

STEP 02 • POWER • A PERSONAL INVENTORY

Search Me

A Personal Inventory for a Church
Seeking Revival

"Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!"

PSALM 139:23-24

A church turns one person at a time.

A church can repent together, and sometimes it must. Christ himself calls whole churches to turn. But it never happens apart from the people in it, and it almost never starts there. It starts quietly, one person at a time, in kitchens and trucks and back pews, until one day the whole body is facing a different direction. That is why you are holding this.

You may have only heard the word repentance during revival week, and it may sound loud and embarrassing. It is not. Repentance means agreeing with God about what is true, then turning to walk the other way. It is a gift, not a punishment. He does not show you your sin to shame you. He shows you because He means to heal you, and healing starts with the truth.

There are two kinds of sorrow. One is sorry about the mess: the trouble, the cost, being found out. That kind wears off. The other is sorry before God, and it changes how you live.

“For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.”

2 CORINTHIANS 7:10

One more thing, and it matters for Part Three. When Daniel prayed for his people, he did not stand outside the problem and describe it. He said we have sinned. When Nehemiah heard the walls were down, he prayed: I and my father’s house have sinned. Both men were among the most faithful of their day. Both counted themselves in.

HOW TO USE THIS

Read it alone, somewhere quiet, with your Bible open. One sitting or several, a part at a time. Bring a pencil and mark the questions that stop you.

PRIVATE No one will ask to see this. It is not turned in, filed, counted, or scored. If you choose to talk with someone about it, that is your decision, later.

UNHURRIED Healthy churches are not built in a weekend. Neither are honest hearts. If one question takes you an hour, that hour was well spent.

PRAYED Begin by asking God to show you what is true. Then believe He will. He is not hiding anything from you that you need to see.

My walk with God

Start here, before anything about the church. Answer these as if no one else will ever read them, because no one will.

- 1 Was there ever a time I turned from my sin and trusted Christ himself, or have I only ever belonged to this church?
- 2 Is there something in my life I have been calling a weakness, or a personality trait, or just the way I am, when God calls it sin?
- 3 When I am sorry for what I have done, am I sorry it cost me something, or sorry that it grieved God?
- 4 Is there anything in my life right now that no one else knows about?
- 5 Have I ever told God about it in plain words, or have I only hoped He would understand without my saying it?
- 6 What is one thing I have asked God to forgive for years and never once turned away from?
- 7 Is there money, property, time, or credit I took that was not mine, and never made right?
- 8 Is there a person I owe an apology to, and have quietly decided will never get one?
- 9 Am I doing anything today that I would have to stop if I told one trustworthy person the truth about it?
- 10 Is there someone who would tell me the truth about my life if I asked them to, and am I willing to ask?
- 11 If God changed nothing about my circumstances this year, would I still want Him?

My motives

It is possible to do everything a good church member does and never once mean it. These questions are about the difference.

- 1 When I come on Sunday, am I coming to meet with God, or because this is what I have always done on Sunday?
- 2 Do I give because I love Christ, because it is expected of a family like mine, or because someone might notice the amount?
- 3 Have I stood and sung words this year that I do not actually believe about myself?
- 4 When I serve here, does it matter to me whether anybody sees me do it?
- 5 If my name were never said from the front again, would I keep doing what I do around here?
- 6 Do I pray out loud in this building more than I pray alone in my own house?
- 7 When I open my Bible, am I looking for God, or finishing something I feel behind on?
- 8 If I teach, sing, usher, or lead, am I doing it from a full heart, or from muscle memory?
- 9 Is there anything I do at church that I would quit doing if nobody thanked me for it?
- 10 If someone followed me all week and only watched, would they guess on their own that I belong to Christ?

My part in this church

Like Daniel and Nehemiah, count yourself in. These are not questions about them. They are questions about your part.

- 1 Have I defended something I simply prefer, at the cost of what this church is here to do?
- 2 The last time I disagreed with a decision, did I go to the person who made it, or did I talk to somebody else about it?
- 3 Do I love what this church used to be more than what God may be calling it to become?
- 4 Is there someone in this body I have written off, whose name I no longer expect anything good from?
- 5 Have I ever used my giving, my attendance, or my service to get my way here, even without saying so out loud?
- 6 Have I said something about a brother or sister in this church that I would not say with them standing there?
- 7 When did I last pray for our pastor by name and ask God for nothing else in that prayer?
- 8 A family stopped coming. Did I ever call them, or did I let them go and decide it was their doing?
- 9 When a new person comes in, do I go to them, or do I wait to see whether they will fit in with us?
- 10 If our town is not hearing about Jesus from this church, what part of that belongs to me?

Do not stop at what you found

Everything up to here was looking. This part is turning, and it is the reason for the looking. Do not carry this booklet around as a list of things wrong with you. Take it to God and say the words out loud if you can. Name what you saw. Do not soften it and do not explain it. Just tell Him, the way you would tell someone who already knows and loves you anyway.

Then hear what He says back. This is the part most of us get wrong. We confess and then stand there waiting to be scolded, or we put ourselves on probation for a season to prove we meant it. That is not what happens. Here is what happens.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

1 JOHN 1:9

"as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us."

PSALM 103:12

"Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool."

ISAIAH 1:18

"Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea."

MICAH 7:18-19

Read those again slowly. Notice that none of them put you on probation. God's answer to an honest confession is welcome. You are not on the outside working your way back in. You are home, and He is glad.

Three short answers

Write plainly. This page stays with you. If you would rather not write names, use initials.

What stays between me and God

Confessed, forgiven, and no one else's business.

What requires going to a person, and who

Something to say, return, or make right. Name the person.

One thing I will do this week

One thing. Small and certain beats large and someday.

If you do not know how to start, start here

Say it out loud, slowly. Stop wherever you need to and put your own words in. He is not grading the sentences.

Father, I have been in church a long time. I know the songs and I know when to stand up. I am not sure I have ever asked You to look straight at me. I am asking now.

Show me what is really there. Not what I would admit to, and not what other people would say. What You see. I have called things weakness that You call sin, and I have been sorry about the trouble more than I have been sorry about You. Forgive me for that.

I confess what I wrote down, and I confess what I could not write down. I have gone through the motions in Your house. I have wanted to be thought well of more than I have wanted You. I have held on to what I like here and called it faithfulness. Where I have hurt this church, count me in it. I have sinned. My part is mine.

Thank You that You do not turn away from honesty. Thank You that You forgive, and that You do not hold it over me afterward. Help me believe that today.

Now give me the courage for the one thing I need to do next. Go with me when I make that phone call. Change me slowly if it has to be slow, but do not let me put this down and forget it. Do it in me, and then do it in us, until this church looks like Your Son again. In Jesus' name, amen.