

Let us continue with Step 4, as we look into the 12 Steps with God

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

Tonight, we are going to continue looking at sin that we have allowed in our lives – sin in our lives starts in our hearts. Our spiritual health, mental health, and physical health are all at stake when we sin...and God's grace is the answer!

In the 1st lesson on Step 4 we went straight to self-examination with the goal of uncovering hidden or forgotten sin or sin of which we were not aware. That exercise is beneficial no matter where you are on that path of sanctification, growing more like Christ each day. In lesson two we were introduced to the benefits of being discipled by a Christian who has a vibrant relationship with God. While they are not perfect, they are helpful in teaching you what a Christian life should look like, and how to live one yourself.

The objective is a moral inventory, as thorough as possible, so that we might grow in our faith...

In this lesson we will be changing gears and working through a little different format. The goal is not to dwell on self, but to be thorough in the clean-up of self. In order to receive the greatest benefit, we must understand the Biblical principles that provide the basis for this exercise. Humbly speaking, sin has saturated our lives more than we can imagine and often want to admit. Again, there is the sin that we know, but there is sin in our lives that we may not be aware of that we must address and confess. In the following paragraphs, we will be systematically approaching our lives with the intent of discovering, confessing, and repenting of that sin.

1 John 2:16, “For all that is in the world-the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life-is not from the Father but is from the world.”

This verse provides a basic structure for doing an actual moral inventory. The opening statement makes it clear that the system of the world that stands in opposition to the holiness of God can be categorized in three groups. These are the three groups we will use to evaluate our lives and seek to understand our sin as well as its remedy.

The “flesh” or the “sinful nature”, depending on the translation, is a compound of two attitudes - (1) that satisfying bodily desire is all that really matters in life, and (2) that I am the only one who can really satisfy my desires, and I have an absolute right to do so. The apostle Paul told us the only way to deal with this attitude is death – we must die to it both once for all and daily. We live in an unbelieving world that believes what we experience here is all there is, so this flesh attitude fits well, but for a believer it is the exact opposite of the direction that God would have us walk...to our recovery and redemption!

Looking at 1 John 2:16, the first phrase we want to understand better is, *the desires of the flesh...*

This desire is natural, and a part of our humanity. The concept of fleshly desires includes things like food when you are hungry, clothing when you are cold, and intimate sexual relations when you are aroused. This context clearly teaches these desires are not within Biblical bounds. We all understand the need to eat, but if you don't establish a balanced, healthy lifestyle your health will pay the price. We also understand the drive for sexual pleasure, but if you entertain sexual pleasure outside a selfless marriage relationship there will be consequences for that as well. This list of fleshly desires, which to a point are Biblical but in excess, can be sinful and an affront to God. Which ones do you fail to limit and/or confine within Godly parameters and therefore succumb to sin.

• Appetite	• Sexuality or pleasure	• Worry/anxiety
• Comfort, avoidance of pain	• Laziness, over indulgence	• Likeability/validation

The next phrase that we want to understand better is, *the desires of the eyes.*

This desire is also natural, and part of our humanity. God is the author of beauty and He intended each of us to enjoy the desire of our eyes...to a point. Again, the context is clear, the desires of the eyes can take us beyond Biblical

boundaries into sin. The challenge here is that we rely on our sense of sight so much/often that we don't even think about the dangers that are present. We are susceptible to "over stimulation." We are a society that is dependent on the television, movies, the smart phone, and other media that can take desires of the eyes to extremes. It is past time that we learned, just because you can watch something doesn't mean you should. Just as we must learn to discipline the flesh, so we must learn to discipline our eyes. How often do we respond to something we see in a selfish or a self-serving manner? Below is a list of desires of the eyes and consequences if taken to non-Biblical extremes. Consider the ones that you fail to limit, and/or confine within Godly bounds and therefore succumb to sin. Add to the list if necessary.

• Pornography resulting in adultery	• Desiring possessions, coveting
• Violence, resulting in hostility	• Comparisons, envy

The last phrase we want to study in the verse is *the pride of life*. This is a statement that identifies a person's attitude of arrogance or haughtiness due to their station in life. We tend to think of the wealthy as struggling with this, but the concept does go beyond financial means to other areas of pride. What really drives the point home is the attitude of one who takes credit for an element of their lives that really belongs to our gracious God. Often, we think we are responsible for the lives we enjoy, but we are truly recipients of God's generosity. One who has pride of life doesn't have a thankful spirit toward God, the source of all blessings. This is a list of issues that exhibit the pride of life. Consider the ones that trigger your pride and add to the list if necessary.

• Financial status/wealth	• Community status or career success
• Political position	• Talents or abilities
• Wealth/possessions accumulated	• Charitable works/activities

As a final reference to Scripture, you might remember the record of **Genesis 3:6**,

"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate."

Do you see the pattern? The first sin of mankind included all three elements: the desire of the flesh, *the tree was good for food*; the desire of the eyes, *it was a delight to the eyes*; the pride of life, *the tree was to be desired to make one wise*. Our sinfulness is indeed summed up by the simplicity of these three phrases of I John 2:16. But now we must get specific.

Consider and Confess:

The shocking thing about sin is how much it is a part of who we are, even after coming to know Christ. In considering these texts you may have felt overwhelmed. Remember steps 1-3? The awesome thing about salvation is that God takes care of your sin – all of it. We need to remind ourselves that He has overcome the penalty of sin and the power of sin – so He is able to empower you to begin the clean-up process.

As you think through the sins on your list, do you feel a genuine sense of shame and regret? Are you embarrassed that you fail in these ways, especially given the way it affects others? Does all our sin humble you before your God? He alone can conquer sin and its consequences.

Looking forward:

Now that we have acknowledged our sin before God, settled in our mind that He knows every dark place in our souls, and have explored the need for greater awareness of our sin; we move logically into admission of wrongdoing. Now is not the time to attempt a defense, but to accept the plan as our creator established it and move forward in our relationship with Him.

What is sin? It is the glory of God not honored. The holiness of God not revered. The greatness of God not admired. The power of God not praised. The truth of God not sought. The wisdom of God not esteemed. The beauty of God not treasured. The goodness of God not savored. The faithfulness of God not trusted. The commandments of God not obeyed. The justice of God not respected. The wrath of God not feared. The grace of God not cherished. The presence of God not prized. The person of God not loved. That is sin.

John Piper