

STEP 4 - MADE A SEARCHING AND FEARLESS MORAL INVENTORY OF OURSELVES.

Once we have accepted Jesus as the Lord and manager of our lives, He gives us the desire to start housecleaning. (God catches His fish, then He cleans them.) In Step 4 the process of becoming more of what He wants us to become begins by taking a fearless personal inventory of where we have morally fallen short in our lives.

We know that forgiveness has been provided for us at the cross and we are not suggesting that salvation must be "earned", but the inventory is necessary if we are to "walk in freedom" and become effective for the Lord. This cannot happen if we remain "slaves" to the sin in our lives. The first order of business is to identify what these sins have been and, to what extent, if any, that they still exist.

One method of taking this inventory, that we have found to be helpful, is to write it down, but regardless of how you choose to do it, it needs to be done. Once it is finished, Steps 5, 6 and 7 show us God's plan for dealing with it.

PSALM 139:23 & 24 - Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

1. Who does the Psalmist turn to in order to take an inventory?
2. Do you think we can find anything in our inventory that God doesn't reveal to us?

EPHESIANS 4:17 thru 5:21 --Read and Discuss

1. What are the three requirements stated in verses 4:22-24?
2. Is verse 5:11 saying that we should take an inventory?

GALATIANS 5:13-18 - You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: "love your neighbor as yourself." If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

1. How are we to know when we are "indulging the sinful nature" without taking an inventory?
2. What happens to the sinful nature when we "live by the Spirit"?

MARK 7:20-23 - Jesus went on: "What comes out of a man is what makes him `unclean'. For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man `unclean.'"

1. What are the things that make a person unclean? How do we get rid of them?
2. If we have a change of heart, will sin be eliminated from our lives?

1 JOHN 1:8 - If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

1. Why would a person claim to be without sin?
2. Is it still possible as Christians to deceive ourselves?

EZEKIEL 36:26,27 & 31 - "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Then you will remember your evil ways and wicked deeds, and you will loathe yourselves for your sins and detestable practices."

1. Note the pronouns "I" and "you". What does God say He will do? What does He say we are to do?
2. If we are "new creations in Christ", why does God say we are to remember our "evil ways and wicked deeds"?

2 CORINTHIANS 7:10 - Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.

1. What is the difference between "Godly sorrow" and "worldly sorrow"?
2. Does God want us to have worldly sorrow? Is it in God's plan?

ROMANS 13:11-14 - And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

1. How can taking Step 4 help to "wake us from our slumber"?
2. What is it that we are to "put aside"? What is it that we are to "put on"?

ROMANS 12:1-3 - Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will. For by the grace given to me I say to everyone of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

1. Name three practical ways we can "offer ourselves as living sacrifices".
2. What does the Scripture "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought" mean to you?
3. Now that we have accepted the Lord, how should we think of ourselves? How can this be accomplished?

JOHN 8:34-36 - Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

1. How do we become slaves to sin? How can we be set free?
2. Are there any areas in our lives where we still need to be set free?

ROMANS 6:16 - Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey - whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

1. Does this Scripture apply to Christians?
2. Does this Scripture prompt us to take an inventory? If so, why?

ROMANS 8:5-9 - Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace, because the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

1. What is the difference between those who have their "minds set" on the Spirit and those who have their "minds set" on the sinful nature?
2. If the Spirit of God lives in us, why do we still sometimes follow after the sinful nature?

2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-7:1 - Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." "Therefore come out from them and be separate", says the Lord. "Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

1. How many sets of opposites does Paul list in these Scriptures? What is the point he is making?
2. Which of these Scriptures deal with taking an inventory?

1 JOHN 3:18-24 - Dear Children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

1. How does the Word tell us to love? How do we know if we "belong to the truth"?
2. Why should it be important to us that "our hearts do not condemn us"?

PSALM 19:14 - May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

1. Do you think it's "pleasing in God's sight" when we take an inventory?
2. If we have Jesus in our hearts, what should the words of our mouths be?