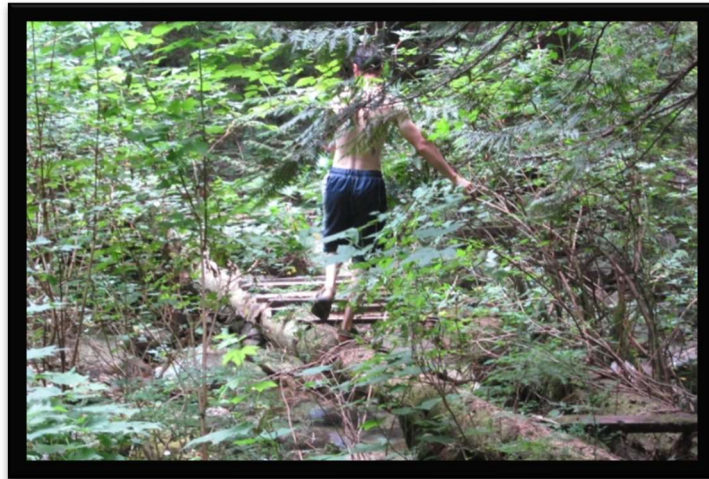


Life With God In Recovery

STEP FOUR: Facing Fear With Kindness



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

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. (1 John 4:16, 18 NIV)

Many of us identify a fearful person as a coward, someone who is not assertive, or someone who trembles when intimidated. But fear can also be expressed by unrealistic bravado, excessive talking, work, alcoholism, and lying. Fear reveals

itself in cover-ups and phoniness. Fear keeps us from being fully honest about our feelings, prompting us to project false or only partially true images of who we truly are. Fear makes us deny – consciously or unconsciously – that anything is wrong. “It’s all good” is a sure sign that it is not.

Perceived expectations of others cause us to avoid meeting issues straight on. We choose to evade and deceive rather than discuss and resolve. As we continue this pattern our true self becomes obscured. We either withdraw and withhold or get angry and lash out at those around us. In order to inventory our lives honestly we have to look at what causes us to be fearful.

Once, we too were foolish and disobedient. We were misled and became slaves to many lusts and pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy and we hated each other. But, when God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit. (Titus 3:3-5 NLT)

As we peel back the layers and move towards the core of our being we discover that our deepest fear is that our inventory will reveal the person we have become as someone defective and give us overwhelming shame and guilt. We are fearful that events in our past brought to

light will cause us to be rejected by those around us and by God.

Even though we are told God's love for us is so great that He sent His Son to die for our sins, we are unsure about this God because we don't know Him very well. Witnesses have told us of God's unconditional love for each of us but because of the deep sorrow in our soul we find it hard to believe that He could care for the hell-deserving sinner we have become. We are not convinced that telling the truth will have the power to set us free. God invites us to set aside all our apprehensions and just do what His word tells us, ***Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!*** (Psalm 34:8 NKJV)

When King David did an inventory of his life he exposed murder and adultery and lying and self-righteous pride. He knew he deserved nothing from God. In spite of this, he relied on God's loving kindness: ***Yet I am confident I will see the Lord's goodness while I am here in the land of the living.*** (Psalm 27:13 NLT)

When we compose a step 4 inventory we sometimes think first of ways others have let us down. We were hurt or betrayed, attacked or molested, lied to or beaten, stolen from or cheated. Sometimes this went on for numerous years. We came to believe that life was unsafe for us and began to live in fear. Fear caused us to behave in unhealthy ways. Sometimes our actions towards others even mirrored the same painful behaviour that was inflicted on us.

When our personal well-being hinges on the actions and opinions of other people, we will continually react in fear because we can never be sure when we might be rejected, criticized or ignored. Life based solely on human interaction is only as secure as the humans we entrust our lives to. Where we experience disappointment with others we will find anger and fear in the face of those disappointments. In order to make a searching and fearless moral inventory we must ask ourselves when we first looked to others for approval, safety, and care rather than looking to God.

We were created to live securely by living in the care of God – the God who loves us perfectly, weaknesses and all. We are also called to live confidently in the knowledge that God will never leave us nor forsake us and will always guide and protect us. ***Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in you.*** (Psalm 56:3 NKJV). Actions or reactions based on any other way of living are something we now need to accept responsibility for, fearlessly record in our inventory, and seek God's help to change.

To live without fear we must intentionally choose to believe God and receive the kindness and tenderness He is offering us. We must bring every thought captive to Him and allow Him to renew our minds. We must look to Him to give us peace of mind and the will to forgive. If we lack compassion, we must allow God to fill us with His compassion. Continually we must affirm God's acceptance and forgiveness of us.

We must uphold the truth that God does not condemn those who are in Christ Jesus.

Our inventory should assess how we are growing in our dependence on God rather than allowing our current circumstances to be the measure of recovery. Our inventory should also assess our genuine forgiveness of others and our efforts to live in harmony with them.

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. Perfect love casts out fear. (2 Timothy 1:7, I John 4:18 NKJV)

As we move forward in living our lives without fear, we need to focus on God's kindness and reject our own negative thoughts. This will require changing our current belief system and bringing it into line with what God says. Instead of living life based on "I think" we need to risk believing what God says in His word. We need to come honestly before Him and place ourselves in His care. When we experience God's love we won't want to lash out at others or live our lives controlled by fear.

So clean house! Make a clean sweep of malice and pretense, envy and hurtful talk. You've had a taste of God. Now, like infants at the breast, drink deep of God's pure kindness. Then you'll grow up mature and whole in God. (1 Peter 2:1-3 MSG)

Have we come to truly believe that by relying on God's unconditional love we can complete a **fearless** moral inventory of ourselves?

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. What fears do I face in my life? How do I try to cover my fears and pretend, "It's all good"?
2. Did I seek approval, safety, and care from other people rather than first looking to God? How is that changing?
3. Fear of rejection, fear of criticism, fear of being ignored or discounted – how did I deal with these issues in addiction and how am I dealing with them today?
4. Do I trust that God has unfailing and unconditional love for me?
5. Where am I in the journey from a place of fear and unforgiveness, to a place of being comfortable with giving and receiving compassion and forgiveness?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I renounce the fear of those events of my past that have kept me in bondage. I ask You now to fill me with Your perfect love and peace. Your word says there is no fear in love and I have come to believe that Your perfect love will cast out all my fear. I desire to do a searching and fearless moral inventory of who I am. With You as the strength of my life, I have nothing to fear. Thank You Lord that You never leave me or forsake me. I am forever grateful for Your love and care for me. AMEN