

STEP FOUR: HONESTLY SPEAKING



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

At various times in the process of making a moral inventory of our lives we experience anxiety and fear about what we will find when we uncover what has been hidden in the deep places of our hearts. We are afraid that if we start opening ourselves up to the truth – the whole truth – we will be distressed by what we find.

We know we have been using our addiction to hide from things we ought not to have done and also things we have left undone. We know we have avoided dealing honestly with life's problems. We started lying a long time ago to

cover up and hide from the truth. Some character defects we are not proud of but can manage to share and take responsibility for them. However, there are other areas of pain and shame that we are very reluctant to bring to the surface for fear of what others might think. Each time we make an inventory we 'tell a little more' but we find it almost impossible to tell the whole truth. We feel like running and hiding instead of telling the truth and yet the road to real recovery which God offers us is one that is based on truth telling and integrity. What are we going to do?

Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but whoever takes crooked paths will be found out.
(Proverbs 10:9 NIV)

The most challenging areas to truth-telling in a searching and fearless moral inventory are actually those areas where we don't even realize we are lying. Honesty is something we are not familiar with. Avoidance of truth has been our familiar "friend". It has helped us avoid responsibility for our actions and has enabled us to deceive those around us. We've distorted the truth and told the same old lies about what happened for so long we've created a version of history that is a mixture of reality and false memories. After having been fooled for so long by our own lies, it's hard to know how to be honest with God, ourselves, and others. Dishonesty kept us going in the same direction for a long time but now it is time to recognize the deceit and deal with it.

The godly are directed by honesty; the wicked fall beneath their load of sin. We have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. (Proverbs 11:5 NLT, 2 Corinthians 4:2 NIV)

We all know we've been dishonest but are we currently admitting to ourselves the truth about why we lied? Some of our core beliefs are actually false but we have used them to prop us up in our sin and addiction. These core beliefs have to be discovered, exposed, and replaced with truth. For those of us who have cycled in and out of recovery, it's almost certain we have been living under the power of buried lies and are in need of God's help to know and live in truth in the deepest places of our being. As we make a searching and fearless moral inventory we need to acknowledge the underlying lies of our beliefs. To leave them untouched will impact our daily living in recovery and return us over and over again to relapse.

Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth." (John 8:31b-32 NIV, John 16:13 NLT)

Truth and sanity go hand in hand. We need to start exposing the lies that have undergirded our life in addiction. The more honest we are with God, with ourselves, and with others, the better

life will be for us. Also, the more honest we are about receiving and implementing advice from sponsors and other trusted Godly people, the smoother our recovery will be.

Show me the right path, O LORD; point out the road for me to follow. Lead me by your truth and teach me, for you are the God who saves me. All day long I put my hope in you. (Psalm 25:4-5 NLT)

Many of us may encounter opposition in our minds as we begin to understand the truth of God's word and follow His ways. This is because our thinking has been programmed by the ways of the world, the flesh, and the devil. An old saying is "garbage in, garbage out". We have built our belief system on how we have been thinking and acting for a long time. Processing our current actions against our former belief system is unreliable. We need to align what we are currently doing and thinking with God's word. To live honestly in all our ways requires all of our thinking and believing to be filtered against the truth of God's word.

The sins of some people are blatant and march them right into court. The sins of others don't show up until much later. The same with good deeds. Some you see right off, but none are hidden forever. (1 Timothy 5:24-25 MSG)

In the past we shut out God's voice and paid no attention to the concerns of those who cared about us. That path led us to a destructive unsustainable lifestyle that caused us to question

our sanity. Now we have the opportunity to complete a truthful searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves and look at how differently we have been living from the safe and satisfying way God created us to live.

Those who let their sinful old selves tell them what to do live under that power of their sinful old selves. But those who let the Holy Spirit tell them what to do are under His power. If your sinful old self is the boss over your mind, it leads to death. But if the Holy Spirit is the boss over your mind, it leads to life and peace. The mind that thinks only of ways to please the sinful old self is fighting against God. It is not able to obey God's Laws. It never can. (Romans 8:5-7 NLV)

How willing are we to make a fresh start, to finally be free from the lies that keep us lying in our thoughts, speaking lies out of our mouths, and implementing lies with our actions? God desires that we know truth and that we recognize and reject our untruthful ways. Are we willing to learn what truth actually is, and to follow truth in all our ways?

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. (Psalm 139:23-24 NLT)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. Why am I afraid to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

2. When did I start lying to cover up and hide from the truth?
3. Why does it seem more convenient for me to tell a misleading version of my life or of some incident than to tell the actual truth?
4. How am I engaging with a sponsor or trusted mentor to help me become conscious of the ways I “don’t even realize I’m lying?”
5. What action am I taking to deal with the deception and manipulation behind the lies I tell?
6. Am I making a practice of filtering all of my thinking and believing through the truth of God’s word?
7. Am I willing to make a fresh start today and reject those lies in my thoughts, my mouth, and my actions? Where do I need to start?
8. Do I dare to pray today, “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”. (Note: If you sincerely want God to touch you, find a quiet place and pray the above words and then be quiet and listen to what He says.)

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, You offer me a life filled with peace and joy when I walk with You in truth. I confess that at times I’ve found it more convenient to act on my own thoughts and ideas than to be guided by the truth of Your word. Too often it has been more convenient to lie both to myself and others than to tell the truth. Tonight I confess that I’ve been wrong. I turn away

from telling lies and ask You to forgive me.
Please work in me and change me so that
telling the truth, regardless of
consequences, becomes my way of life.
Thank you for giving me the Holy Spirit who
guides me into all truth. Please help me to
listen attentively to His guidance. I am
forever grateful that You care for me. AMEN