

Fearless Inventory

Sherilyn Long, M.H.

It was a cold winter day. The unrelenting snow of the previous week had finally stopped, but only for a moment. I had taken the break as an opportunity to go on a shopping trip. Tucked behind a department store pillar, I noticed a bike and trailer piled high with camping gear. A man sat huddled on the ground wearing camouflage pants and smoking a pipe. It was cold! His face was weather worn but he did not seem to mind. I approached him and started up a conversation.

The man's name was Tom. He told me that he had been homeless for 48 years. He complained about the cold and stiff joints and then talked about his beloved dog, hiding under a pile of gear and trying to stay warm. With joints aggravated by the cold she was happy to see a new face, a friendly smile and receive a rub. Tom mentioned that he was often pushed out from one place to the next with nowhere to escape the cold, so I asked him about any of the facilities in the area. No, he was not interested. Beer was a regular part of his diet, he said, and he was not going to give that up. He would rather be homeless.

Tom did not ask for anything. He appreciated a friendly conversation and a listening ear, which I was happy to give. While Tom prided himself in having freedom to do as he wished, I was struck by how he complained that no one would allow him to pitch a tent or loiter in front of their business and would often call the cops on him. He repeatedly talked about his dog's poor health and his creaking joints. However, any suggestions for assistance were dismissed as "too much work." It was as if his choices to maintain certain habits and not voluntarily submit to any restrictions not only caused an unwanted restriction in his freedom, but also his health and the health of someone he loved. He wanted to do it his way, and so he suffered for it.



While you and I may have a warm cozy home, a job and are protected from the cold, we are deceived if we think of ourselves as better than old Tom. Perhaps there are habits or choices that you and I are making right now that are detrimental to our health, our relationships and are hurting those we love. It's human nature to make excuses for our behaviors, even saying that our choices do not affect other people, or, in Tom's case, even our beloved pets. The truth is that every single choice we make has ramifications that affect us as well as our world. Ignoring warnings with wishful thinking will not delay the inevitable. Our choices matter.

The ultimate addiction is not alcohol or drugs but stubbornly choosing our own way or making excuses regardless of the consequences. True freedom is not a choice to do whatever you want, but the ability to do what is right. If you want true freedom, then it's time to take a fearless inventory of your life:

- You have the gift of physical and emotional health. Do you want it? Really?
- Do you ask for health advice only to dismiss it? Do you refuse to let go of some of your favorite foods, justifying that they are “not that bad?”
- Do you refuse natural protocols and dietary changes, choosing to take a riskier option or drug instead because it is “easier” or because you “don’t have time?” Are you focusing on symptoms rather than the root?
- Do you justify toxic emotions as “caring for others” or “that’s just the way I am?”
- How bad will you allow your health or your family life to deteriorate before you are ready to finally make a change?
- ***What truth have you ignored or rejected this year, and how might you begin to act on it?***

The beautiful thing is you don’t have to suffer! You can experience true freedom. The steps to experiencing a new life are:

- 1) Be a Lover of truth. Seek and hold onto truth as you would a great treasure.
- 2) Don’t hide or justify. Instead, ask God for help.
- 3) Seek wise support and council (not people who only tell you what you want to hear!)
- 4) Act on what you know, one step at a time.
- 5) Focus on what you are gaining rather than letting go. Be grateful!

Remember that change is never easy at first. However, good change is always rewarding. Hang in there and be consistent. You can do it! You’ll be glad you did!

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