

Lesson 20

Daily Inventory

Principle 7: Reserve a daily time with God for self-examination, Bible reading, and prayer in order to know God and His will for my life and to gain the power to follow His will.

Step 10: We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

“So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!” (1 Corinthians 10:12)

Introduction

Tonight we want to focus on the how-tos of Step 10. But first, I would like to see how you did with your seven days of Step 10 journaling. I know for many of you it was the first experience in writing down your thoughts on a daily basis. I thought it would be interesting to randomly call on some of you to come up here and read them for the whole group. Just kidding!

But, it is important to recap our day in written form—the good and the bad, the successes and the times when we blew it. Here’s why:

1. When you write down areas in which you owe amends, it will help you see if patterns are developing, so you can identify them and work on them with the help of Jesus Christ and your sponsor.
2. You can keep the amends you owe to a very “short list.” As soon as you write down an issue you can make a plan to PROMPTLY offer your amends. After you make the amends you can cross it off in your journal.

Inventory

Some of you may have had trouble getting started writing in your journal. Let me give

you three hints that will help you get started putting the ink on the paper.

1. Start off by writing down just one thing that happened that particular day for which you are thankful. Just one thing can get you started, and it will also help you sleep better that night.
2. Ask your accountability partner/sponsor to hold you accountable for writing in your journal each night.
3. This is the one that really works for me! Memorize Galatians 5:22–23, the “fruit of the Spirit”: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

Daily ask yourself any of these questions to prompt your writing, starting each question with the word “today”:

- How did I show *love* to others?
- Did I act in an unloving way toward anyone?
- Did others see in me the *joy* of having a personal relationship with the Lord? If not, why not?
- How was my serenity, my *peace*? Did anything happen that caused me to lose it?
What was my part in it?
- Was I *patient*? What caused me to lose my patience? Do I owe anyone amends?
- Would anyone say that I was *kind/good*? In what ways did I act unkind?
- How was my *faithfulness*?
- Did I keep my word with everyone?
- How was my *gentleness* and *self-control*? Did I lose my temper, speak a harsh or

unkind word to someone?

As we work Step 10 and Principle 7, we begin the journey of applying what we have discovered in the first nine steps. We humbly live daily—in reality, not denial. We have done our best to amend our past. Through God’s guidance, we can make choices about the emotions that affect our thinking and actions. We start to take action—positive action—instead of constant *reaction*.

In Principle 7 we desire to grow daily in our new relationship with Jesus Christ and others. Instead of attempting to be in control of every situation and every person we come in contact with, or spinning out of control ourselves, we are starting to exhibit self-control, the way God want us to be. Remember “self under control” is what we are seeking. Self under *God’s* control is what we are striving for.

God has provided us with a daily checklist for our new lifestyle. It’s called the “Great Commandment,” and it is found in Matthew 22:37–40 where Jesus said, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart ... soul and ... mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

When you do your daily personal inventory, ask yourself, “Today, did my actions show what the second greatest commandment tells me to do? Did I love my neighbor (others) as myself?”

As we live the two commandments by putting the principles and steps into action in our lives, we will become more like Christ. We will become doers of God’s Word, not hearers only. James 1:22 says, “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.” Our actions need to be consistent with our talk. You may be the only Bible someone ever reads.

That's being a real "Living Bible." That's how the apostle Paul lived. He says in 1 Thessalonians 1:5 (TLB), "Our very lives were further proof to you of the truth of our message." Others should see God's truth shown in our lives.

Step 10 does not say how often to take an inventory, but I would like to offer three suggestions that can help us keep on the right road, God's road to recovery.

Do an Ongoing Inventory

We can keep an ongoing inventory throughout the day. The best time to admit we are wrong is the exact time that we are made aware of it. Why wait? Let me give you an example.

Yesterday afternoon, I snapped at my son. I was immediately faced with a choice. I could admit that I was wrong ("I shouldn't have snapped at Johnny; all he wanted to do was play catch") and make amends with him ("Johnny, I'm sorry for speaking so sharply; I was wrong"), or I could wait until later and risk rationalizing it away ("He saw I was busy; he had no right to ask me to play at that time").

You don't have to wait until you go home, cook dinner, watch TV, and then start your journal. If you do an ongoing inventory during the day, you can keep your amends list very short!

Do a Daily Inventory

At the end of each day, we look over our daily activities, the good and the bad. We need to search where we might have harmed someone or where we acted out of anger or fear. But once again, remember to keep your daily inventory balanced. Be sure to include the things that you did right throughout the day. The best way to do this is to journal.

I spend about fifteen minutes just before I go to sleep, journaling my day's events, asking God to show me the wrongs that I have committed. Then, as promptly as I can the next morning, I admit them and make my amends.

Do a Periodic Inventory

I take a periodic inventory about every three months. I get away on a "mini retreat"! I would encourage you to try it. Bring your daily journal with you, and pray as you read through the last ninety days of your journal entries. Ask God to show you areas in your life that you can improve on in the next ninety days and *celebrate the victories* that you have made.

By taking an ongoing, a daily, and a periodic inventory we can work Step 10 to the best of our abilities. With God's help we can keep our side of the street clean.

Here are a few key verses to learn and follow for Step 10.

"Intelligent people think before they speak; what they say is then more persuasive." (Proverbs 16:23, GNB)

"Let no foul or polluting language, nor evil word, nor unwholesome or worthless talk (ever) come out of your mouth, but only such (speech) as is good and beneficial to the spiritual progress of others." (Ephesians 4:29, AB)

"A wise, mature person is known for his understanding. The more pleasant his words, the more persuasive he is." (Proverbs 16:21, GNB)

"A word of encouragement does wonders!" (Proverbs 12:25, TLB)

"If I had the gift of being able to speak in other languages without learning them, and could speak in every language there is in all of heaven and earth, but didn't love others, I would only be making noise." (1 Corinthians 13:1, TLB)

Step 10 Daily Action Plan

1. Continue to take a daily inventory, and when you are wrong, promptly make your

amends.

2. Summarize the events of your day in your journal.
3. Read and memorize one of the Principle 7a verses on page XX of Participant's Guide 4.
4. Work all steps and principles to the best of your ability.

The key verse for this lesson is Mark 14:38: "Watch and pray so that you do not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak." Let's close in prayer.

Dear God, thank You for today. Thank You for giving me the tools to work my program and live my life differently, centered in Your will. Lord, help me to make my amends promptly and ask for forgiveness. In all my relationships today help me to do my part in making them healthy and growing. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Principle 7a Testimony

My name is Rosanne and I am an alcoholic. I grew up in what I term a "dysfunctional family." My parents divorced when I was about six months old. I have two older brothers, an older sister, and a younger half-sister. We mostly lived with my mom in my youth. My father was always a practicing alcoholic up until about two years ago when he got sober. I do not blame either one of my parents for my alcoholism. Both of my parents were Jewish and raised us as such. I even had my Bat Mitzvah at the age of seventeen. They also both have been married four times, so we had a lot of parents running around our house. When I was ten years old, my mom decided to move us all to Lake Tahoe, where there weren't any drugs or alcohol. She was afraid for us kids. That's where I learned "wherever you go, there you are." You can't escape your problems. By age thirteen, I was smoking cigarettes and pot with my older siblings.

Occasionally, I would do some other drugs. Alcohol did not become my drug of choice until about age sixteen. I hung around with the “good” kids, you know, the cheerleaders and football players, so I didn’t think I’d have a problem. But by the age of twenty-one, I was a daily drinker. I was a blackout drinker and threw up every day. Every morning I would say, “I’ll never drink again,” and every night I was pouring the wine again. I just could not stop.

I ended up meeting and marrying another practicing alcoholic like me. Shortly after we married, I got pregnant. Fortunately, God shed His grace upon me during the time of my pregnancy and I only drank one glass of wine every Saturday night. To this day I know that was God, because I could never quit on my own for even a day. I started going to Al-Anon. I didn’t feel a part of it, but I needed help. I thought my husband was the problem, not me. Once my son was born, my alcoholism really took off. I had been a daily drinker, only now it was worse.

After almost two years, I couldn’t take it anymore and I decided to leave my husband. Three weeks later, in my new apartment with my two-year-old son, I realized that I was the one with the problem. I was still going through the same amount of alcohol, having blackouts, and just wanting everything to change but not doing anything about it. I was living in hell! The alcohol turned on me, no longer my friend. I said and did things that I would never do in a sober state.

I finally was able to admit that I had a problem. I remembered the Al-Anon meeting and the AA meeting that was next door. I called AA and my journey really began. I was welcomed with open arms. In AA they talked about this “Higher Power” concept and told me that many called their Higher Power “God.” Since I was Jewish and raised with a belief in God, I didn’t have a problem with God. So I called my Higher Power God too. Once I admitted I was powerless over my addiction and that my life had become unmanageable—and understood what

that meant—I was able to start my recovery.

The next step, my sponsor told me, was “Come to believe that a power greater than myself would restore me to sanity.” I learned through working Step 2 that if I keep the same behavior and expect different results, I am totally insane. But, if I go to Jesus Christ and ask Him to give me the courage and the strength and the willingness to change my behavior, then so will the results change. With everything that has happened to me in sobriety, if I had kept on drinking I would probably be dead by now. Fortunately, God had another plan. Since I’ve been sober (my first day of sobriety was March 1, 1987), I divorced my first husband and married my current husband, who is very different from my first husband. We met when I was three years sober. This leads me to believe that I did learn to look at what I had been doing, why it didn’t work, and how to do things a new way. In fact, the only thing I really had to change in sobriety was *everything*.

I was given hope by working the second step. First, I came. Then, I came to. And, then I came to believe. Jesus Christ showered me with His grace even before I believed. With God’s help, I had the willingness to change the things I could and He gave me the power to change them. I kept on hearing, “Don’t quit before the miracle; it’s right around the corner!” I believed and I still believe. I still have hope.

I have survived financial difficulties, getting married, having a second child, getting cancer, losing a job I had held for eight and a half years, finding a new job, and battling a potentially life-threatening liver disease. Through all that, I never had to drink because I was taught in Step 2 to change my behavior, that drinking or using drugs wouldn’t make the situation better—just worse. I learned to “think through the drink.”

My favorite verses in the Bible are Matthew 7:7–8 (GNB), which read, “Ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone

who asks will receive, and anyone who seeks will find, and the door will be opened to him who knocks.”

This verse really brings me to Step 10: “We continued to take a personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.” Every day, I not only ask God for His blessing, but I also ask Him to show me where I have wronged Him or others, so that I may make amends and change my behavior. I learned that there are two parts to making amends. The first part is to acknowledge the wrong you’ve done and the second (and most important) part is to change your behavior. There are days when this step is very difficult to do, but I always ask the Lord to give me the courage to see the real me, as He and others see me. The actual prayer I use is “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” (Psalm 139:23–24).

While I was working on the 11th Step, “Sought through prayer and meditation to improve my conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of His will for me and power to carry that out,” I became a Christian and received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. But, that’s another whole testimony...

Now, my husband, kids, and I all are members at Saddleback. My husband works in the Adventure Land Ministry with the two-year-olds on Sunday mornings and I have been involved in the high school ministry. At one point I was feeling just as uncomfortable on Sunday mornings with the kids as I had felt in high school. I went to my lead staff member and told her I didn’t know if I could continue in the high school ministry. We talked about my “passion,” which is recovery. She asked me to think about starting a ministry for high school kids that aren’t necessarily addicts or alcoholics yet, but may be headed that way. I prayed a lot about it. The name came (I love acronyms)—TNT. It stands for a couple of things. First, Teens ’n’ Temptation.

The temptation could be cigarettes, sex, alcohol, drugs, even food. The problem is the same and the recovery process is the same. I want to help kids catch recovery before they hurt themselves and others too badly. The other meaning of TNT, of course, is that it's truly a "dynamite" ministry in this church for kids. We'll take them as young as they're being tempted, but they must not be older than high school age. I'm grateful to the Lord for giving me this opportunity. Please pray for me and all the kids.

Thank you for listening and for the opportunity to share with you.