, we want to forget about it, we want to stop thinking about it and so we either numb our minds with a substance or we busy ourselves with activity or we blame others so that we do not have to accept the blame ourselves.
 - iii. But when we perform our moral inventory we actually intentionally look at all the stuff we have tried so long not to look at.
 1. For this reason Step 4, Principle 4 is hard. If people stop progressing in their recovery they usually stop here.
 - B. **Now in this step, as we said before, it is very important that you have a Sponsor.** There are a couple reason for that:
 - i. First, some of the stuff you have experienced and some of the guilt you feel is so intense that you really need the love and nurturing of another fellow-struggler.
 - ii. And the second reason is that a Sponsor can keep you from writing an unbalanced inventory.
 - iii. An unbalanced inventory is one in which you list only the bad stuff- which is our tendency.
 - C. So the searching and fearless moral inventory is a hard step. It will require intentionally bringing up the hurts of the past and setting up an appointment to go over those hurts one by one.
 - i. Sounds worse than a root-canal right?
- II. **So let's talk about the 5 Components of the Inventory**

- A. The Person:** In this column you list the person you resent or fear. You want to go as far back as you can. Remember that resentment is mostly unexpressed anger.
- i. So in this column you list all the people and things that you are holding resentment against.
 - ii. What you may notice if you are doing your inventory for the second or third time is that there may be some resentments from the past that did not occur to you, or perhaps that you did not remember, when you did your first inventory.
 1. This often happens in counseling. In counseling we will most often work with the most present trauma but once we do that we sometimes find there are other traumas that have been repressed or altogether forgotten.
 2. This is why it is helpful to do more than one Step Study.
- B. The Cause:** In this column you are going to list the specific actions that someone did to hurt you.
- i. What did the person do to cause you resentment or fear?
 - ii. An example would be an alcoholic father who was emotionally unavailable for you.
 - iii. A parent who attempted to control and dominate your life.
 - iv. An uncle who made inappropriate passes at you when you were a teenager.
 - v. This reflective look can be painful and that's why having a sponsor and an accountability partner or accountability team is so important. They can be there for you to walk with you through the pain.
 1. And of course Jesus will be with you too.
- C. The Effect:** In this column you write down how what specific action or event affected your life both in the past and in the present.
- i. How did it make me feel then and now? In this section you want to try and go back to the moment that it happened and ask yourself, "What did I feel in the moment when it happened?"
 - ii. Did they silence me? Did they make me feel afraid? Insecure?
 - iii. Did they cause me to have building anger I felt I could not express?
 - iv. Did they make me feel belittled, unwanted, dirty or worthless?
 1. What was the effect of the action they did to you?
 2. Be as descriptive as you want to be or feel comfortable being with your Sponsor.
 - v. You might even note the long-term effects it had on you such as:
 1. It made me distrust all men
 2. It made me lose friends because I always had to be home because I felt I had to protect the other kids
 3. It left me feeling alone in my pain, like I couldn't tell anyone.
 4. It led me to feel like it was all my fault over the years. Etc..
- D. The Damage:** Have you suffered from broken relationships, slander, gossip?
- i. Has your physical safety been threatened? Have you suffered financial loss?
 - ii. Has intimacy or trust been damaged or broken?
 - iii. Did it leave you a single parent?

- iv. Where has it impeded on your own growth and progress?
- v. Did you become afraid of sex in your marriage?
- vi. Did it cause you to be repeatedly triggered so as not to function well in certain situations?

E. My Part: Lamentations 3:40 does not say, *“Let us examine their ways and test them”*, it says, *“Let us examine our ways...”*

- i. In this column you need to honestly determine how your actions contributed to the relationship or event.
- ii. Ask God to show you your part in a broken or damaged marriage, a broken or damaged relationship with a distant child or parent, or maybe even a lost job.
- iii. In addition in this column list all the people you have hurt and how you hurt them.
 1. You will use column 5 later on when you get to **Step 6** and actually make amends to people.

- iv. Now a big note here: If you have been abused as a child, be it emotionally, physically or sexually, you can find great freedom in this part of the inventory. Why?
 1. Because children are never to blame for what their parents do.
 2. It doesn't matter how bratty you were as a child the verbal, emotional or sexual abuse was not justified.
 3. You had no part in any of that.
 4. But simply writing the words “None” or “Not Guilty” in column 5 can be freeing.
 5. In fact the Celebrate Recovery national leadership team has re-written **Step 4** for those who have been sexually abused and it reads this: *“Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves, realizing all wrongs can be forgiven. Renounce the lie that the abuse was our fault.”*
 - a. Now it has been my experience that a child's automatic reaction to trauma, or it may be the automatic lie the Devil whispers to them when something traumatic happens to them;
 - b. A child's automatic reaction to trauma is to blame himself or herself.
 - c. One thing I will often do with clients processing trauma is invite them to imagine some other child going through what they went through and asking the following questions:
 - i. What should that child feel?
 - ii. What is that child likely to feel?
 - iii. What did you feel?

III. Understanding our Resistance

- A. What I want to do now is look at a passage of Scripture that I think helps us understand why we are so resistant to doing a searching and fearless moral inventory.

- i. The resistance to look honestly at ourselves can be traced all the way back to the beginning of time. When Adam and Eve first sinned in the Garden of Eden they immediately hid from God.
- ii. When they were confronted with their wrong-doing, instead of being honest with themselves and with God and confessing their fault, they blamed. They pointed the finger.
- iii. And I sometimes wonder how the Garden of Eden scene might have gone differently if immediately upon doing wrong Adam and Eve said to each other, *"We've sinned against our Father! Let's go to Him right now and tell Him what we have done."*
 - 1. As I father myself I know that if my children come to me and confess their wrong-doing immediately upon its occurrence, I am likely to have a much different response than if I discover their wrong doing, confront them about it and then they try to blame it on someone else. Wouldn't you?!
 - 2. So I sometimes wonder how God might have responded differently if Adam and Eve had run to Him with their confession right when it happened. I don't know.
 - 3. But this has been mankind's default response to wrong-doing from the beginning of time; we do wrong, feel shame, hide behind some fig-leaf such as alcohol, or drugs, or pornography, or busy-ness, or workaholism or something else. When we are finally found out we blame it on someone else.
 - 4. So mankind has been avoiding the moral inventory, we have been avoiding looking at ourselves honestly from the beginning of time and we are not likely to like it any better.
 - a. But it's the only way to healing and life.

B. **Lamentations 3:40** which we read in conjunction with **Step 4** was originally spoken as an invitation for the entire community of Israel to look honestly at themselves. In it the prophet Jeremiah said, *"Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord."*

- i. Another place in the Bible where we see a call for a collective moral inventory is in the book of **Amos**.
- ii. What's really curious about the book of Amos is Amos' clever way of pulling away the fig leaves of denial to bring the people to a point of deep and difficult introspection.
 - 1. The first 20 verses of the book of Amos look a lot like conversations that happen in clicks.
 - 2. Clicks, be they female clicks or male clicks can be an ideal space for a dangerous game of "who can we verbally assassinate who is not with us right now?"
 - 3. It's a gossip fest! *"Did you see Kari yesterday? Oh, my goodness. And what about Cheryl, does she really think she looks good in that?"* On and on they go and you better hope you don't walk in while they are verbally assassinating you.
 - a. Well in the first 20 verses of Amos, 7 girls not in the click get verbally assassinated by Amos and this makes girls in the click feel pretty good about themselves.

b. Let's read and you will see what I mean.

C. **Listen to Amos 1:3-2:5:** *"This is what the Lord says: "For three sins of Damascus, even for four, I will not relent. Because she threshed Gilead with sledges having iron teeth...This is what the Lord says: "For three sins of Gaza, even for four, I will not relent. Because she took captive whole communities and sold them to Edom... 9 This is what the Lord says: "For three sins of Tyre, even for four, I will not relent. Because she sold whole communities of captives to Edom, disregarding a treaty of brotherhood, I will send fire on the walls of Tyre that will consume her fortresses." 11 This is what the Lord says: "For three sins of Edom, even for four, I will not relent. Because he pursued his brother with a sword and slaughtered the women of the land, because his anger raged continually and his fury flamed unchecked...13 This is what the Lord says: "For three sins of Ammon, even for four, I will not relent. Because he ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead in order to extend his borders...This is what the Lord says:"For three sins of Moab, even for four, I will not relent. Because he burned to ashes the bones of Edom's king...This is what the Lord says: "For three sins of Judah, even for four, I will not relent. Because they have rejected the law of the Lord and have not kept his decrees, because they have been led astray by false gods, the gods their ancestors followed, I will send fire on Judah that will consume the fortresses of Jerusalem."*

- i. In these 20 verses **Amos** verbally assassinates 7 nations for the injustices they had done against other nations and other peoples. If you were to look at a map and plot these nations you would see that they are all of Israel's surrounding neighbors.
- ii. So as Israel listens to Amos speak we can picture them saying, *"Oh Damascus you've been a bad girl, naughty, naughty. Gaza, really. I can't believe you did those things. Tyre, she thought she was so good. What goes around comes around Tyre."*
- iii. On and on Amos goes fueling Israel's self-esteem by verbally assassinating a bunch of Israel's friends who aren't in the click.
- iv. But Amos is going somewhere with this. He's working up to a big punch in order to pierce through Israel's fig leaves of denial.
 1. For in **chapter 2:6, the very next verse**, Amos drops a bomb on Israel and says, *"For three sins of ISRAEL, even for four, I will not relent. They sell the innocent for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals..."*
 2. The next 7 chapters Amos focus' exclusively on Israel's problems and we never again hear about the other nations.
 3. The other nations get 2.5 verses of condemnation each: Israel gets 7 chapters.
 4. It may not be that Israel was guilty of more injustice than the other nations, maybe they were; but their resistance to looking at themselves was obviously very thick. At least 7 chapters thick.

D. This is, I believe, a clear picture of the reality of the human heart.

- i. None of us want to look deep into our own past, but we are certainly available anytime someone wants to look into someone else's past.

- ii. We are comfortable talking about other people's problems, but we are so resistant to looking at or own...
- iii. The resistance you feel to performing an honest moral inventory is a resistance indicative of every human being and every nation.

IV. Encouragement

- A. Now here's the encouraging part of our lesson tonight: There are a couple parenthesis in the book of Amos where Amos takes a break from punching through their resistance and invites a response.
- i. Now keep in mind here that Amos is speaking for God when he does this.
 - ii. We see two pauses in **chapter 5** and here's what he says, *"Seek me and live...Seek the Lord and live...Seek good and not evil, that you may live..." (Amos 5:4, 6, 14)*
 - iii. What's he doing in these verses? He's inviting Israel to come clean with God: to run to God with their wrong-doing. To stop hiding, stop blaming, stop covering up and do the hard work of humbling themselves through a moral inventory confession.
 - 1. God emphatically invites us to come to Him when we sin. He says "seek Me and live."
 - 2. He does not want us to run away and hide. He doesn't want us to tangle together a group of pathetic fig leaves. He wants to give us life.
 - 3. But unless we openly examine and confess our faults to ourselves, to God, and to someone we trust that life will elude us.
 - iv. At the end of the book of Amos we get a picture of what sort of life it is He is offering us if we will seek Him.
 - 1. **Amos 9:11-13:** *"In that day I will restore David's fallen tent. I will repair its broken places, restore its ruins, and build it as it used to be, so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all of the nations that bear My name, declares the Lord, who will do these things. The days are coming, declares the Lord, when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills..."*
 - 2. He says here, first of all, that a rebuilding is coming. Broken places will be repaired, ruined places restored, newness is on its way.
 - 3. But then he says something really neat to think about. He says, *"the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills..."*
 - 4. Farmers work in seasons. There is a season for sowing, a season for reaping and a season for getting ready to sow or for plowing.
 - a. What Amos envisions here is a time when the reaper will not be done reaping yet and it will be time to plow.
 - b. In other words God is saying a time is coming when there will be so much to reap, so much to collect, so

much to harvest, that when it comes the season to plow the plowman will run over the reaper who is still out there reaping. Abundance!

- c. The one treading grapes to make wine will not be done treading yet when the planter will begin planting again and be in his way.
 - d. And then he says, "New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from the hills".
 - e. God is saying there is coming a time when things will be not just new but something like they have never been before.
- v. The Jerusalem counsel after the resurrection of Christ in **Acts 15** quoted from this passage realizing that Jesus was the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy.
1. Amos told the Israelites to "*seek God that you may live*" and what the early Christians would see is that Jesus came as One who would seek God and die to make it possible for us to seek God through Him and live.
 2. Jesus knew that He would come to Earth, seek God perfectly, and die, in order that we might imperfectly seek God through Him and live!
 3. I know we all have resistance to honest confession in an honest moral inventory because it feels like if we seek God this way, if we re-travel those painful roads in our memory, we are going to die.
 4. It feels too painful to look at all of that stuff again and that's why we avoid it.
 5. **But get this; the Bible says Jesus is the only one Who seeks God and dies. The rest of us, through Jesus, get to seek God and live! Do you see this?**
 - a. Death will not result, abundance will.
 - b. You do not have to be afraid of re-looking at your past pain. You do not have to avoid those things anymore.
 - c. Jesus Christ, your Higher Power, invites you to Seek Him and live.