

SPIRITUAL INVENTORY

PART I

Principle 4: Openly examine and confess my faults to myself, to God, and to someone I trust.

“Happy are the pure in heart.” (Matthew 5:8)

Step 4: We made 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)*

Introduction

Tonight we begin the first of two lessons in which we will look at our spiritual inventory, using the “Spiritual Evaluation” Pastor Rick Warren developed for this step.⁶

Principle 4 begins the process of coming clean, where you openly examine and confess your faults to yourself, to God, and to another person you trust.

Most of us don’t like to look within ourselves for the same reason we don’t like to open a letter that we know has bad news. But remember what we talked about in Lesson 9: You need to keep your evaluation, your inventory, balanced. It needs to include both the good and the bad within you. Let’s look at what a spiritual inventory, or evaluation, is all about!

God’s Word tells us, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test my thoughts. Point out anything you find in me that makes you sad, and lead me along the path of everlasting life” (Psalm 139:23–24 TLB).

6. The eight areas of the spiritual inventory were written by Pastor Rick Warren. With his permission, I have added my teaching notes and comments.

Do you know everyone has three different “characters”?

1. The character we exhibit.
2. The character we *think* we have.
3. The character we *truly* have.

No doubt each one has good qualities and bad. Tonight we are going to look at some of the bad, some of our character shortcomings and sins that can block us from receiving all the joy that God has intended. We will work on four areas of our character tonight and four more at our next session. This exercise will help you get started on your inventory as you search your heart!

Relationships with Others

In Matthew 6:12–14 (TLB) Jesus tells us to pray, “Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. Don’t bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.” Ask yourself the following questions regarding your relationships with others:

1. Who has hurt you?

2. Against whom have you been holding a grudge?

It doesn’t take a doctor to tell you that it is better to remove a grudge than to nurse it. No matter how long you nurse a grudge, it won’t get better. Writing the grudge down on your inventory is the first step in getting rid of it.

3. Against whom are you still seeking revenge?

Did you know that seeking revenge is like biting a dog just because the dog bit you? It really doesn’t help you or the dog!

4. Are you jealous of someone?

In Songs of Songs 8:6 jealousy is said to be as unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire!

5. Have you tried to justify your bad attitude by saying it is “their fault?”

I have found out that when I’m searching for someone to blame, it’s better for me to look in the mirror rather than through binoculars. Hosea 4:4 (NLT) tells us, “Don’t point your finger at someone else and try to pass the blame.”

The people that you name in these areas will go in column 1 of your “Celebrate Recover Principle 4 Inventory Worksheet” in Participant’s Guide 2.

6. Who have you hurt?

How did you hurt them? You may have hurt them unintentionally. Maybe it was intentional.

7. Who have you been critical of or gossiped about?

It isn't that difficult to make a mountain out of a molehill. Just add a little dirt on it. That's what gossip is—just a little dirt!

I find it amazing that a tongue four inches long can destroy a man six feet tall. That's why James 1:26 tells us to "keep a tight rein on [our] tongues."

The people that you name in these areas will go in column 5 of your Celebrate Recover Principle 4 Inventory Worksheet.

Next, let's look at what's important to you.

Priorities in Your Life

We do what is important to us. Others see our priorities by our actions, not our words. Personally, I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day.

What are the priorities in your life?

Matthew 6:33 (TLB) tells us what will happen if we make God our number-one priority: "He will give ... to you if you give him first place in your life and live as he wants you to."

1. After making the decision to turn your life and your will over to God, in what areas of your life are you still not putting God first?

What closet are you not letting Him enter and clean out?

2. What, in your past, is interfering with your doing God's will?

Your ambition? Is it driven by serving God or is it driven by envy?

Your pleasures? If your pleasure has been found in the world, Proverbs 21:17 warns, "He who loves pleasure will become poor." Is your pleasure now found in Jesus Christ? Psalm 16:11 (NCV) tells us, "You will teach me how to live a holy life. Being with you will fill me with joy; at your right hand I will find pleasure forever."

3. What have been your priorities in your job? Friendships? Personal goals?

Were they just self-centered, self-serving? Selfishness turns life into a burden. Unselfishness turns burdens into life.

4. Who did your priorities affect?

You know, you will never get so rich that you can afford to lose a true friend.

5. What was good about your priorities?

6. What was wrong about them?

The next area of our spiritual inventory is to examine our attitudes.

Your Attitude

Ephesians 4:31 (GNT) says, "Get rid of all bitterness, passion, and anger. No more shouting or insults. No more hateful feelings of any sort."

1. Do you always try to have an “attitude of gratitude” or do you find yourself always complaining about your circumstances?

When you feel dog tired at night, do you ever think that it might be because you growled all day?

2. In what areas of your life are you ungrateful?

If we can't be grateful for the bad things in our lives that we have received, we can at least be thankful for what we have escaped.

And the one thing we can all be grateful for is found in 1 Corinthians 15:57: “But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

3. Have you gotten angry and easily blown up at people?

4. Have you been sarcastic?

Do you know that sarcasm can be a form of verbal abuse?

5. What in your past is still causing you fear or anxiety?

As we have said before, your fear imprisons you; your faith liberates you. Fear paralyzes; faith empowers! Fear disheartens; faith encourages! Fear sickens; faith heals! Faith in Jesus Christ will allow you to face your past fears, and with faith you can be free of fear's chains. First John 4:18 says, “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.”

The last area we are going to talk about tonight is your integrity.

Your Integrity

Colossians 3:9 (NCV) tells us, “Do not lie to each other. You have left your old sinful life and the things you did before.”

1. In what past dealing were you dishonest?

An honest man alters his ideas to fit the truth. A dishonest man alters the truth to fit his ideas.

2. Have you stolen things?

I told you that your inventory wasn't going to be easy.

3. Have you exaggerated yourself to make yourself look better?

Do you know, there are no degrees of “honest”: Either you are or you aren't!

4. In what areas of your past have you used false humility?

Did you know that humility is never gained by seeking it? To think we have it is sure proof that we don't.

5. Have you pretended to live one way in front of your Christian friends and another way at home or at work?

Are you a “Sunday Christian” or a seven-day, full-time follower of Jesus Christ? Do you try to practice the eight principles seven days a week or just here at Celebrate Recovery on Friday nights?

Wrap-Up

Well, that's enough to work on for one week, but next week we'll dig in again and look at Part 2 of our spiritual inventory. We'll explore our old ways of thinking—our minds, the ways we have treated or mistreated God's temple—our bodies, how we did or didn't walk by faith in the past, our important past relations with our family and church.

As you start to work on your spiritual inventory, remember two things. First, in Isaiah 1:18 (TLB) God says, "No matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can take it out and make you as clean as freshly fallen snow." Second—I can't say it enough—keep your inventory balanced. List the positive new relationships that you have, the areas of your life that you have been able to turn over to God, how your attitude has improved since you have been in recovery, the ways you have been able to step out of your denial into God's truth.

Let's close in prayer.

Father God, thank You for each person here tonight. Thank You for giving them the courage to begin this difficult step of making an inventory. Give them the desire and strength they need to proceed. Encourage them and light their way with Your truth. In the strong name of Jesus I pray, Amen.