

Hi, My names are Brian, Forgiven, Loved, Redeemed, Brave, Messenger and Son. I'm a grateful believer in Jesus, a recipient of His amazing Grace, celebrating over 27 years of progressive freedom over a sexual addiction and I am still healing from all of my hurts, insecurities and rejections. Also God and my wife are still working on my character defects.

Nice to be with all of you tonight. It is my **privilege** to talk tonight about this topic of **Inventory**, we have actually combined two teachings into one tonight, what CR calls;

> **Spiritual Inventory 1 & 2**

And this is of course, based on;

> **Step 4:**

We made a 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

> **Principle 4:**

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

Happy are the pure in heart. – Matthew 5:8a

John and I are having the privilege of leading a **step study** on Wednesday's at noon, with several courageous, honest and amazing men, where we have been on this journey of inventory and working the steps. This idea of inventory always takes me back to **1991**, when I checked myself into a sexual addiction treatment center, where the journey began. My **first** meeting of any kind, was in a very strange place, with many seemingly strange men and women ... (Reflect ... sisters journal, first impressions, Gentle Path book, black notebook, years, family slides). Some people refer to this inventory process, as *navel gazing*, or *why should I bring up the junk from my past*, as though it is stupid, selfish, or fruitless to be entering this process of **uncovering** our past. Here is my appeal toward the **value** of inventory and recovery in general! I believe **strongly** in the **benefits** of this journey, a process of discovering, considering, understanding the impact and learning how to forgive, grieve and heal **from the wounds of our past.**

Bringing us to our main take away thought for tonight.

> **Inventory is Healing the Past**

This is the “why” behind Inventory. And here’s our tweetable related quote;

> **“We must heal the past, if we want to stop medicating the pain of our past.”**

What about the words of Paul in Philippians, *Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me.*

No doubt there is a sense in which we will need to **move on** from our past and put our efforts toward today and focusing on the future. But if we have not put significant time and insight into **understanding the impact of the past, healing** the past wounds, the past will **remain damaging** to our today, impacting our relationships, holding us **hostage** in our addictions and **hindering** our best future.

Some people say or believe that **time heals all wounds**. Well Rick Warren, the pastor of a church in California, where Celebrate Recovery was founded and a huge supporter of CR was quoted as saying, *“The Bible clearly states “all have sinned.” It is my nature to sin, and it is yours too. None of us is untainted. Because of sin, we’ve all hurt ourselves, we’ve all hurt other people, and others have hurt us. This means each of us need repentance and recovery in order to live our lives the way God intended. You’ve undoubtedly heard the expression that “time heals all wounds.” Unfortunately, it isn’t true. As a pastor I frequently talk with people who are still carrying hurts from 30 or 40 years ago. The truth is – time often makes things worse. Wounds that are left untended fester and spread infection throughout your entire body. Time only extends the pain if the problem isn’t dealt with.”*

Consider a study of **Philippians 3**, Paul starts out in verse 2, *Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh.* That will grab your attention. He goes on talking about a **process** of what he has learned and in verse 12 he says, *Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.*

Paul was clearly a man **just like us**, who **struggled** with sin and was **striving** to finish well and desiring to not be disqualified. He talks about life as **running** a race, **disciplining** his body, running in such a way as to win. Listen to the end of chapter 3,

Many live as enemies of the cross of Christ, their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach (their drug of choice) and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things (and desires).

He says our focus, in part, should be on heaven and he concludes by saying that God through Christ has the power to bring everything under his control, including our appetites, our will and our addictions. Paul also says in **Galatians 5**, that God is transforming believers into His likeness, transforming our hearts and minds, to where we begin to show the fruits of, **love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.**

This is why we do inventory, this is why we **surrender, seek, ask and knock.** The process of recovery needs us to **do our part**, to be **intentional** and do **the hard work** of **reflection** and **study**. This is a life-long process and while we heal from and eventually focus less on **the past**, celebrating our progressive recovery, there is also an ongoing process of **admitting** our wrongs and even, as we will see later in the program, doing a daily inventory, to continually see clearly our strengths and weakness, in order to make adjustments and become the best possible, version of who God created us to be. Trust me, **God wants to use your pain, your story, your past, your mess, your mistakes, to help others heal and find hope and freedom.** This is called reconciliation and redemption. God takes **our past mess** and calls each one of us to be **a messenger of grace** and of God's love.

When I think of Inventory, this is a great Bible verse:

> **Vs:** *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*

So let's dig in as we are going to cover **two** lessons tonight, each of which you should have a **handout** for.

> **Relationships with Others**

> **Vs:** *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.*
– Matthew 6:12–13

I remember an **old guy** early in my recovery, in a meeting saying, “I can afford to have no enemies.” No **Resentment, bitterness, grudges, as anger fuels our addictions.** Paul says, *“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”* Our taking inventory is like cleaning out our closet and examining our relationships with all the others in our life, past and present. Determining if we need to make amends for harm we may have done, or working toward forgiveness and reconciliation with those that have hurt us. Step 9 tells us, “We made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.” My biggest trigger or fuel to my addiction, would be if I am feeling anger, especially anger toward my wife. So we are all to be learning to minimize or eliminate anger or bitterness in all our relationships, which will greatly help our maintaining sobriety. Ask yourself, “who has **hurt me** and have I resolved those hurts? Am I holding a grudge or unforgiveness toward someone? Who am I blaming my behaviors on? Who have I hurt, that I need to make amends with?”

> **Priorities in [Your Life](#)**

Priorities, leads me to thinking about the word **balance** and margin. Not only having our priorities in reasonable order, but having room to breath, to have fun, to rest and reflect on all we have to be grateful for. One **priority**, must be our recovery, our self care, our time with God and study. Time with our spouse, our family, it is so easy to be too busy, even too busy doing good things! My brother-in-law married Kim and I and I still recall him saying one of the main enemies of marriage, is busy. Sometimes we need outside people, people that know and care about us, to help us evaluate our priorities and make adjustments. We all know and love the quote, ***“Insanity is doing the same things over and over and expecting different results!”*** If we want to change our life, we have to change our priorities.

> **Your [Attitude](#)**

> **Vs:** *Get rid of all bitterness, passion, and anger. No more shouting or insults, no more hateful feelings of any sort.* – Ephesians 4:31

Some of you might know the name of a preacher, Chuck Swindoll, well he has a familiar quote that is good here. *“We have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for the day. Life is 10% what happens to us and 90% how we react to it. Our attitude is everything.”* One of my words for this year is Gratitude and I believe gratitude is a choice.

Here are a couple of self inventory questions, “Is my **attitude** generally good or negative? How am I doing with my **anger**? Do I believe what I say I **believe** about God and my faith? Do I **trust** God with my future?”

> **Your Integrity**

> **Vs:** *Do not lie to each other. You have left your old sinful life and the things you did before.*
– Colossians 3:9

My father was a man of integrity. **I was not.** To me integrity is being the **same person** off this stage and out in public, as on this stage. Integrity is being the same person on Sunday as Friday. Integrity is living according to our own values and faith. Living right, not necessarily perfect, but being able to quickly admit when we are wrong, and make amends. Integrity is making sure your walk, matches your talk. Ask yourself, “Am I striving to become a person of integrity? Am I completely **honest** in my business dealings? with my spouse? Am I wearing **masks** or am I authentic and transparent?”
(Now, Spiritual Inventory #2)

> **Your Mind**

> **Vs:** *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.* – Romans 12:2

How do we renew our minds? This is a process and a promise. God’s **new covenant** promises a new **heart** and a new **mind**. Thankfully God is at work, He is the author ... I have often thought about what the Bible calls the new covenant ... I believe we are partners with God in creating a new heart and a new mind ... We see this in Hebrews chapter **8**, where it says in part, *Since the new covenant is established on better promises. For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. But God found fault with the people and said: “The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord.*

I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.

This is a powerful promise, that should give us all great hope! Here are some self evaluation questions, “How am I guarding my mind? Am I filling my mind and eyes with harmful or beneficial things? Am I spending time in God’s word, meditating on truth?” Part of “our part”, is filling our minds with positive, edifying truth about what God says and His promises. Our part is significant and a daily choice.

> **Your Body**

I believe self love is under emphasized and learning to love and care for our body is an essential step in recovery. I still remember a moment in my treatment center, locked up ...(story, washing feet). South Africa bath.

Remember the second commandment ... “Love your neighbor **as yourself.**” ... Your wife. Your enemy. Paul says in Ephesians 5, *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ... In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body. (KJV says, but nourishes and cherishes it).* I did not, many addicts are **abusing** their bodies. Until we get self care, self love, we will continue to suffer. Ask yourself, How am I treating my body? Does my self-care, show that I love myself well? What needs to change? Who can help and partner with me in making changes?”

> **Your Family**

We all know how crazy life can be and how easy it is to miss those we are called to love first. Many of us have hurt our families the most ... I once asked, “how do I make amends for the damage I have done?” Someone told me, the best amends ... My boys have saved me and given me purpose ... Inventory questions, “Have I done my best at making amends with my family? Whom do I have unresolved resentment toward? How can I forgive and let go? Is there a family secret that needs to be brought out for my healing to occur?” When I first began my recovery, I learned my sister had been sexually abuse by my father’s friend and I was horrified. As part of my inventory I spent many

hours going through old family photos and it was here I found a couple photos that confirmed, he was in more subtle ways, also abusive to me. Here he is throwing me into the pool and pulling a loose tooth out with pliers. Not as funny as others felt it was.

> **Photos, pool and tooth**

Bringing our pain, our wounds out and sharing them, is part of the healing process. Empathy from people that care about you and your story, is a huge part to the healing.

> **Your Church**

I'm so **grateful** that I am in such a better place in this relationship and that I have been able to integrate my recovery with my church. First let's remember what church is. My pastor from many years ago, once told me, "Brian you are the church." The church is not a building ... Finding connections, friends, becoming family, small groups ... caring, knowing, sharing, confessing ... a group or body of believers. In many ways many of us see CR as our church within our church. Our forever family. There is the big church, all believers and there are local churches, where we meet to encourage one another, to learn and to remember the work of Christ. Here are a couple questions to consider. "Do you have a church family? Does your church support your recovery? Are you critical or support and involved in your church?" Paul says in Hebrews,

> **Vs:** *Let us not neglect our church meetings, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of his coming back again is drawing near.* – Hebrews 10:25

So we made it through the talking points and now let's reflect on

"Why do Inventory?" It is in inventory that we learn about **grieving, acceptance** and **forgiving**. Becoming self aware. Making sure we have no secrets. It is in the **process** of inventory that we break out of **denial**, find healing, the healing that is necessary, in order to end, **numbing** and **medicating**. To **break out** of minimizing, rationalizing and justifying our behaviors, our addictions. Why do inventory? To be sure we are not holding resentment or unforgiveness. **To heal our hurts**, our wounds. **Inventory is the process of becoming our best. Becoming a better person, becoming set free from the pain of our past. So remember the why.**

> **Inventory is Healing the Past**

We want to be sure our past is not holding us hostage. And inventory, healing the past, is the necessary work to get freedom, to get where you want to go, to become who you want to be, to become who God wants you to be, free, full of hope, helping others and filled with the fruits of the Holy Spirit. The fruits of, love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Thanks for letting me share.

> Leader's Focus Questions:

Does your walk match your talk?

How have you treated your mind, body, family and church?