

“We admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being, the exact nature of our wrongs.”

In the 4th step, we **began to clean house**. We carefully and honestly searched beyond our denial and **took stock** of our past and present. If we completed our inventory thoroughly, we should have arrived at a **comprehensive, realistic idea of our true selves**, including both our **assets and liabilities**.

Remember, assets are positive patterns of believing, thinking, feeling, and doing that are healthy for us and others. Liabilities are toxic, unproductive behaviours and attitudes that have caused us, and others, pain. Liabilities are the survival skills that we would be better off without.



“The time has come,” he said, “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

Mark 1:15

A **thorough Step 4 inventory** is one of the **foundations** of our recovery process. It provides a **platform for self-improvement and personal transformation**.

From here, we are **able to assess**. What about ourselves is in good condition and what is not? What have we done that we never want to repeat? For which actions do we need to request forgiveness? Who do we need to forgive? Which of our patterns of thinking and behaviour have been destructive? What do we need to let go of? What about ourselves would we like to keep?

To answer these questions, we need to **pull everything of which we have taken stock out into the daylight and make it known**. The point of this is **not to humiliate, shame or condemn us**. On the contrary, the purpose is to ultimately **set us free**.

So, in Step 5, we **openly acknowledge the contents of our Step 4** to another person, before God and within ourselves. We finally **come clean**, so to speak, about **who we really are** and what we've done.

WE ADMITTED

Admitting something is **not as straightforward as simply speaking it out loud**. Admitting is about **acceptance**. When we admit to something, we **own up to it**. We **confess**. We **assume responsibility**.

In Step 1, we **admitted our powerlessness** over our addiction and the **unmanageability** of our lives.

In Steps 2 and 3, we admitted that our lives need new management and we handed the task over to God.

- What have you gained by admitting your powerlessness and unmanageability in Step 1?

- What have you gained by admitting (and submitting to) God’s authority in Steps 2 and 3?

Now, in Step 5, we are asked to admit the **exact nature of our wrongs**. This means:

- confessing our misdeeds, crimes and sins
- taking responsibility for the harm that we have caused others and ourselves
- acknowledging our faults and weaknesses
- accepting aspects of ourselves that we have previously denied or suppressed

This may seem like a daunting request and it is **natural for us to feel apprehensive**. Fear is an expected reaction to confession and the opening up of painful experiences. It is common for us to **feel exposed, vulnerable and anxious** at this point, fearing rejection, shame, hurt and consequences. However, if we allow these feelings to take over, we will **hinder our forward progression**. Watch out for defiance and procrastination, which can crop up in a dysfunctional attempt to avoid facing the truth.

- What are some of your reservations and fears about working Step 5?

- How can you overcome these potential obstacles?

SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLE: TRUST

Trust is defined as **a firm belief in the honesty or integrity of a person or thing**. In Step 5, we practice trust by **placing our confidence in the process** despite our reservations and fears.

We also practice this principle by **entrusting another person** with the contents of our Step 4 and by **putting our faith in God’s** desire to redeem and restore us.

- How can you practice the spiritual principle of trust in Step 5?

- What does this parable teach us about repentance?

- What does this parable teach us about God, the Father?

TO OURSELVES

In the past, we **denied reality**. We **minimised, rationalised and justified our behaviour** in many ways. Denial is one of addiction's most prominent, sustaining features that we subconsciously use to **protect us from facing the truth**.

This is why it is so important that, in Step 5, we are **brutally honest with ourselves**. Looking ourselves in the eye and taking ownership of our flaws and past failures is a vital part of change.

We cannot change what we do not acknowledge.

As we have learned, admitting our wrongs is **not just a matter of speaking them out loud**. Admission means **opening our eyes** to our actual condition and **overcoming self-deception**.

In the New Testament, the Greek word used for *repentance* is **metanoia** which is commonly understood as **a transformative change of heart**. **True repentance** includes **genuine feelings of realisation and remorse** and a **strong desire to unload and abandon our sins**.



Whoever conceals
their sins does not
prosper, but the one
who confesses and
renounces them
finds mercy.
Proverbs 28:13

- How have you avoided self-honesty in the past?

- What negative effects do you experience when you avoid self-honesty?

- How might self-honesty change your life?

AND ANOTHER HUMAN BEING

Step 5 asks us to share our inventory with another person. Although this may feel daunting at first, the **power of this process is profound and should not be procrastinated**. Sharing with another person is an **extremely meaningful exercise in humility** that is able to **break down our defences** in a significant way.

The Bible teaches us that **confession brings healing**. James 5:16 tells us to, **“Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed!”**

Confession **relieves us of the emotional burden** of our wrongs – the regret, shame, guilt, sadness, anger, hurt and confusion – and **releases the grip of hidden sin**. Addictive thinking and behaviour, which thrives in the dark, begins to dissipate upon exposure.



There is no real freedom without confession. What a relief to finally give up the weight of our lies and excuses. When we confess our sins, we find the internal peace that we lost so long ago.
Recovery Bible, 12 Step Devotional, pg. 1433

In addition, we isolated ourselves, physically, spiritually and emotionally. Step 5 is a **move out of isolation and into community**. One of the first visible signs of recovery is an **openness to share** our struggles with others. What this shows is a process of **surrender**. It shows a willingness to do things according to God's will, rather than our own way. In recovery, we know that **willingness produces growth** and that **surrender ultimately results in victory**.

- How have others assisted you in your recovery process so far?

Another human being does not mean *any* human being. We work Step 5 with someone that we **respect and trust**. We choose someone who will **not condemn** us but will also **not condone** our wrongs. We choose someone who will **honour and encourage our process** of repentance and be able to provide us with **valuable feedback**.

NB: It is advised that you **do not** work your Step 5 with a spouse, significant other or close family member because of the emotional triggers to which they may be exposed.

- Who will you ask to work your Step 5 with you?

- What qualities does this person possess that will be of benefit to this process?

- Have they agreed to participate?

THE EXACT NATURE OF OUR WRONGS

If the word 'wrongs' makes us feel defensive, we will benefit from considering the **value of living according to a set of principles**. One of the most unfortunate outcomes of addiction is the **deterioration of our moral compass** to guide our decision making. If we are to live in spiritual alignment, it is important to **define right from wrong**.

Rather than defending our past behaviour, we can embrace the opportunity to **clarify what we will no longer accept for ourselves** and **decisively turn** towards right living.

Only Jesus lived a perfect life and **we all have the need to repent**. The Bible reminds us that there is **no one on Earth without sin** and that, if we say we are without wrongs, we are in denial.

In the context of Step 5, **wrongs** not only refers to our wrongdoings but also to our **attitudes and actions that have been self-destructive**. To help us understand this part, we can substitute the word **wrongs with liabilities**.

Another name for liabilities is **shortcomings**. Our shortcomings are those beliefs, thoughts and behaviours that **hurt others, harm us and hold us back** from achieving our full potential.

Recovery is a process of **freeing ourselves** from these chains. This is a subject that we will deal with in detail in Step 6.

- Which of your wrongs and weaknesses are most difficult for you to admit? Why do you think this is so?

Sharing our inventory with another person requires **great humility and courage**. It can be tempting to dilute the truth of our inventory for fear of judgement, shaming and rejection. However, it is essential that we **resist our fear and pride and risk self-disclosure**. Although the process may be difficult and painful at the time, **brutal honesty brings about the most reward** and freedom in the end.

- Are you willing to risk self-disclosure and brutal honesty?

- What are you currently feeling about sharing your inventory?

STEP 5 GUIDELINES

Sharing a Step 5 **may take some time**, over several meetings. For these meetings, set aside sufficient time in a quiet place with few distractions.

Each time, **open and close with prayer**, asking God for courage and revelation in what you are about to experience. Make space for **feedback** after each section of your inventory or at the end of each session.

If you feel emotions rising, **allow your feelings to be expressed**. This is part of the healing process. We must allow ourselves to experience our natural responses to what we are sharing.

Remember to also **share your assets**. Although Step 5 requires us to admit our wrongs, it is vital that, at the same time, we acknowledge our achievements, positive qualities and unique attributes.

One of the goals of this Step is to reach a place of **self-acceptance**. True self-acceptance means being okay with ourselves, just the way we are. Keep in mind that even our negative experiences have brought us to where we are today.

- How will you make time for your Step 5? When will you start?

- Write a prayer that invites God into your Step 5 process.

STEP 5 PRAYER

POST REFLECTION

- Describe your experience of admitting your wrongs to another human being before God.

- Describe the feedback that you received.

- What themes (patterns of thinking and behaviour) emerged from sharing your inventory?

- How has the Step 5 process helped you?

- How has Step 5 impacted your self-acceptance?

- How has your relationship with, and faith in, God been strengthened?

ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

In Step 5, we have openly confronted the truth about ourselves. We have **stopped hiding and pretending**. This does not mean that we will instantly be rid of our liabilities, but it does begin the sanctification journey and allows us to **look forward with hope to the future**, unburdened of the past.

- On a scale of 1-10, how much effort have you put into Step 9?
1 indicates no effort. 10 indicates extreme effort.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩

- What have been your most significant realisations in Step 5?

- How could you apply the principles of Step 5 to help you **throughout** your recovery journey?

- Are you ready to move on to Step 6?



I have come as a light to shine in this dark world, so that all who put their trust in Me,
will no longer remain in the dark.

John 12:46

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