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BUILDING SELF-AWARE LEADERS AT SADDLEBACK  
SOUTH BAY CHURCH

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A Proposal  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

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by  
Samuel Yoon  
May 2021

**APPROVAL SHEET**

BUILDING SELF-AWARE LEADERS AT SADDLEBACK  
SOUTH BAY CHURCH

Samuel Yoon

Read and Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Kevin Peck (Faculty Supervisor)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Matthew D. Haste

Date \_\_\_\_\_

To my beautiful wife and best friend, Grace, who always helps me to be aware of God's  
goodness, love, and leadership in my life and the local church.

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## PREFACE

This project stands on the shoulders of many who have supported, mentored, coached, and developed me. I could not complete this project and finish my doctorate without the love and support of so many. I want to first thank God for blessing me with this opportunity and giving me the ability and strength to learn and grow. I am honored and privileged that God has chosen me to serve in his kingdom.

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Samuel Yoon

Torrance, California

May 2021

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The mission of Saddleback Church is to build healthy churches by living out its five purposes—worship, discipleship, ministry, fellowship, and evangelism. The motto of Saddleback Church is, “A great commitment to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission will build a great church.” Saddleback has been building disciples and churches for over forty years and is committed to doing so all around the world. The heartbeat of the church is to help more people to know and follow Jesus. There is an emphasis in training and developing pastors and leaders in the church. Leadership development supports this goal by equipping and empowering church members to fulfill this mission and vision. Self-awareness is one key area of leadership development that assists the leader’s growth. It gives the leader the ability to understand his own emotions, feelings, and passions. Self-awareness in the leader also provides feedback on how he impacts others around them. This allows the leader to make better decisions and have a greater role in the local church and in ministry. For this reason, Saddleback Church in South Bay seeks to provide more leadership development in the area of self-awareness.

#### **Context**

Saddleback Church has a rich history and significant impact around the world. The church was founded by Pastor Rick Warren and his wife Kay Warren in 1980. Pastor Rick wrote two best-selling books, *Purpose Driven Church* and *Purpose Driven Life*. The church attendance exploded to over twenty-five thousand people in the first twenty years. The church continued to grow and multiply to where it is today, with its eighteen campuses and one online campus. Fourteen campuses are in Southern California, Lake

Forest being the first and biggest campus. There are also four other campuses around the world—the Philippines, Hong Kong, Germany, and Argentina. We have transitioned from being merely a local church to a global church.

The heartbeat of Saddleback Church is training and developing pastors and leaders in the church. Pastor Rick has taken his Purpose Driven Model of church to all parts of the world. The Purpose Driven (PD) Model hosts conferences in most continents, aiming primarily to train and develop pastors. The conference started in Lake Forest, California, initially aimed at training and developing pastors and church leaders in America. It is estimated that through these conferences, workshops, and seminars, Pastor Rick has trained over five-hundred thousand church leaders and pastors around the world.

The leadership of Saddleback Church places an emphasis on training and development. Pastor Rick has taught and shared leadership principles during weekly staff meetings for decades. He also trained our volunteer ministry leaders through Sunday night leadership trainings. As our church has grown, it has required more leaders to step up and step in. For instance, the church was transitioning away from mid-week services to small groups. This required having thousands of small group leaders volunteer and serve. Pastor Rick created opportunities to train and develop thousands of small group hosts over a one-week period. Saddleback currently has over eight thousand small groups in our church. A system of care and training is available for each small group host. They have also taken their outreach program (P.E.A.C.E Plan) to over 197 countries. The P.E.A.C.E Plan helps provide hope and healing to those in need, sending thousands of volunteers to serve in those countries.

Leadership development is even more important as Saddleback Church continues to expand and grow. They currently have eighteen campuses with the hope of planting even more in the future. In order to accomplish this goal, they need qualified and capable leaders and staff members. There is a plan and intentional pathway to launch a new campus that requires several staff members and a launch plan. In order to support a

campus, there are even more staff members and positions needed to support those campuses. Saddleback calls them “central support.” Their role is to think through how to assist and support the campuses, especially since there are more people populating the campuses than there are at our Lake Forest campus. Assistance to these new campuses include communication, marketing, worship, facility, and ministries. As the largest campus, Lake Forest alone requires hundreds of staff for its operation and management. Therefore, a high number of staff is needed to continue the growth of the church.

When a staff member leaves, it creates holes and issues in the management of the church. Those positions need to be filled to continue the growth of the church. However, there does not seem to be enough well-equipped leaders or staff members to take those positions. The church needs a more strategic and intentional leadership development program. Some staff training and support exist, but they do not work to intentionally develop and train our staff and volunteers for future needs.

The church started to explore leadership development training for campus pastors and other leaders, with the hope to launch more campuses to reach more people. As a result, new training programs opened the door for some campus pastors to be trained in house and empowered to take over other campuses. I am a product of that. The emphasis of the training was on Saddleback culture and DNA as well as on ministry skills.

The senior leadership understands the need to train and develop leaders. Pastor Rick wants to plant more campuses in the next decade, desiring to double the number of our campuses from eighteen to thirty-six. His heart is to reach more people. Currently, Saddleback does not have the necessary pipeline of leaders to step into those roles. The elders of the church are creating a plan to develop and train our leaders. This means identifying and creating a cohort to learn and train. There are various ways to train and develop, and I believe the emotional intelligence component needs to be emphasized. There needs to be training that engages not only the cognitive but also the emotional

realm of the leader. The training needs to be experiential and to help leaders grow throughout the year.

### **Rationale**

Most leaders and pastors want to grow and develop their leadership skills. The typical methods of leadership development are attending conferences or conducting Bible studies. While these are important elements of leadership development, the primary focus emphasizes cognitive learning. It engages primarily the mind and the cognitive area, focusing on knowledge, facts, or principles. These are important elements to grow in our understanding as a leader. However, it does not address a leader holistically.

Emotional intelligence is an important component that needs more attention and development in the training of leaders and pastors in the church. Daniel Goleman published a book on emotional intelligence in 1995 that popularized the term “emotional intelligence.”<sup>1</sup> Goleman unpacks five different components that are part of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill.<sup>2</sup> These five elements help to build a more balanced and emotionally aware individual.

Counseling is one tool that can be effective in developing emotional intelligence. Lifeway Research shows that there is a negative stigma toward mental health in churches.<sup>3</sup> However, counseling and therapy are becoming widely accepted among churches in America. Many therapists even label themselves as “Christian therapists.” Churches understand that psychology and theology can work together.<sup>4</sup> It is

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<sup>1</sup> Jake Aguas, “Emotional Intelligence in the Discourse of the Johannie Account,” *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* 8, no. 1 (2018): 53.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Goleman, Richard E. Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, tenth anniversary ed. (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2013), 39.

<sup>3</sup> Ed Stetzer, “The Church And Mental Health: What Do The Numbers Tell Us?,” *Christianity Today*, April 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Christians have various approaches to the integration of Christianity and psychology. For more resources on this topic, please refer to Eric L. Johnson and David G. Myers, *Psychology & Christianity: Five Views*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2010).

helping more believers and Christians find healing and hope. Although counseling can be costly, and even financially impossible for some pastors and church leaders, it is nonetheless being embraced by many churches that are now hiring counselors for their staff and church members.

Emotional intelligence is also being more embraced by the church. Peter Scazzero wrote *Emotionally Healthy Church* to show the importance of emotional health in the church. He used the iceberg analogy that people only see 10 percent of themselves. The rest of the person is below in the deep waters.<sup>5</sup> There is so much that people do not understand about themselves either consciously or unconsciously. There is so much depth to each person. It is vital for the growth and development of our pastors and leaders to explore these areas of themselves. Being aware of and knowledgeable about their emotional complexities will give leaders a better sense of their calling and gifting. It also allows an opportunity for those leaders to find healing and resolve any unresolved conflicts and past hurts.

Research helps show the influence emotional intelligence has on ministry effectiveness. Dr. Clarkson surveyed two-hundred and fifty pastors in the Midwest and discovered three key findings about emotional intelligence among pastors.<sup>6</sup> Clarkson found that pastors who had a higher emotional intelligence score had less conflicts and less stress from managing the expectations than others had of pastors. Pastors with a higher EI (Emotional Intelligence) score had a great sense of personal accomplishment and satisfaction. Lastly, pastors that tied their identity to their performance were more likely to burn out. Her research found that among the two-hundred and fifty pastors surveyed, only 3 percent of them were satisfied with their jobs. This is confirmed in other

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<sup>5</sup> Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: It's Impossible to Be Spiritually Mature, While Remaining Emotionally Immature*, updated ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 16.

<sup>6</sup> Jeannie Clarkson, "Pastoral Burnout: The Results of a Study Examining the Relationships of Emotional Intelligence and Performance Based Self-Esteem with Burnout among Pastors" (PhD diss., Walden University, 2013), 158–76.

research. Research among Canadian pastors found a strong correlation between job satisfaction and emotional intelligence.<sup>7</sup>

Research shows that pastors are more effective when they have a higher EI score. For example, pastors who were able to help turn around failing churches had higher levels of EI.<sup>8</sup> In fact, Oswald shares that “a pastor who improves his emotional intelligence will find that his ministry is more fulfilling and effective, less draining and frustrating.”<sup>9</sup> Emotional intelligence gives pastors tools and abilities to handle difficult situations. It also allows pastors to enjoy moments of ministry and find purpose and satisfaction. This is important because the pastor’s EI not only impacts his family but also his congregation. The average size of a congregation that a pastor can influence is around 183 people.<sup>10</sup> The congregation can either be positively or negatively impacted by the emotional intelligence of the pastor. John Maxwell shares that “good leaders know when to display emotions and when to delay them.”<sup>11</sup>

Emotional intelligence is clearly important in the life of a pastor or church leader, and it is also multifaceted. This project will specifically focus on the area of EI known as self-awareness. Self-awareness is a key component and foundation of EI. Research shows that self-awareness among executives was the best predictor of success

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<sup>7</sup> M. Q. Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2014), 104-487.

<sup>8</sup> Jared Roth, “The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Pastor Leadership in Turnaround Churches” (EdD diss., Pepperdine University, 2011), <https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/etd/219/>.

<sup>9</sup> Roy M. Oswald and Arland Jacobson, *The Emotional Intelligence of Jesus: Relational Smarts for Religious Leaders* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 25.

<sup>10</sup> Mark Chaves and Shawna L. Anderson, “Changing American Congregations: Findings from the Third Wave of the National Congregations Study,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 53, no. 4 (2014): 676–86, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12151>.

<sup>11</sup> John C. Maxwell, *The 360 Degree Leader: Developing Your Influence from Anywhere in the Organization* (Nashville: Nelson Business, 2005), 87.

in their organization.<sup>12</sup> Steve Moore shares that “self-awareness is the primary gateway into effective self-leadership.”<sup>13</sup> I believe this is one of the most important aspects for which leaders and volunteers need training and development. The more leaders are self-aware about their leadership, the better that they can lead, communicate, and serve others. A better work environment results from leaders understanding their strengths, weaknesses, and areas of improvement.

John Calvin wrote, “Nearly all wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.”<sup>14</sup> Pastors and church leaders tend to focus on the knowledge of God. They do not like to dig deeper into themselves. They may feel guilty for being self-centered or self-focused. However, Ken Blanchard argues that self-awareness “lends itself to being able to view most situations from a more integrated, holistic position.”<sup>15</sup> When pastors and church leaders take a more honest look into themselves, they are able to have a fuller and better picture of God and their situations. Each will be a better pastor, leader, and follower of Christ, for all three go hand in hand.

Jesus is the best example of keen self-awareness. Jesus understood his emotions, feelings, and behavior. He was aware of his mission and purpose on earth, as well as his impact on others. This is seen throughout Scripture. For instance, Jesus is honest about his feelings. He shows emotions, such as when he wept about Lazarus’ death. His temptation in the wilderness shows how self-aware he is, even in the midst of extreme hunger. According to Oswald and Jacobson, the wilderness or desert “was a

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<sup>12</sup> Green Peak Partners, “When It Comes to Business Leadership, Nice Guys Finish First,” Last modified September 18, 2020, [https://greenpeakpartners.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Green-Peak\\_Cornell-University-Study\\_What-predicts-success.pdf](https://greenpeakpartners.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Green-Peak_Cornell-University-Study_What-predicts-success.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> Steve Moore, *The Top 10 Leadership Conversations in The Bible: Practical Insights from Extensive Research on Over 1,000 Biblical Leaders* (Atlanta: Nexleader, 2017), 37.

<sup>14</sup> Jean Calvin, John T. McNeill, and Ford Lewis Battles, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 1.

<sup>15</sup> Kenneth H. Blanchard and Renee Broadwell, eds., *Servant Leadership in Action: How You Can Achieve Great Relationships and Results* (Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2018), 16.

place of cleansing, of confrontation with oneself, free from all distractions, a lonely and demanding place of testing—and developing self-awareness.”<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, this project argues that self-awareness is a key component of training and development among Saddleback’s volunteers and leaders, and churches. Along with that, self-awareness trainings needs to be a priority in their discipleship and training of leaders. Self-awareness will result in a more positive and healthier leader. This will open the doors to a healthier church and serving environment. Self-awareness allows the leader to self-reflect and change their behavior, attitude, and leadership decisions. When leaders are not self-aware, unhealthy leadership ensues, creating a more complicated and unhealthy work environment. This, in turn, trickles down to the staff interaction and morale, impacting the church volunteers and members. A lack of awareness of one’s emotions creates unnecessary pain and conflict.

### **Purpose**

The title of the project is “Building Self-Aware Leaders at Saddleback South Bay.” The purpose was to create a training guide to help build more self-awareness among leaders at Saddleback South Bay in Los Angeles.

### **Goals**

The following three goals helped to complete this project. The first goal was to build cognitive understanding about self-awareness in the church. The second goal was to build a biblical understanding of self-awareness for training and development. The last goal was done in the context of the local church.

1. The first goal was to assess the current level of self-awareness among members and leaders of Saddleback South Bay.
2. The second goal was to develop a six-session curriculum that would help build self-awareness. The curriculum would focus on building internal self-awareness (emotions, feelings, passions, gifting) and external self-awareness (how they impact

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<sup>16</sup> Oswald and Jacobson, *Emotional Intelligence of Jesus*, 35.

others).

3. The third goal was to increase self-awareness of members and leaders of Saddleback South Bay by implementing the six-session curriculum in a small group setting.

These three goals were measured by definitive research methodology.<sup>17</sup> The means of measurement and the standard of success for each goal is detailed in the following section.

### **Research Methodology**

The three goals listed above shaped the success of this project. The first goal was to assess the current level of self-awareness among members of Saddleback South Bay. This goal was measured by administering the Self-Awareness Outcome Questionnaire.<sup>18</sup> This goal would be successful when the twenty five participants have completed the thirty-eight questions in the self-awareness questionnaire.

The second goal was to develop a curriculum on self-awareness. A six-week course was created to build more internal and external self-awareness. The curriculum was based on a biblical framework. This was done through an interactive teaching and discussion, as well as homework assigned to further the learning. The homework created an experiential learning portion to apply the lesson. This goal was measured by an expert panel consisting of five pastors at Saddleback Church and one accredited Christian coach. The panel used a rubric to evaluate the curriculum to ensure that it was biblically sound and applicable to the ministry setting.<sup>19</sup> This goal was considered successful when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion was met or exceeded. If the initial feedback yielded less, then the curriculum would be revised in accordance to the panel's evaluation until it met those criteria and was adopted by Saddleback Church.

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<sup>17</sup> All the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use.

<sup>18</sup> appendix 1

<sup>19</sup> appendix 2

The third goal was to increase self-awareness of members and leaders at Saddleback South Bay by implementing the six-week curriculum. Participants were selected by those that completed the initial Self-Awareness Outcome Questionnaire. This goal was measured by having those participants take the Self-Awareness Outcome Questionnaire again after they completed the six-session course. This score determined any changes from their previous score. This goal was considered successfully met when the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the first and second survey scores. A t-test for dependent samples involves comparing each group of scores and focuses on the difference between those scores. Since this project involved the same group of subjects being surveyed under two conditions, a t-test of dependent samples was an appropriate test.

### **Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations**

The following definitions of key terms are used in the ministry project. Both types of self-awareness will be explored in this project.

*Self-awareness.* The term *self-awareness* is used as the ability to have cognitive, spiritual, emotional, relational, and social awareness of yourself and others. Daniel Goleman defines self-awareness as “having a deep understanding of one’s emotions, as well as one’s strengths and limitations and one’s values and motives.”<sup>20</sup>

*Internal Self-awareness.* The term *internal self-awareness* is used to understand your personal thoughts and feelings. It is the ability to have a cognitive understanding of your emotions and feelings in the moment. Dr. Tasha Eurich named this internal self-awareness.<sup>21</sup>

*External Self-awareness.* The term *external self-awareness* is used to be aware

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<sup>20</sup> Daniel Goleman, Richard E. Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, Tenth anniversary ed. (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2013), 40.

<sup>21</sup> Tasha Eurich, *Insight: Why We’re Not as Self-Aware as We Think, and How Seeing Ourselves Clearly Helps Us Succeed at Work and in Life* (New York: Crown Business, 2017), 8.

of how you impact others, as well as how others impact you. Dr. Tasha Eurich explains self-awareness as when you understand how your emotions and behavior impact and affect others around you.<sup>22</sup>

There will be some limitations on this project. First, this project was open only to current leaders and members of Saddleback Church. Priority was given to those that volunteer, serve, or lead in the church. The primary limitation of this project was the curriculum and training would be limited to six sessions over six weeks. The full completion of the project would include the pre-assessment, course development, and post-assessment.

### **Conclusion**

The greatest need in our generation right now is godly leaders. Self-awareness is the building block to help grow and develop godly leaders. The following chapters will unpack the biblical foundation for self-awareness. Chapter two will show how self-awareness is a biblical and theological concept. Jesus is the model and example of internal and external self-awareness. Chapter three will also present the sociological framework to understand self-awareness. There will also be tools and practical resources to build self-awareness that have been researched.

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<sup>22</sup> Eurich, *Insights*, 3.

## CHAPTER 2

### A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL MODEL OF SELF-AWARENESS IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

People have a love-hate relationship with mirrors. They love them because they look at themselves constantly. Research shows that men on average look at themselves in the mirror twenty-three times a day, whereas women look at the mirror sixteen times a day.<sup>1</sup> They glance at themselves when they are brushing their teeth, putting their car in reverse, or going to the restroom. They are constantly gazing at themselves because they enjoy their reflection. However, people also hate looking at the mirror. They do not always like what they see staring back at them. This may be due to a bad hair day or insecurities about their body and image. Regardless, people all take the time to look at their physical appearance. But what about our emotional appearance? How often do people look at the mirror to study their feelings and emotions?

Paul commands to “examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves” (2 Cor 13:5, NIV). Paul wants believers to examine and test themselves. This includes looking at all the layers of our heart and emotions. Jeremiah writes that the “heart is deceitful above all things” (Jer 17:9). Deceitfulness and sin lay within every person. Our hearts and motives can be self-centered or tend to distort the truth. In fact, people’s hearts can blind themselves to their own reality. Therefore, Paul advocates for believers to test their hearts and motives. This is the process of self-awareness. Self-awareness demands honesty and vulnerability with oneself and with God. When people do this, they will have a more realistic understanding of their faith in God and, in turn, they develop a stronger relationship with Christ. It also impacts their relationship with

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<sup>1</sup> AFP Relaxnews, “Men Check Themselves Out More Than Women: Study,” Daily News, May 18, 2015, <https://www.nydailynews.com/life-style/men-check-women-study-article-1.2226370>.

others in the church and their community.

Even when people examine themselves, they can quickly forget the condition of their heart and soul. James shares that many believers can be like “someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like” (Jas 1:23-24). This happens not only with a physical mirror but also a spiritual one. Too often, people have moments of self-awareness about their own character flaws then quickly forget what those issues are. This may be intentional or unintentional. They may not comprehend the connection between their emotions and actions, or its consequences. On the other hand, leaders can choose to ignore their issues for a variety of reasons. It may be they are not satisfied with their place in life or they are disappointed in their past failures. They prefer to ignore the reality of their circumstances and situations. This has consequences on their spiritual lives and their relationship with Jesus. For instance, they may not fully grasp why they do what they do. They may let their emotions and circumstances dictate, control, or define their relationship with Jesus and others. Thus, it is important to examine their emotions and the impact it has on themselves and others. This chapter will examine how Jesus, Paul, and Peter possessed awareness of their own emotions as well as the influence their self-awareness had on others.

### **Self-Awareness as Seen in the Gospels of Jesus**

Jesus is the best example of self-awareness. No human can measure up to Jesus because he is fully man and fully God.<sup>2</sup> He possesses both humanity and deity. In Hebrews, Jesus is referred to as our high priest “who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin” (Heb 4:15). Jesus has a unique perspective. He understands and empathizes with the human experience yet did not make any mistakes.

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<sup>2</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 529.

This makes Jesus the model of self-awareness. He is fully aware of his emotions and their impact on himself and others.

To understand Jesus as the example of self-awareness, it is important to start from the very beginning in Genesis 1. God created the world in seven days and concluded by creating human beings, male and female. Human beings are different from all other creation because God made them in the image of God. In Genesis 1:26a it reads, “Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness.’” God created humans in the image of God (*imago Dei*, in Latin). Allen Myers argues that most Christians historically have chosen to understand image bearers in terms of our spiritual and emotional aspects, such as free will, rationality, personality, and consciousness.<sup>3</sup> Peter Gentry argues that, based from the texts and cultural understanding, this would also include the physical aspect of humanity as well.<sup>4</sup> Hans Walter Wolf explains that “man is set in the midst of creation as God’s statue. He is evidence that God is the Lord of creation...they are copies.”<sup>5</sup> Men and women are created as copies of God. This means people share characteristics of God, including our psychological framework. Our psychological structure includes “reason, memory, will, emotions, self-consciousness, joy, and morality, culminating in the emergence of personal agency with good character.”<sup>6</sup> Our emotions and feelings were created before the fall and considered good, and are, therefore, elements of God’s image. However, when sin and brokenness entered

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<sup>3</sup> Allen C. Myers, ed., *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 516.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Gentry, “Kingdom Through Covenant: Humanity as the Divine Image,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 23. Peter Gentry argues that the traditional view that image bearers only pertains to the spiritual and invisible parts of God is insufficient. He argues that this thought is inadequate because it did not originate from the early church but rather came from a Jewish philosopher, Philo of Alexandria, from 30 BC to AD 45. The idea behind the *imago dei* must include our physical aspect as well.

<sup>5</sup> Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 160–61.

<sup>6</sup> Eric L. Johnson, *God & Soul Care: The Therapeutic Resources of the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 82.

the world in Genesis 3, sin corrupted everything including our emotions. Peter Gentry says that our “divine image was marred but not lost through the fall.”<sup>7</sup> This does not mean that emotions are sinful, but rather broken in areas. The image of God in man is tainted with sin and brokenness.

Jesus’ arrival two thousand years ago restored the image of God for humanity. In fact, Christ’s humanity “provides the ontological key to understanding human nature—as expressed in its individual and corporate dimensions—as designed and determined by God.”<sup>8</sup> Christ is the perfect representation of *imago dei* for humanity. His life on earth exemplifies what people were to be before the fall. Crisp helps us understand this:

Christ is the archetypal human being, who represents God to humanity and humanity to God in his incarnation. He is also the prototypical human being, after whose image all other human beings are fashioned. Humans are able to represent God in the world in virtue of being made in the image of the God-man, the archetypal image-bearer.<sup>9</sup>

Christ is the best example of what it means to be an image bearer of God. As the image bearer of God, Jesus has a full awareness of himself and the impact he had on others. He is the model that humanity needs to examine and learn from.

## **Heart and Soul**

The heart and soul are important elements in understanding self-awareness. Jesus mentions the heart and soul in the Great Commandment, sharing that people need to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind” (Luke 10:27). Pierre argues the “terms for soul, spirit,

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<sup>7</sup> Gentry, “Kingdom Through Covenant,” 33.

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Paul Badgett, “Christian Self-Knowledge: A Christological Framework for Undermining Dissociation Through Reconciliation” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018), 83, <https://digital.library.sbts.edu/handle/10392/5614>.

<sup>9</sup> Oliver Crisp, *The Word Enfleshed: Exploring the Person and Work of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 65.

and mind describe the same type of function as the term for heart.”<sup>10</sup> The Bible is not using these different spiritual organs to describe different functions or aspects.<sup>11</sup> They all are doing the same function because Pierre argues that “biblical authors understand human experience flowing from one, unified heart.”<sup>12</sup> The biblical understanding of the heart does not just refer to the physical organ but has several meanings.<sup>13</sup> The heart is used to refer to the intellect or psychology (Luke 2:51), [and] various emotions (Mark 3:5; John 16:22; Rom 9:2).<sup>14</sup> Pierre teaches that the heart encompasses three functions: cognitive (mind), affective (emotions) and through volition (choices).<sup>15</sup> He argues that the “human heart responds cognitively, through rational processes based on knowledge and beliefs. It also responds affectively, through a framework of desires and emotions. It also responds volitionally, through a series of choices reflecting the willful commitments of the heart.”<sup>16</sup> In order to love God with all your heart, there needs to be awareness in the cognitive, affective and volition.

The function of the heart is to connect to and worship God. Pierre highlights, “God designed the heart’s function for worship: he wants people to respond to him with the complex beauty that reflects his own.”<sup>17</sup> Bock shares that our heart and love for God is the starting point in our relationship with God.<sup>18</sup> Elwell and Beitzel state that “a

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<sup>10</sup> Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), 20.

<sup>11</sup> Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart*, 20.

<sup>12</sup> Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart*, 20.

<sup>13</sup> Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* (Carol Stream, IL.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 579.

<sup>14</sup> Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, eds., *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 939.

<sup>15</sup> Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart*, 18.

<sup>16</sup> Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 18.

<sup>17</sup> Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart*, 26.

<sup>18</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, The IVP New Testament Commentary 3 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 196.

mystery of the hidden self is fully known to God and to Christ (Jer 17:10; Lk 9:47; Rom 8:27; and throughout), and the heart is the seat of our knowledge of God (2 Cor 4:6).”<sup>19</sup> The heart is where people understand themselves and God. It is where they can grasp a knowledge of God and speak and connect with God.

### **Positive and Negative Emotions of Jesus**

Emotions and feelings are an important human element. Every culture and religion have different views on emotions. Some cultures have a negative view toward emotions, discarding them because the culture values intelligence or productivity. However, the Christian faith upholds the value of emotions and feelings. Hill and Benner argue that only in “Christianity is humans’ emotional life given such a place of prominence.”<sup>20</sup> Our creator God is a God that has emotions and feelings. He displays emotions throughout the Bible. This is best exemplified in the person of Jesus Christ through the Gospels. Jesus displays positive emotions throughout Scripture. He goes to parties, celebrations, and dinner events. He knows the importance of celebrations for the human experience. That is one of the reasons why he continues the wedding festivities in John 2:1-11 by turning the water into wine at his mother’s request for help. He feels love and compassion toward others (Matt 9:36), especially children (Mark 9:37). He extends grace and forgiveness to many who are repentant and open hearted. He shows an enormous amount of “humility, gentleness, generosity, sympathy, courage and clarity . . . compassion, sacrifice.”<sup>21</sup> Jesus acknowledges his positive emotions and never shies away from displaying and showing them to all people.

Positive emotions are typically easier, safer, and more acceptable feelings than

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<sup>19</sup> Elwell and Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 939.

<sup>20</sup> David G. Benner and Peter C. Hill, eds., *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology & Counseling*, 2nd ed., Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 396.

<sup>21</sup> William Boekestine, “Positive Leadership: Leading Like Jesus (Not Rehoboam),” *Puritan Reformed Journal* 8, no. 2 (2016): 144.

are negative feelings. Negative emotions are not readily embraced by cultures or society.<sup>22</sup> These negative emotions show the worst parts of humanity, and even a darkness in ourselves. There is almost a comfort in not knowing or exploring that darkness. It may be that “ignorance is bliss.” However, Matthew Elliot argues that emotions allow people to see who they are and what they truly believe.<sup>23</sup> With this in mind, people see who Jesus truly is based on how he handles negative emotions during his time on earth. He encourages his followers to express and display an abundance of positive emotions while also teaching the importance of controlling negative emotions.<sup>24</sup> One such negative emotion is anger. Anger is a common emotion that is experienced by all humans. In fact, Jesus feels anger on multiple occasions. He is angry when he cleanses the temple (Mark 11:15-18) and when he curses the fig tree (Mark 11:12-14).<sup>25</sup> Jesus acknowledges his anger. He is aware of it and expresses it appropriately. His anger does not lead to sin (Eph 4:26). Rather, his anger is directed toward evil and the brokenness in the world. His anger is always motivated by compassion and love (Mark 3:5).

Self-awareness is not just understanding the feeling of anger, but also how that anger impacts others. In Mark 3:5, Jesus is upset and angry. His anger is directed toward the religious leaders and teachers of the law. Jesus is fully aware that the leaders and teachers are upset with him for healing on the Sabbath. However, Jesus is also angry about their hypocrisy. But he understands and controls his anger, and it does not lead to sin. Jesus practices what he preached about controlling anger (Matt 5:22).

One of the deepest and most negative emotion that Jesus feels is sorrow. Benner and Hill argue that joy is the most pleasant emotion and “the most frequently

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<sup>22</sup> Matthew A Elliott, *Faithful Feelings: Rethinking Emotion in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2006), 117.

<sup>23</sup> Elliott, *Faithful Feelings*, 143.

<sup>24</sup> Benner and Hill, *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology & Counseling*, 396.

<sup>25</sup> Roy M. Oswald and Arland Jacobson, *The Emotional Intelligence of Jesus: Relational Smarts for Religious Leaders* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 11.

unpleasant emotion is sorrow.”<sup>26</sup> Jesus invites his closest disciples to pray for him because his “soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death” (Matt 26:38). His prayer to God shows the level of anxiety, stress, and sorrow that he feels. He prays and asks God, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will” (Matt 26:39). Jesus addresses God as his Father. He uses the Aramaic term *abba* to express an intimate relationship between them.<sup>27</sup> In Jesus’ darkest hour he is aware of his need for his Father and confesses his pain to God. People can all identify with this from childhood. When kids are in pain, they want their parents to make that pain go away. It is a natural response to pain.

Jesus not only seeks comfort from his Father but also from his friends. He asks his closest disciples for prayer and support. Jesus reveals to them his weakest and most vulnerable moment. He is open about his current physical and emotional state. He does not deny his emotions but steps into them. It is at the Garden of Gethsemane that the disciples see Jesus’ full humanity.<sup>28</sup> When he invites his disciples into his pain, they learn that self-awareness requires help from others. Self-awareness reveals their needs for others during their weakest moments.

This was not the only time that Jesus felt sorrow and grief. The disciples see his grief and sadness toward the city of Jerusalem (Matt 23:37; Luke 13:34) and while he was on the cross grieving for people’s sin (Luke 23:34). Even on the cross, Jesus prays for his executors to be forgiven. Jesus also grieves for his friend Lazarus in John 11:35. Although he knows Lazarus will have life again, Jesus still mourns. His soul is filled with excruciating sadness as he shares the same grief as Mary and Martha. He feels their pain. Often people hide their sorrow and grief, thinking it shameful if others see them. But

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<sup>26</sup> Benner and Hill, *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology & Counseling*, 395.

<sup>27</sup> Robert S. Snow and Arseny Ermakov, *Matthew: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition*, New Beacon Bible Commentary (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2019), 314.

<sup>28</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary 22 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 394.

Jesus allows his disciples to see this side of him. Jesus gives us permission to express sadness in grief. Geri Scazzero argues that it is “central to our spiritual growth” to grieve.<sup>29</sup> The community can help people in their time of grief. People need support and help from each other in their weakest moments. Seeking support amid their grief demonstrates a self-awareness of what they need and how others play a role in that need.

### **Impact on Others**

Jesus also teaches us the opposite of self-awareness. Jesus is the most critical toward a very specific group of people—the Pharisees and the religious teachers of the law. Jesus calls them “snakes” and “brood of vipers,” and he questions their salvation (Matt 23:33). Jesus refers to them as “whitewashed tombs,” meaning they looked beautiful on the outside but were actually full of dirt and filth in the inside (Matt 15:7; 23:27; Luke 12:56; 13:15).<sup>30</sup> Jesus is upset with them because they have little to no awareness of themselves. Instead of examining their own sins, these religious leaders judge others. Jesus teaches that hypocrisy means judging others without seeing one’s own faults and failings (Luke 6:42). In Luke 6:42, Jesus asks the question, “How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye?” Jesus uses this humorous imagery to make a point about judgment. Bock shares that “a judgmental spirit often reflects a self-righteous, unreflective, insensitive heart.”<sup>31</sup> The religious leaders’ hearts are stubborn and unwilling to reflect or repent. Jesus cannot tolerate their hypocrisy because hypocrisy is the “absence of self-awareness.”<sup>32</sup> It is the opposite of authenticity and genuineness. Jesus

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<sup>29</sup> Geri Scazzero and Peter Scazzero, *I Quit! Stop Pretending Everything Is Fine and Change Your Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 104.

<sup>30</sup> Mark Allan Powell ed., *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 399.

<sup>31</sup> Bock, *Luke*, 128.

<sup>32</sup> Oswald and Jacobson, *The Emotional Intelligence of Jesus*, 36.

condemns hypocrisy because it “distorts God’s righteous command.”<sup>33</sup> It gives the impression that the leaders are holy when, in fact, their hearts are unholy.

Jesus condemns the Pharisees and teachers of the law also because they have no awareness of how their hypocrisy impacts others. People look to these leaders and teachers as models of what it looks like to follow God and to be close with him. However, the leaders’ corruption generates a false understanding of who God is. It gives a “perverse understanding of how he reconciles sinners to himself.”<sup>34</sup> Thinking themselves righteous, they actually make it harder for people to follow God. Their lack of self-awareness impacts not only their own reality but also others’ faith and relationship with God.

People are unable to truly know and worship God because of the leaders’ corruption. Jesus questions, “Can the blind lead the blind?” (Luke 6:39). Jesus makes a rhetorical statement with the expectation that the answer is negative.<sup>35</sup> Bock argues that Jesus is “warning us to watch which teachers we follow.”<sup>36</sup> Those who do not follow God are blind guides who are blinded by their “inner corruption.”<sup>37</sup> Tim Keller illustrates, “[If I am in denial about my own weaknesses and sin, there will be a concomitant blindness to the greatness and glory of God.”<sup>38</sup> The hypocritical leaders cannot recognize their own sin which blinds them to God’s glory. In turn, they cause others to be blind in the same way. They are destroying people’s faith and relationship with God. A lack of self-awareness has severe consequences on others.

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<sup>33</sup> Elwell and Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, 622.

<sup>34</sup> Elwell and Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*.

<sup>35</sup> Bock, *Luke*, 127.

<sup>36</sup> Bock, *Luke*, 128.

<sup>37</sup> Matthew Brett Vaden, “The False Self and True Self: A Christian Perspective” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015), 57, <https://repository.sbts.edu/handle/10392/5064>.

<sup>38</sup> Timothy Keller, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* (New York: Penguin Books, 2016), 135.

Jesus is harsh toward these religious leaders because they are unaware and unwilling to live out God's mission and purpose. Jesus understands the impact his words have on them. In fact, John Eldredge shares that Jesus' honesty and "severity are measured out precisely according to the amount of delusion and self-deception encasing his listener."<sup>39</sup> His tone is harsher when he sees even more hypocrisy from religious leaders. This infuriates the religious leaders, and they are the ones who ultimately plan to have Jesus crucified (Matt 27:1).

While Jesus is critical towards the religious leaders, he demonstrates compassion toward others. He is aware of how he needs to connect with different people at different times. For instance, Jesus has a different tone and approach with Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38-40. Martha wants Jesus to take her side by having Mary help her more. Jesus' honesty may take people aback as he tells Martha that Mary is doing the better thing (Luke 10:42). Bock argues that Jesus is not "condemning Martha's action as much as commending Mary's."<sup>40</sup> It is not Mary's activity that Jesus has an issue with as much as her attitude.<sup>41</sup> Martha is worried, upset, and stressed. Jesus sees her heart and responds accordingly. His tone is different than with the Pharisees. He has a softer approach and tone because Jesus is "dealing with a softer heart."<sup>42</sup> Jesus sees Martha's open heart and addresses Martha's name two times (10:41). Bock argues that this double address "indicates the presence of caring emotion, as such an address does elsewhere (6:46; 8:24; 13:34; 22:31)."<sup>43</sup> Jesus notices a believer's heart condition and approaches them accordingly. Jesus is willing to engage with people's negative emotions so that they

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<sup>39</sup> John Eldredge, *Beautiful Outlaw: Experiencing the Playful, Disruptive, Extravagant Personality of Jesus* (New York: FaithWords, 2013), 68.

<sup>40</sup> Bock, *Luke*, 201.

<sup>41</sup> Bock, *Luke*.

<sup>42</sup> Eldredge, *Beautiful Outlaw*, 69.

<sup>43</sup> Bock, *Luke*, 201.

can grow more like Christ. Jesus wants believers to value being with Jesus more than doing things for Jesus. This is important because the “foundational reason for examining our lives and blind spots is so we can be more like Christ in our work.”<sup>44</sup>

### **Self-Awareness as Seen in Pauline Writing**

In his writings to the church, Paul shows the value of knowing our emotions and how they impact others. Paul understands the significance that emotions have on our spiritual growth. Paul grasps his emotions and openly expresses both positive and negative feelings to the believers in the churches, recognizing the role that his emotions have on them. This does not mean that Paul believed in emotionalism. Emotionalism is “seeking of emotion as an end in itself—emotion for emotion’s sake.”<sup>45</sup> Paul does not advocate emotion as an end to itself. Emotions are not to be our primary focus. Rather, Paul’s letters indicate the importance that feelings play in growing our faith and walk with Christ.

### **Positive and Negative Emotions of Paul**

Just as Jesus displayed emotions in the Gospels, Paul also expresses them in his letters to the church. First, he conveys positive emotions and feelings. One of those positive emotions is joy. Paul uses the word “joy” and “rejoice” in his writings at least seventeen times in the book of Philippians.<sup>46</sup> In Philippi, Paul and Silas were singing late into the night while in prison (Acts 16:16-40). Paul can find joy even while in prison. He had found the secret of being “content whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want” (Phil 4:11-13). Paul is aware of his physical environment as well as his internal feelings, and he chooses to be joyful.

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<sup>44</sup> Terry Linhart, *The Self-Aware Leader: Discovering Your Blind Spots to Reach Your Ministry Potential* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 28.

<sup>45</sup> Guy P. Duffield and Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology*, Rev. ed. (Los Angeles: Foursquare Media, 2008), 299.

<sup>46</sup> Duffield and Van Cleave, *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology*.

Another positive emotion that Paul experiences and endorses is love. His life is transformed by the love of Christ (2 Cor 5:14-15). Paul's meeting with Jesus on the road to Damascus changed everything (Acts 9). Instead of persecuting the church and imprisoning believers, Paul now spreads the good news and love of Jesus Christ. His motivation stems from Jesus' love and forgiveness for his past sins. He encourages others to live by Christ's love, extending it to each other (Rom 12:10), as he has so much love for the church (Phil 1:8).<sup>47</sup>

Second, Paul is also conscious of his negative emotions. Paul is open and vulnerable in his letters to the church in Corinth, as seen particularly in his pleas and exhortation in 2 Corinthians. Elliot argues that 2 Corinthians may be his most emotional letter among Paul's writings to the church.<sup>48</sup> He expresses deep sorrow and pain to the church in Corinth, which are the motivating reason for his not visiting them (2 Cor 2:1). Paul shares the reasons for his pain. He wants the church to discipline the one who caused him "grief" (2 Cor 5:5-11), and he wants to "rebuke the church for not coming to his aid (7:8-12)."<sup>49</sup> Paul is hurt by their lack of personal support (2:3; 7:12-13) and their lack of obedience to his apostolic authority (7:14-15).<sup>50</sup> This is why Paul writes that he is in "great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears" (2 Cor 2:4). Linda Belleville shares that "*thlipsis* (distress) and *synoche* (anguish) are virtual synonyms for personal pain brought about by oppressive circumstances."<sup>51</sup> He has been wounded by his fellow friends and believers. This leads to extreme sorrow, sadness, and tears. Paul did not have to reveal this in his letters. He could have chosen to ignore or suppress these feelings.

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<sup>47</sup> Linhart, *The Self-Aware Leader*, 28.

<sup>48</sup> Elliott, *Faithful Feelings*, 251.

<sup>49</sup> Linda L. Belleville, *2 Corinthians*, The IVP New Testament Commentary 8 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 72.

<sup>50</sup> Belleville, *2 Corinthians*.

<sup>51</sup> Belleville, *2 Corinthians*.

However, he intentionally voices his pain to the church in Corinth. Paul not only demonstrates an awareness of his feelings but also expresses them in a healthy way.

Paul shares his pain and sorrow because he wants the church to respond with godly sorrow. Paul makes the distinction between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow in 2 Corinthians 7:8-11. He states that godly sorrow leads to repentance (7:9), whereas worldly sorrow leads to death (7:10). Sorrow, if handled well, can lead to a deeper relationship with God and with others. This is what Paul experienced, and he encourages the church in Corinth to endure godly sorrow (7:8). He knows his letter will cause pain for them. Paul understands the influence that his words and emotions will have on the believers. He does not regret the short-term impact of pain because he knows that “godly grief leads to spiritual renewal.”<sup>52</sup> In fact, Paul shares that godly sorrow can bring repentance that leads to salvation (7:10). Paul wants the church to repent of their sins. David Garland argues that repentance “implies remorse for sins that wound and anger God and the desire to make amends and to desist from sinning again.”<sup>53</sup> Repentance is having awareness of your sins and how your sin breaks your relationship with God. It is also a desire to change your mind and behavior. Paul fears that the church’s refusal to repent will lead to a hardening of their hearts that will make it even more difficult to truly repent.<sup>54</sup>

The church in Corinth does recognize the pain and sorrow they have caused Paul (7:7). Belleville shares that the word sorrow (*odyrmos*) “denotes wailing and lamentation, often accompanied by tears and other outward expressions of grief.”<sup>55</sup> The

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<sup>52</sup> Margaret E. Thrall, *Commentary on II Corinthians VIII - XIII*, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, vol. 2 (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, 2004), 492.

<sup>53</sup> David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, The New American Commentary, v. 29 (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 356.

<sup>54</sup> Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 356.

<sup>55</sup> Belleville, *2 Corinthians*.

church responds to Paul's rebuke with their own grief and sorrow. They are repentant (7:9). Belleville argues that the word repentance (*metanoia*) "denotes not just a change of mind about something but a reorientation of the whole person."<sup>56</sup> They are not only sorry for their actions and mistakes, but they want to change their behavior. They want to make things right with their personal relationship with Paul as well as with other believers in the church. This leads to reconciliation and unity in the church.

### **Struggle for Self-Awareness**

Paul reveals that there is a struggle inside every person because of sin. Paul writes about this struggle in Romans and Galatians. He uses the term "flesh" to identify this tension. In Romans 7:5, Paul writes that "we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death." Douglas Moo states that "Paul pictures flesh (*sarx*) as another 'power' of the old era, set in opposition to the Spirit."<sup>57</sup> Moo argues that *sarx* does not refer to being "part of the person, nor even exactly an impulse or 'nature' within the person but a 'power sphere' in which the person lives."<sup>58</sup> It refers to the powers of evil and darkness.

Moo argues that the flesh is influenced by "three other powers of the old era: sin, the law and death."<sup>59</sup> Paul focuses on these powers of darkness in Romans 7 and 8. He shares that sinful desires and passions are produced through the law. He identifies the law as neither wrong nor sinful, but rather that sin uses the law to produce great sin (7:7-12).<sup>60</sup> The flesh chooses to live an "ungodly lifestyle of selfishness and sensual self-

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<sup>56</sup> Belleville, *2 Corinthians*, 196.

<sup>57</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *Romans 1-8*, The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 442.

<sup>58</sup> Moo, *Romans 1-8*, 443.

<sup>59</sup> Moo, *Romans 1-8*.

<sup>60</sup> Moo, *Romans 1-8*, 449.

gratification.”<sup>61</sup> The flesh is “incapable of conforming to God’s holy expectations (Rom 7:5, 18; 8:3-9; Gal 3:3).”<sup>62</sup> People cannot earn God’s favor, mercy, or presence. Paul understands that they are influenced by the power of the flesh (2 Cor 12:7-9; Gal 5:17), and this includes Paul’s own struggle with the flesh (2 Cor 11:30).<sup>63</sup>

For Christians, there is this constant battle between the flesh and the Spirit, as seen in Romans 7. Paul shares of his struggle: “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do” (Rom 7:15). Moo argues that Paul is making the argument that “a will to do the good cannot overcome the human propensity to do what is evil.”<sup>64</sup> Paul again depicts this conflict in Galatians 5:17 when he says, “The flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.” Moo shares that the powers of the flesh and the Spirit are fighting with each other, and that impacts and influences your choices.<sup>65</sup> You are either governed by the flesh or the Spirit. When you allow the Spirit to control you, you gain victory and power over the flesh.

Paul unpacks this struggle in a different way with the metaphor of the “old self” and “new self.” He uses this example in Colossians 3:9-11 and Ephesians 4:22-24 to share that Christ has redeemed us to be a new person, or new self. Paul asks the believers to get rid of their old self (Eph 4:22; Col 3:9) by refraining from sinful behavior such as “anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips” (Col 3:8). Doing so requires going to battle against flesh and sin. In Ephesians 4:22, Paul refers to the old self as our “former way of life . . . corrupted by its deceitful desires.” Andrew Lincoln

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<sup>61</sup> Daryl C. Cornett, “Flesh and Spirit,” in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Chad Brand (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2015), 583.

<sup>62</sup> Kevin J. Youngblood, “Flesh,” in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Chad Brand (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2015), 582-583.

<sup>63</sup> Linhart, *The Self-Aware Leader*, 17.

<sup>64</sup> Moo, *Romans 1-8*, 484.

<sup>65</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 352.

describes this corruption, explaining that the “old person is in a process of decay which will lead to final ruin, a process brought about through evil desires generated by deceit by an ultimately illusory view of life.”<sup>66</sup> This “illusory view of life” impacts our relationships with others. If people choose to live in this lie, then they continue their old and destructive habits. This leads to ruin, especially with relationships.

Our old self chooses to live by sin and corruption. On the other hand, our new self and identity come from Christ himself. Paul uses a picture of putting on the new clothes of Christ while taking off the old clothes of our human nature.<sup>67</sup> He teaches that a believer’s old self was crucified with Christ, and they are now new in Christ. They are made a new person by being in Christ and thereby sharing in his crucifixion and resurrection.<sup>68</sup> David Garland argues that the Greek phrasing in Colossians 3:10 “means that the new life does not come as the result of a successful, daily battle with temptation. Rather the new life marks the starting point.”<sup>69</sup> The new life is not a result of our own actions but rather what Christ has done.

Putting on new life does not mean trying to preserve who people are but rather stepping into our new creation in Christ. Schweizer argues that “one’s whole nature must be exchanged, not just revamped.”<sup>70</sup> Garland also shares that the new self is being renewed, implying that we are in need of consistent renewal.<sup>71</sup> Consistent renewal is the idea of continually putting on Christ every day. Garland also points out that the “passive

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<sup>66</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary 42, ed. David A. Hubbard (Waco, TX: Word Books, 2005), 290.

<sup>67</sup> David S. Dockery, “New Nature and Old Nature,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, eds. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 629.

<sup>68</sup> Dockery, “New Nature and Old Nature,” 628.

<sup>69</sup> David E. Garland, *Colossians and Philemon*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 206.

<sup>70</sup> Eduard Schweizer, *The Letter to the Colossians: A Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Pub. House, 1982), 197.

<sup>71</sup> Garland, *Colossians and Philemon*.

voice indicates that the renewal does not result from our own efforts.”<sup>72</sup> It happens when believers put our faith and trust in God’s power. Living clothed in the new self is not just a behavioral change. Rather, it is a deep-seated change that happens by the Holy Spirit. It is inviting God’s Spirit to move in their lives so that they follow a new set of rules for life.<sup>73</sup>

Partaking in this deep-seated change by the Spirit does involve a choice, particularly a choice to change the attitudes of our minds (Eph 4:23). One must choose to be aware of this need and to step into their new self. When they put on their new self, they are “created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph 4:24). Lincoln argues that believers are not made completely new, so this requires believers to be continually renewed especially in the mind.<sup>74</sup> Paul affirms this in Colossians 3:10. Peter Gentry argues that “the phrase ‘according to God’ in Eph 4:24 may be ambiguous by itself, but is clarified by the parallel in Col 3:10 and means that the new creation is, like the old, according to the image and likeness of God.”<sup>75</sup> A Christian’s new self allows them to bear the true image of our Father and Creator. It confirms their special relationship and fellowship with God and humanity. When they step into their new self, in part, they reflect the image of God as they did before the Fall. They bear his true image in the way that God intended in Genesis 1 and 2. Christians have a restored relationship with God and others.

After Paul encourages believers to put on their new self in Ephesians 4:24, he writes what this looks like from a practical standpoint in verses 25-32. He teaches that a Christian’s new self means that they “speak truthfully to your neighbor for [they] are all

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<sup>72</sup> Garland, *Colossians and Philemon*.

<sup>73</sup> Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 629.

<sup>74</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 290.

<sup>75</sup> Gentry, “Kingdom Through Covenant,” 33.

members of one body” (Eph 4:25). Lincoln argues that “there is no room for lies which poison communication and breed suspicion instead of mutual trust.”<sup>76</sup> Paul understands that they may be angry but commands, “In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry” (Eph 4:26). Anger is not a sin, but Lincoln argues that when it does occur, it needs to be short and “expelled immediately.”<sup>77</sup> Anger that is not dealt with quickly will cause destruction in relationships, having a negative impact on others as well as themselves.

On the flip side, a Christian’s new self allows them to have Spirit-filled relationships. They can choose to have a positive impact on those around them even if others choose to live in accordance with their old self. The Spirit enables them to have healthier and more mature relationships with their spouse, kids, friends, and others. There will be a level of intimacy and richness in their relationships which God wants and intends for them when they live in this new self. Paul encourages that no “unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs” (Eph 4:29). Lincoln argues that all these take place in the context of a harmonious relationship with the church.<sup>78</sup> This requires self-awareness of our emotions so that they can control the impact they have on others. If they do not, then they will put on their old self and allow their anger, unwholesome talk, and lies tear down the church and their family.

### **Discipline of Self-Awareness**

Self-awareness is a continual process that needs discipline and training. In 1 Timothy 4:7, Paul challenges Timothy to “train yourself to be godly.” The Greek word for

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<sup>76</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 301.

<sup>77</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 302.

<sup>78</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 300.

“train” (*gymnazo*) means to exercise.<sup>79</sup> It is a present active imperative, carrying an image of an athlete training and being disciplined.<sup>80</sup> Athletes need continual training. Their athletic career requires hours of stretches, exercises, discipline, and perseverance. Athletes spend years of their life to refine and hone their professional craft. It is important that Christians apply that same perspective and mentality with our Christian faith. Believers need to spend the same amount of focus and energy in our sport of “godliness.” Building self-awareness is part of that training for godliness.

Every athlete has a coach to help them improve. Coaches provide the athlete with self-awareness. They show the athlete where they are weak and need improvement. They make connections on how their actions impact the outcome in the game. Paul makes the argument that Christians need coaches to train for godliness. Spiritual coaches help them see and understand when they are living in step with their flesh. The coach raises awareness on how their emotions and actions impact those around them. Paul shows that the coach for the Christian athlete comes in two forms.

Our first coach is the Word of God. Paul teaches that believers are to “let the message of Christ dwell among you richly” (Col 3:16). The Word of God gives us direction and guidance. The writer of Hebrews demonstrates the power of God’s word: It “penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Heb 4:12). The Word of God brings awareness to their emotions and thoughts. It reveals when they are choosing the flesh or old self. It opens the “eyes of our heart” (Eph 1:18). Christians and Christian leaders must focus their “eyes” on godliness. Godliness involves our character, faith, and emotions. When leaders do not focus on godliness, they leave a destructive path. Staff members may choose to leave

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<sup>79</sup> Knute Larson and Max Anders, *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, Holman New Testament Commentary 9 (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2005), 205-206.

<sup>80</sup> Robert James Utley and Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 623.

because of a toxic work culture that the pastor creates unknowingly. Church members may leave because of the emotional tantrums of the leader and pastor. Paul advocates that they train to become more self-aware so that they can be better and godlier leaders. This helps them lead and love not only their church but also their families.

The other coach that helps them understand their emotions and how they impact others is the church. Paul writes that Christ gave each believer a role so that they can “equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith . . . and become mature” (Eph 4:12-13). Lincoln argues that the unity in faith happened through Christ, but “at the same time it still remains to be attained and to be attained through the effective utilization of the gifts that are an element of that which is already possessed.”<sup>81</sup> Believers are unified in Christ, but it is the job of the church to help each other so that they can be mature believers in Christ. The church helps believers identify when they are acting more like “infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching” (Eph 4:14). The church also helps them recognize their gifts and strengths so that they can live out God’s purposes and build the church. The church helps Christians to become more mature and godly believers. Growth and godliness happen in the context of relationships where they can practice living in their new selves.

### **Self-Awareness as Seen in Peter’s Epistles**

Peter also addresses the issue of self-awareness in his letters. He uses the term “knowledge” to refer to a better understanding of God and himself. Peter has been on his own journey of knowledge about Jesus and himself. For instance, Jesus asks his disciples who people think the Son of Man is (Matt 16:13). Peter correctly answers that Jesus is the “Messiah, the Son of the Living God” (16:16). Peter has the correct answer and knowledge. He demonstrates true understanding and awareness of Jesus’ identity.

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<sup>81</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 256.

However, that knowledge and awareness does not always mean that Peter acts accordingly. For instance, after Peter correctly identifies Jesus as the Son of God, Jesus calls Peter “Satan” and asks him to get behind him (16:23). Before that happened, Jesus gave Peter one of the greatest encouragements on how Peter would be the rock, or foundation, upon which the church is built (16:18). Then immediately afterwards, Jesus calls out Peter for acting like “Satan” (16:23). Jesus is aware of his mission and purpose. Peter does not understand this. Jesus understands the impact that his words have on Peter. He wants Peter to grow in his faith and understanding of himself and others.

### **Peter’s Journey with Self-Awareness**

There are other moments where Peter’s knowledge does not translate to faith in action. Green points out that “knowing right does not mean doing right.”<sup>82</sup> Peter denies Jesus three times (26:69-75) after Jesus is arrested. After the rooster crows, Peter goes outside and weeps bitterly (26:75). He is filled with so much regret and pain, confronting his own sin and the depth of his betrayal. In essence, David Benner shares that Peter has “encountered his weakest and most despicable self and he was likely filled with self-loathing.”<sup>83</sup>

Peter struggles with his failure and weakness. He comprehends the influence that his betrayal has on Jesus and others. He has disappointed Jesus. However, Matthew highlights that Peter’s failure and weakness demonstrate a disciple and follower of Christ that is growing and maturing.<sup>84</sup> In the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew shows that Peter’s strengths and failures demonstrate the “power of Christ is available to transcend and strengthen those on the path to discipleship.”<sup>85</sup> In the moment of his betrayal to Jesus,

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<sup>82</sup> Gene L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 193.

<sup>83</sup> Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself*, 29–30.

<sup>84</sup> Benner and Hill, *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology & Counseling*, 1663.

<sup>85</sup> Benner and Hill, *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology & Counseling*.

Peter does not choose to abandon Christ but to move toward Christ. He wrestles with the knowledge of knowing Christ's identity and his failure to follow Christ. He reflects and examines his faith in Christ so that he can grow and learn. Benner shares that "Peter did not know himself until Jesus showed him who he was, but in learning about himself, he also came to truly know Jesus."<sup>86</sup> Peter gets to see his true faults and areas to grow in. This allows him to have a more accurate view of himself and to realize he needs to follow and obey Jesus regardless of the cost. He needs to surrender to Jesus completely and fully.

The conclusion of Peter's transformation after Jesus' resurrection is when he asks Peter three times to feed his sheep (John 21:17). Benner shares that "spiritual transformation does not result from fixing our problems. It results from turning to God in the midst of them and meeting God just as we are."<sup>87</sup> Peter cannot fix the past, but he can turn to God in the present. Peter experiences transformation because he turns to God in all his faults and weaknesses. He accepts his weaknesses, and that allows Jesus the opportunity to forgive, accept, and reconcile with Peter. Peter does not just know who Jesus is but also experiences true love, forgiveness, and mercy from Jesus. Peter has come to a fuller understanding of himself in light of his failures towards Jesus. Kevin DeYoung shares that you "can't find your true identity without being true to God."<sup>88</sup> Peter is true to Jesus, and thus he is more aware of himself. It allows him to have more self-awareness and a firmer commitment to the mission and gospel of Jesus. He is able to have a greater impact on others because of this. He demonstrates this in his writings.

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<sup>86</sup> Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself*, 30–32.

<sup>87</sup> Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself*, 63.

<sup>88</sup> Kevin DeYoung, *The Hole in Our Holiness: Filling the Gap between Gospel Passion and the Pursuit of Godliness* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 37.

## Peter's Encouragement for Self-Awareness

In his epistles, Peter encourages believers to grow in their knowledge of Christ. Peter uses the term “knowledge” to understand Christ. He references “knowledge” fifteen times in the first three chapters of 2 Peter.<sup>89</sup> There are a variety of views on how to understand knowledge. It is generally agreed upon by scholars that the use of knowledge by Peter is not to address the gnostic heresy or false teachings that were prevalent in the church.<sup>90</sup> Rather Green and Davids argue that Peter uses knowledge to refer to a personal knowledge of Christ, since the objects of this personal knowledge are God and Jesus our Lord.<sup>91</sup> Warren Wiersbe argues that knowledge in 2 Peter 1:2 means “full knowledge” or “knowledge that is growing.”<sup>92</sup> It is a knowledge of Jesus Christ that is growing and developing.

Peter shares that a growing knowledge of Christ leads to a godly life. Peter states, “His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who has called us by his own glory and goodness” (2 Pet 1:3). Knowledge of Christ is demonstrated by how believers live out their life. Their attitude, behavior and action indicate their understanding of Christ. This knowledge of Christ should produce a godly life. A godly life displays “self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection and love” (2 Pet 1:5-7). There is a natural progression and growth of these traits when believers grow in their relationship with Christ.

Peter teaches that when these godly characteristics are increasing that “they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet 1:8). Schreiner shares that the word “‘ineffective’ is used of idle workers who are

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<sup>89</sup> Myers, *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*, 632.

<sup>90</sup> Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 176; Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, 165.

<sup>91</sup> Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 177; Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*.

<sup>92</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1989), 438.

wasting their day in the marketplace instead of working (Matt 20:3, 6).”<sup>93</sup> Peter makes the point that knowledge needs to be paired with practical action.<sup>94</sup> This is why Peter places knowledge with these godly characteristics. The invisible qualities of knowledge need to be made visible in their daily lives. This demonstrates awareness of Christ’s love and power in a believer’s life. As they grow in their knowledge of Christ, they are able to see where they need to grow and change. They are confronted with areas in their life that needs the transforming power of Christ. Pierre shares that “without the knowledge of Christ and a love for him, people will not obey him with a whole heart.”<sup>95</sup> Believers choose to live a godly life when they learn and grow in their knowledge of Christ. Their growing knowledge of Christ gives an opportunity for obedience to Christ in their life. This godly living also influences others around them too. Christians are also able to impact others when their knowledge of Christ produces a godly life. They are able to demonstrate the love of God and show the power of God in how they love and live. Family, friends and co-workers notice their godly behavior and are positively impacted. The believer will lead a more effective and purposeful life.

Peter points out that an ungodly life demonstrates a lack of knowledge of Christ. He shares that when the believer does not choose to live a godly life, then they are “nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins” (2 Pet 1:9). Schreiner argues that the word blind can be interpreted to be shortsighted and have failed to see what they should see.<sup>96</sup> The believer has forgotten or is unaware that their sins are forgiven. When believers do this, Schreiner shares that they are “living like

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<sup>93</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary, v. 37 (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 302.

<sup>94</sup> Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, 180.

<sup>95</sup> Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 15.

<sup>96</sup> Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 303.

unconverted people.”<sup>97</sup> They are choosing not to live by God’s truth and knowledge. Their lack of awareness shows they have forgotten their identity and hope in Christ. They become blind to the saving grace and truth of Christ’s salvation. Peter is warning the church not to become forgetful and blind. He wants them to be aware of their choices and the consequences of their actions.

Peter also encourages the church to “confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things then you will never stumble” (2 Pet 1:10). Schreiner shares that believers confirm their call and election by living a godly life and this godly life is listed in verses 5 to 7.<sup>98</sup> When believers do this then Peter teaches that they will never stumble. This demonstrates maturity and a closeness to Christ. They will not forsake or abandon God. They will continue to walk with Christ. However, those that do stumble show they have forgotten this knowledge or have been swayed by false teachers.<sup>99</sup> Peter does not want believers to stumble. He wants them to be aware and choose to live a godly life.

Peter reaffirms this when he says, “So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have” (2 Pet 1:12). Peter acknowledges that the church knows the truth and has a growing knowledge of Christ. He wants to remind the church what he just shared from verses 3-11 about the connection with how the knowledge of Christ produces a godly life.<sup>100</sup> Peter stresses that he will always remind them. This is something that the church needs continual reminder about. Believers can easily forget and become distracted. Believers need continual encouragements to pursue a knowledge of Christ.

Our knowledge of Christ deepens our relationship with Christ. Peter uses the same word for knowledge in 2 Peter 1:5. He refers to the same personal knowledge that

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<sup>97</sup> Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 308.

<sup>98</sup> Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 305.

<sup>99</sup> Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 305.

<sup>100</sup> Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 308.

he wrote in verse 3. Green points out that “this knowledge of God is not the mere fruit of human inquiry or speculation but is the result of the divine initiative.”<sup>101</sup> Davids argues that “we were called into our knowledge of him; it was not really our discovery.”<sup>102</sup> This gives perspective and helps us to approach knowledge of Jesus with humility. God has a knowledge of us, and this allows us to know him. God initiates and pursues us. Our response should be humility. People do not deserve to be known, but they are given access to have a personal relationship with the God Almighty. This allows us to strengthen and deepen our relationship as we grow in our knowledge of Christ.

Peter affirms the importance of knowledge by closing out 2 Peter with an encouragement to “grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 3:18). Davids highlights the different scholarly opinions on understanding how grace and knowledge are connected.<sup>103</sup> Green shares that knowledge is not meant to be “theoretical but personal knowledge whose object is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”<sup>104</sup> After conversion, our goal is to grow in our personal knowledge and relationship with Jesus Christ. Green argues that when believers do this, this is the “strongest antidote against the destructive lures of false teachers.”<sup>105</sup>

Peter’s life demonstrates a personal knowledge and relationship with Jesus. Even when he denied and betrayed Jesus, Peter strove for that personal relationship. He did not give up. He encourages believers with his own story and testimony to continue to pursue that knowledge. Peter wants believers to have a deeper knowledge and understanding of God, or else they will be “limited in the depth of their personal knowing

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<sup>101</sup> Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 183.

<sup>102</sup> Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, 171.

<sup>103</sup> Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, 316.

<sup>104</sup> Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 343.

<sup>105</sup> Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*.

of themselves.”<sup>106</sup> When Christians have a fuller understanding of God, they are able to understand themselves as well. Knowledge of God and self are interconnected. Saint Augustine prayed, “Grant, Lord that I may know myself that I may know thee.”<sup>107</sup> Knowledge of self and God also allows us to live out the mission of God. Peter understands his role and purpose in leading the church and does so with godliness and purpose. He encourages the church to continue to live this out in their lives. Our knowledge of God and ourselves will have a positive impact on others. It will create opportunities for God to move and work in others’ lives.

### **Conclusion**

Building self-awareness is a discipleship issue. Self-awareness is not just a journey of self-discovery. In fact, J. I. Packer helps to understand that “what matters supremely therefore, is not, in the last analysis, the fact that I know God, but the larger fact which underlies it—the fact that he knows me.”<sup>108</sup> God is fully aware of people. He knows them and has a complete understanding of them. When people understand this truth, then it changes them. Their relationship with God allows them to experience transformation and change. Packer shares that “transformational knowing of God comes from the intimate, personal knowing of Divine love.”<sup>109</sup> Having a deep and intimate relationship with God allows them to be transformed. Believers experience true love from him, which gives them a greater awareness and knowledge of themselves. They are able to walk in that truth. People cannot experience true self-awareness without exploring awareness of who God is. When they have this, they can understand how they impact

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<sup>106</sup> Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself*, 17.

<sup>107</sup> Dori Sear, *All Consuming Fire: Spiritual Formation Head to Heart* (United States: Xulon Press, 2008), 19.

<sup>108</sup> J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, 20th anniv. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 41.

<sup>109</sup> Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself*, 34-35.

others as well. They see this demonstrated in the lives of Jesus, Paul, and Peter. Jesus fully understands both himself and God perfectly. Paul is transformed as he encounters Jesus. He shares the wrestle and struggle that all believers face between the flesh and spirit. Peter shows the importance of having an accurate knowledge of God. This allows them to have an impact and influence over others in the church.

## CHAPTER 3

### PRACTICAL WAYS TO BUILD SELF-AWARENESS IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

“Mind the gap” is an audible warning phrase that people hear when a person steps into the underground subway in London. It refers to the gap between the subway train and the platform. There is a space that passengers need to be careful about when entering or leaving the subway train. If they are not cautious, then they can trip on the gap and fall down. The gap varies and can be one foot apart in some stations. Most people are able to see physical gaps, but how often are they aware of the nonphysical gaps in their lives, specifically with their emotions? Tasha Eurich conducted research to find out people’s level of self-awareness. She found that 95 percent of participants believed they were somewhat-to-very self-aware; however, her research found that roughly 15 percent of participants were actually somewhat self-aware.<sup>1</sup> That is a big gap between people’s perception of themselves and the reality of those perceptions. Regardless of the size of the gap, it is possible to close the gap. Psychologists, researchers, and therapists have done research to find different activities and therapies to develop more self-awareness. These tools are utilized outside the church and some need to be encouraged in the church as well. Pastors, leaders, and church members can benefit from some of this research and incorporate it into their existing spiritual disciplines. This will allow them to have a greater understanding of their emotions, passions, values, and strengths (internal self-awareness). It will also help them have a greater awareness of how their actions, behaviors, and attitude are impacting others around them (external self-awareness).

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<sup>1</sup> Harvard Business Review, *Self-Awareness*, HBR Emotional Intelligence Series (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2018), 14.

## Background of Self-Awareness

Peter Salovey and John Mayer introduced the concept of emotional intelligence in 1990, and they defined it as a form of “social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and action.”<sup>2</sup> The term “emotional intelligence” did not become popular until Daniel Goleman published a book on emotional intelligence in 1995.<sup>3</sup> There are five different components associated with emotional intelligence, according to Goleman. These five elements are self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill.<sup>4</sup>

While there are five pillars of emotional intelligence, self-awareness is considered the foundation and building block to emotional intelligence. Daniel Anderson argues that “having a high emotional intelligence cannot be unaccompanied by high self-awareness. Thus, if you have a high EQ you also know yourself well.”<sup>5</sup> In order for people to know themselves, they need to have a high level of self-awareness. This leads to a higher emotional intelligence. Self-awareness is the starting point that helps to build and increase our emotional intelligence. The other four build on self-awareness. Therefore, it is vital for people to have an awareness of themselves before focusing on the other parts of emotional intelligence.

Daniel Goleman defines self-awareness as “having a deep understanding of one’s emotions, as well as one’s strengths and limitations and one’s values and motives.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Salovey, ed., *Emotional Intelligence: Key Readings on the Mayer and Salovey Model*, (Port Chester, NY: Dude Publ, 2007), 39.

<sup>3</sup> Jake Aguas, “Emotional Intelligence in the Discourse of the Johannie Account,” *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* 8, no. 1 (2018): 53.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, 10th anniversary ed. (New York: Bantam Books, 2005), 1995.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Anderson, *Introducing Emotional Intelligence: Mastering Modern Psychology to Control Emotions, Improve Communication and Boost Your Leadership Skills* (Self-pub., 2019), 84.

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Goleman, Richard E. Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, tenth anniversary ed. (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2013), 40.

There are two basic components of self-awareness. The first is having an understanding of our own emotions, passions, values, strengths, and weaknesses. Tasha Eurich refers to this as “internal self-awareness.”<sup>7</sup> The other part of self-awareness is understanding how our actions, attitude, and behavior impact others around us. It is being aware of how they are perceived by others. Eurich calls this “external self-awareness.” In order to build self-awareness, people need information about themselves. They need several viewpoints and perspectives to have a greater understanding of themselves.

Having a high level of self-awareness allows people to live a fuller life. Travis Bradberry shares that “your personality sets your direction in life, and the greater your self-awareness, the more able you are to use personality to achieve your fullest potential.”<sup>8</sup> This full potential is only realized in connection with a person’s relationship with Jesus. Jesus provides that pathway for a full and abundant life. Jesus teaches this in John 10:10 when he said, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” According to Borchert, the Greek word for “full” means “that which goes way beyond necessity.”<sup>9</sup> People all have an idea of what they want their lives to be. Jesus’ definition of life for Christians goes beyond their wildest dreams. He wants Christians to live their best lives now. This requires that they have an awareness about their relationship with Jesus. This allows them to also better understand themselves. When they do develop self-awareness, they have a better understanding of their personalities. This knowledge then gives them the opportunity to maximize the best parts of themselves in their workplace, family, and environment. They are able to excel and thrive in their lives.

On the flip side, Goleman shares that awareness also helps people to

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<sup>7</sup> Tasha Eurich, *Insight: Why We’re Not as Self-Aware as We Think, and How Seeing Ourselves Clearly Helps Us Succeed at Work and in Life* (New York: Crown Business, 2017), 8.

<sup>8</sup> Travis Bradberry, *The Personality Code: Unlock the Secret to Understanding Your Boss, Your Colleagues, Your Friends—and Yourself* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 2007), 5.

<sup>9</sup> Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1-11*, The New American Commentary, vol. 25A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 333.

understand their limitations.<sup>10</sup> Having a grasp of what they are not good at allows them to develop their abilities. They can improve and grow in those areas. They can only change what they are aware of. Bradberry argues that “self-awareness is not about discovering deep, dark secrets or unconscious motivation, but rather it comes from developing a straightforward and honest understanding of what makes you tick.”<sup>11</sup> It is understanding their triggers and motivations. Their limitations can also help them confront their sinful side. Ian Morgan Cron shares that “once you know the dark side of your personality, simply give God consent to do for you what you’ve never been able to do for yourself, namely, bring meaningful and lasting change to your life.”<sup>12</sup> God can heal the broken parts of people. God is able to heal them permanently so that they can live the full life that God has for each one of them. People need to be aware of this and come to God with their sin and brokenness.

Self-awareness is not just a concept or idea; it is connected to people’s physical bodies. Self-awareness is found in the prefrontal area of the brain.<sup>13</sup> Goleman shares that the “circuits in that part of the brain, then, harbor our positive feelings, quietly bringing them to mind over and over as we struggle toward a goal.”<sup>14</sup> Those positive feelings encourage people and motivate them to continue to move forward with their goals. This shows a relationship between what they do and feel and how their brain operates. Goleman teaches that the “passion for work, at the brain level, means that circuits linked to the left prefrontal cortex pump out a fairly steady stream of good feelings as we do our work.”<sup>15</sup> When people are self-aware of what makes them feel good or motivates them,

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<sup>10</sup> Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership*, 40.

<sup>11</sup> Bradberry, *The Personality Code*, 8.

<sup>12</sup> Ian Morgan Cron, *The Road Back to You: An Enneagram Journey to Self-Discovery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 36.

<sup>13</sup> Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership*, 41.

<sup>14</sup> Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership*.

<sup>15</sup> Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership*, 41.

then their brain encourages them by producing chemical reactions to continue those feelings. Self-awareness and our physical bodies are connected so that they continue to engage, work, and be productive. Goleman also shares that the “prefrontal-based brain circuits perform another motivational favor: They quiet the feelings of frustration or worry that might discourage us from continuing.”<sup>16</sup> Everyone goes through conflict, pressures, and challenges. When people are self-aware of those moments, then their brain can prepare to help them navigate through them. This helps them to overcome and excel in a variety of situations and environments. Bradberry argues that the “area of the brain responsible for self-awareness is highly malleable. But like a muscle, just having it doesn’t mean it will be put to good use. Our self-awareness needs to be exercised before it can get strong.”<sup>17</sup> Self-awareness is like a muscle. People can strengthen it and make it stronger. Eurich shows that self-awareness is a developing skill.<sup>18</sup> People can improve this skill and grow in their understanding of themselves and how they impact others. However, if people do not work on this and build this muscle then it atrophies and becomes weaker. It requires intentionality, focus, and discipline.

### **Benefits of Self-Awareness**

Research shows that there are benefits of having high levels of self-awareness and emotional intelligence. It shows that those with “high emotional intelligence report better moods, less anxiety, and less worry during times of tension and stress than those with less ability to identify and manage their emotions.”<sup>19</sup> When a person is able to identify their emotions, it gives them the ability to manage their emotions. This is especially helpful in the workplace. In fact, research shows that the biggest predictor of

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<sup>16</sup> Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, *Primal Leadership*.

<sup>17</sup> Bradberry, *The Personality Code*, 39.

<sup>18</sup> Eurich, *Insight*, 9.

<sup>19</sup> Anderson, *Introducing Emotional Intelligence*, 22.

success for executives in the workplace is having a high level of self-awareness.<sup>20</sup> Bradberry points out that “in the workplace, 83% of those high in self-awareness are top performers.”<sup>21</sup> TalentSmart did a study of half a million people, and they found that only 29 percent of people possessed self-awareness and “more than 70 percent of those we tested had considerable difficulty managing the stress and interpersonal conflict that are fostered by this lack of self-awareness.”<sup>22</sup> The apostle Paul is an example of how high self-awareness allowed him to be effective in ministry. In 2 Corinthians 11, Paul is aware of the hardship that he has faced while doing ministry. He has been shipwrecked, flogged, beaten, and much more. However, even with all these difficulties, Paul has learned to be content. In fact, Paul shares that he has learned the “secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want” (Phil 4:12). He is fully aware of his circumstances and is able to choose to be content and satisfied. He is able to continue to work and do ministry. Even when he is in prison, Paul is singing and praising God (Acts 16:25). Paul is fully aware of his emotions and circumstances. This allows him to persevere and do his job exceptionally well.

### **Research on Lack of Self-Awareness**

Self-awareness helps us become more successful in life; however, many do not choose to develop awareness. Henry Cloud shares that “it is the people who have little self-awareness who are the most dysfunctional. It is a paradox of life that the less we look at our shortcomings, the more others do.”<sup>23</sup> Even though many may choose not to examine themselves, it is very clear and apparent to others. A person’s weaknesses and

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<sup>20</sup> J.P. Flaum, “When It Comes to Business Leadership, Nice Guys Finish First,” Green Peak, accessed September 20, 2020, <https://greenpeakpartners.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Green-Peak-Cornell-University-Study-What-predicts-success.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup> Bradberry, *The Personality Code*, 8.

<sup>22</sup> Bradberry, *The Personality Code*, 35.

<sup>23</sup> Henry Cloud, *Integrity: The Courage to Meet the Demands of Reality: How Six Essential Qualities Determine Your Success in Business*, First Collins paperback ed. (New York: Collins, 2008), 118.

faults are obvious to others, so it is important that they are aware of them. Researchers define this lack of self-awareness in a variety of ways. Tasha Eurich defines it as self-delusion. She shares that self-delusion is the “antithesis of self-awareness.”<sup>24</sup> It is having these beliefs and ideas about yourself and others that are not in sync with reality. John Ortberg calls it a shadow. He shares that our shadow can cause us to drift “just five or ten degrees off our true path in the direction of selfishness or comfort or arrogance. But those few degrees, over time, become the difference between light and shadow. When people live in the shadows, they keep secrets.”<sup>25</sup> When people are not aware of their dark side, they can let their dark side lead them and control them. Having secrets and hiding information from themselves and others are symptoms of living in the shadow. The Arbinger Institute also refers to a lack of self-awareness as “self-deception.” They mention that there is “nothing more common in organizations than self-deception.”<sup>26</sup> Gordon Smith shares that self-aware people are “conscious of their own capacity for self-deception and thus of their vital need for the encouragement, support and wisdom of others.”<sup>27</sup> Self-deception does not advocate for support and help from others. It wants to isolate and distance from support and wisdom from others. This only reinforces the cycle of deception.

There is research to help people understand why they choose to not confront or deal with their shadow, self-delusion, or self-deception. Nobel Prize Laureate Daniel Kahneman did research that found the “Better than Average” effect.<sup>28</sup> The idea is that

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<sup>24</sup> Eurich, *Insight*, 7.

<sup>25</sup> Samuel R. Chand, *Leadership Pain: The Classroom for Growth* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2015), 121.

<sup>26</sup> Arbinger Institute, ed., *Leadership and Self-Deception: Getting out of the Box*, 3rd ed. (Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2018), 15.

<sup>27</sup> Gordon T. Smith, *The Voice of Jesus: Discernment, Prayer, and the Witness of the Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 33.

<sup>28</sup> Justin Druger and David Dunning, “Unskilled and Unaware of It: How Difficulties in Recognizing One’s Own Incompetence Lead to Inflated Self-Assessment.,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 77, no. 6 (1999): 1121–34.

people tend to think more highly of themselves than is true. For instance, their research was conducted on thirteen thousand professionals and found that there was no relationship with their own self-assessment and their objective ratings of performance. More than 33 percent of engineers considered themselves as top 5 percent of performers compared with their peers. Another research was done on a million high school seniors that showed that “25 percent placed themselves in the top 1 percent in their ability to get along with others. How many thought they were below average? Two percent.”<sup>29</sup> Most people tend to think they are the exception. They believe they are above average. This is an issue that Paul addresses. Paul encourages Christians to think accurately of themselves. He shares that believers are not to think of themselves “more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you” (Rom 12:3). Christians need the right judgment of themselves. They should not see themselves too highly or too lowly. They need an accurate view of how God has gifted and made each of them.

Other research shows that “experienced leaders are more likely to overestimate their abilities.”<sup>30</sup> Those leaders or successful people tend to rely on their past success and achievements when faced with their present situations. Professor Manfred Kets Vries shares that this is due to the fact that these leaders are “surrounded by walls, mirrors and liars.”<sup>31</sup> These leaders may surround themselves with trusted voices that just encourage and promote what they want to hear. This makes the leader feel better and overly confident in themselves because they are being fed those false encouragements. However, if they were surrounded by people who gave a fair, rational, and objective reality, then they would be able to lead and make decisions more in line with reality. Linhart shares

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<sup>29</sup> Eurich, *Insight*, 48.

<sup>30</sup> Eurich, *Insight*, 47.

<sup>31</sup> Eurich, *Insight*, 47.

that “most leaders do not seek pastors or mentors to help them work through those areas.”<sup>32</sup> When Christians invite godly men and women into their leadership, they are inviting God’s perspective, plans, and purposes. This allows them to have a greater reliance on God rather than on themselves. This makes them a better leader.

Stanford psychology professor David Dunning also found the “Dunning-Kruger Effect,” which found that the “least competent people tend to be the most confident in their abilities.”<sup>33</sup> For instance, they did research on students and tested them in a variety of skills. They found that those who scored in the 12th percentile believed that their abilities were in the 62nd percentile.<sup>34</sup> This means that they only tested better than 12 percent of others, but they themselves thought they tested better than 62 percent of others. That is a big gap in reality. Even if they did not have the skill sets, they still believed they were better than average.

Research shows the reasons for why people hold onto these blind spots. Our society has moved from an “age of effort” (World War 2 generation), to an “age of esteem” (1950-1960), to the “cult of self”.<sup>35</sup> In 1969, psychotherapist Nathaniel Branden, father of the self-esteem movement, published “Psychology of Self-Esteem,” and he led a task force to promote self-esteem in California.<sup>36</sup> This movement created a feel good movement but it also created unintended consequences. It focused primarily on the individual and the idea of making themselves feel good regardless of the outcome of the person’s work or situation. Eurich shares that “an intense self-focus not only obscures our vision of those around us; it distracts our ability to see ourselves for what we really

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<sup>32</sup> Linhart, *The Self-Aware Leader*, 61.

<sup>33</sup> Druger and Dunning, “Unskilled and Unaware of It,” 1121–34.

<sup>34</sup> Druger and Dunning, “Unskilled and Unaware of It,” 1121–34.

<sup>35</sup> Eurich, *Insight*, 67.

<sup>36</sup> Eurich, *Insight*.

are.”<sup>37</sup> Promoting only self-esteem blinds people to the reality of the individual because the focus is just to feel good and think they are good. This intense focus on self creates ignorance and darkness. Paul shares, “They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts” (Eph 4:18). A person’s ignorance leads to a darkness in their understanding of themselves and God. It creates a separation from God. They are not able to have a true understanding of themselves without a proper understanding of God. Their ignorance creates a disconnection between God, themselves and others.

Another reason may be due to highly researched principle in psychology called “cognitive dissonance.” Marshall Goldsmith shares that it is when there is a “disconnect between what we believe in our minds and what we experience or see in reality.”<sup>38</sup> This disconnect may happen due to pain. People do not like pain and want to avoid it. However, Samuel Chand shares that “life’s most defining moments are usually painful experiences. When we encounter pain, we often default to previous coping styles. It takes perception, courage and help to create new habits.”<sup>39</sup> Peter Scazzero shares that while it is painful, the truth of ourselves will ultimately draw us closer to God.”<sup>40</sup> Pain is a way that God uses to get our attention. It reminds people that they are human and in need of help. They can only find their true help through God.

However, many have a variety of coping mechanisms that are not helpful or healthy for themselves. When they can embrace pain, then they will be able to grow and thrive. This requires that they have a growth mindset rather than a fixed mindset. Carol Dweck shares that a “growth mindset is based on the belief that your basic qualities are

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<sup>37</sup> Eurich, *Insight*, 75.

<sup>38</sup> Marshall Goldsmith and Mark Reiter, *What Got You Here Won't Get You There: How Successful People Become Even More Successful*, 1st ed. (New York: Hyperion, 2007), 24.

<sup>39</sup> Chand, *Leadership Pain*, 146.

<sup>40</sup> Peter Scazzero and Warren Bird, *The Emotionally Healthy Church: A Strategy for Discipleship That Actually Changes Lives* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 73.

things you can cultivate through your efforts, your strategies and help from others.”<sup>41</sup> This requires self-awareness to accurately assess and understand your current talents and abilities. This information allows you to take a realistic and productive approach in growth and development. However, a fixed mindset “limits achievement. It fills people’s minds with interfering thoughts, it makes effort disagreeable and it leads to inferior learning strategies.”<sup>42</sup> A fixed mindset does not believe in examination and self-awareness. It characterizes someone that is blind to their own situation and reality. The only way to break away from this fixed mindset is by seeking after God to bring transformation. Benner shares that God helps us break through our false understanding so that people can see their true selves in relation to God.<sup>43</sup> They can only grow and develop when they are connected with God and see themselves the way God sees them. This creates transformation and growth.

Technology only promotes this intense focus on ourselves. Barna Group surveyed 1,021 parents in America about the amount of time their children spend on social media. They found that children spend on average, five hours on a typical weekday using social media.<sup>44</sup> In the research, the number one reason that makes parenting more difficult today is technology and social media. A study found that when people are talking in person, they talk about themselves 60 percent of the time, but when they are on social media, it jumps to 80 percent.<sup>45</sup> The focus becomes more about ourselves on social media. They care more about their own thoughts and ideas. Proverbs shares this reality when it says, “fools find no pleasure in understanding but delight in airing their own

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<sup>41</sup> Carol S. Dweck, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2008), 7.

<sup>42</sup> Dweck, *Mindset*, 67.

<sup>43</sup> David G. Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery*, exp. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2015), 67.

<sup>44</sup> Crouch, *The Tech-Wise Family*, 109.

<sup>45</sup> Neil Duncan, Robin Dunbar, and Anna Marriott, “Human Conversational Behavior,” *Human Nature* 8, no. 3 (1997): 231–46.

opinions” (Prov 18:2). They use social media to promote themselves and make it about themselves. Researcher Timothy Wilson and his colleagues gave participants the choice between being alone in a room by themselves without any phone or to receive a mild electric shock. They found that more than half preferred the shocks than being alone for five minutes.<sup>46</sup> The idea of being alone even for five minutes without social media and technology is too unbearable for most people. In fact, they would choose to receive mild torture than to have time to themselves. This shows how dependent and obsessed people are with technology. They are afraid to be alone and afraid to explore themselves.

### **Internal Self-Awareness**

According to Tasha Eurich, internal awareness “has to do with seeing yourself clearly. It is an inward understanding of your values, passions, aspirations, ideal environment, patterns, reactions and impact on others.”<sup>47</sup> Internal self-awareness allows us to have a better understanding of ourselves. However, this requires that Christians also comprehend who God is. They are both connected. Believers cannot understand themselves without inviting God into the equation. John Calvin wrote, “Christian spirituality involves a transformation of the self that occurs only when God and self are both deeply known.”<sup>48</sup> They discover their self only when they seek after God, because in “finding God, we find our truest and deepest self.”<sup>49</sup> When believers are connected with God, then they have a better understanding of their own internal motivations and desires. It allows them to live in their authentic self. When they lack internal self-awareness, there is a disconnect with God as well.

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<sup>46</sup> Eurich, *Insight*, 120.

<sup>47</sup> Eurich, *Insight*, 8.

<sup>48</sup> Jean Calvin and Ford Lewis Battles, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 15.

<sup>49</sup> David G. Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery*, exp. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2015), 124.

## Reflection and Introspection

Research shows that internal self-awareness can be built through reflection and introspection. Mortari shares that reflection is ““a turning back onto a self” where the inquirer is at once an observed and an active observer.”<sup>50</sup> It is being able to reflect and make observations of oneself in a particular situation or moment so that they can find meaning or a better sense of understanding. The non-Western approach to reflection is called “mindfulness,” which is “to experience what one’s mind is doing as it does it, to be present with one’s mind.”<sup>51</sup> It is about focusing primarily on the here and now and being able to pay attention to our mind, thoughts, body, and action. This builds self-awareness so that a person can make the needed changes and adjustments. Mindfulness is effective when it is used in the context of God. When people are mindful of God’s presence in the here and now then they are able to have a proper understanding of their present moment. As it states in Lamentations 3:40, “Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord.” The goal of mindfulness needs to be to return to God. It is about centering our lives and relationship to God. This is where we find wholeness and peace.

There are benefits to self-reflection. Research shows that when employees spent fifteen minutes at the end of their work day to reflect about what happened, they performed 23 percent better after ten days than those who did not.<sup>52</sup> Another UK study found that those commuters who used their commute to reflect and plan were more productive, happier, and had better employee engagement.<sup>53</sup> The Bible shows that when Christians reflect on their lives in relation to God then there tremendous benefits. They

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<sup>50</sup> Luigina Mortari, “Reflectivity in Research Practice: An Overview of Different Perspectives,” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 14, no. 5 (December 9, 2015): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406915618045>.

<sup>51</sup> Mortari, “Reflectivity in Research Practice,” 7.

<sup>52</sup> Jennifer Porter, “Why You Should Make Time for Self-Reflection (Even If You Hate Doing It),” *Harvard Business Review*, last modified March 21, 2017, <https://hbr.org/2017/03/why-you-should-make-time-for-self-reflection-even-if-you-hate-doing-it>.

<sup>53</sup> Porter, “Why You Should Make Time.”

are able to know God's will (Rom 12:2), have God's peace (Phil 4:7), and God's blessings (Ps 115:12). When they reflect through the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16) then they are able to have God's wisdom and live out their purpose.

Gibbs created a reflective model to have a structure and process for reflection. There are six stages to the reflective cycle: 1) description, 2) feelings, 3) evaluation, 4) analysis, 5) conclusion, and 6) action plan.<sup>54</sup> In the description phase, the focus is to reflect on what happened. It is being able to tell the story with the details. Next, in the feeling phase, one reflects on the feelings that were felt at that moment. The more open and honest the person is, the better the reflection will be. This is a vital part of the reflection process. Next, evaluation is about seeing what the positive and negative outcomes were. It is evaluating what happened because of that situation or event. The analysis phase is making sense of what happened. It is about uncovering and understanding the meaning behind the situation. The conclusion is about deciding on the learning outcome from the situation. The action plan is the last phase that determines if any action is needed.

Teachers were tested with the reflective model to see if it improved challenging teaching environments. The research found that after learning this model, teachers were able to see their situations from a variety of perspectives and points of view.<sup>55</sup> It gave them the ability to understand those challenging situations and gave them the opportunity to brainstorm and think through different ways to improve those situations. Reflection gave them the ability to take a different and more effective approach. Reflection allows us to stop and think through a better course of action. This is a practice that the church can use to better self-reflect. The focus on emotions and

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<sup>54</sup> Graham Gibbs, *Learning by Doing: A Guide to Teaching and Learning Methods* (London: FEU, 1988), 49.

<sup>55</sup> Pihla Markkanen, et al., "A Reflective Cycle: Understanding Challenging Situations in a School Setting," *Educational Research* 62, no. 1 (January 2, 2020): 46–62, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2020.1711790>.

feelings is an area that would be beneficial for Christians. The reflective model gives a practical step-by-step method for those that need structure and a process.

## **Meditation and Prayer**

Christians practice self-reflection through the discipline of meditation. Richard Foster shares that the “Bible uses two different Hebrew words (הִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת and שִׁיחַ) to convey the idea of meditation, and together they are used some fifty-eight times.”<sup>56</sup> Meditation, according to Foster, means “listening to God’s word, reflecting on God’s word, rehearsing God’s deed, ruminating on God’s law, and more.”<sup>57</sup> It is continually thinking with intentional focus on God’s Word in our lives. Jesus made this a priority when he would withdraw to a lonely place so that he could listen and be with God (Matt 14:13). The purpose of meditation is so that believers can hear God’s voice through God’s word. When Christians do, they are able to understand what God is speaking to them about. Richard Foster shares that “what happens in meditation is that we create the emotional and spiritual space which allows Christ to construct an inner sanctuary in the heart.”<sup>58</sup> Meditation is the gateway by which Christians have space to reflect on their emotions and their hearts. It is inviting God to let his truth and life in so that they have a better understanding of themselves. This sheds light on what they may be thinking and feeling. Hebrews 4:12 shares about the power of God’s Word in helping to better understand our hearts and mind.

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<sup>56</sup> Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, 20th anniversary ed. (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1998), 15.

<sup>57</sup> Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*.

<sup>58</sup> Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 20.

The prayer of examen helps one to better reflect and know themselves.<sup>59</sup>

According to Foster, the prayer of examen has two parts. The first is the “*examen of consciousness* through which we discover how God has been present to us throughout the day and how we have responded to his loving presence. The second aspect is an *examen of conscience* in which we uncover those areas that need cleansing, purifying and healing.”<sup>60</sup> Both types of prayers help build self-awareness because believers examine how they are connecting with God or rejecting God throughout the day. This allows them to take the next steps in discovering whether they need to ask for forgiveness and repair that relationship with God or if they need to be grateful and thankful.

Combining Foster’s prayer of examen and Gibbs’ reflective cycle creates structure and a clear process for believers. Gibbs’ reflective cycle does not take God into consideration, but when you filter his model through prayer and meditation, it creates a stronger and clearer process for some believers. It allows believers a step-by-step process to help bring God in their meditation and reflection. This is especially helpful for church members and leaders who need organization, structure, and a process. Many have a difficult time with self-reflection because of their methodology. Dr. Lara Fielding shares that “the danger of too much introspection in therapy is that we spin a story that gets us stuck.”<sup>61</sup> People replay the same story and focus on the same situation and feelings.

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<sup>59</sup> Richard Foster is a Quaker Theologian who has been influenced by Roman Catholic Mystics such as Teresa of Avila, John Cross and others. Foster’s spiritual disciplines have some utility for Evangelical churches. However, his practices and disciplines need to be filtered and consistent with the Word of God. The discipline of prayer of examen needs to be rooted in Scripture and should not be for the pursuit of feeling or an experience. The purpose needs to be to know Christ and be more like Christ.

<sup>60</sup> Richard J. Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1992), 27–28.

<sup>61</sup> Eurich, *Insight*, 95.

When they do this, they get stuck and are not able to make progress even though they think they are reflecting and doing introspection. Gibbs' process offers a more proactive approach to understand their situation, feelings, and next steps.

Another tool that the church can use to better self-reflect is to stop asking the why question. Eurich shares that we need to stop asking "why" and start asking "what."<sup>62</sup> When people ask why and want to know why something happened in their past, then they replay that story and narrative. They can get stuck trying to uncover past motives, reasons, and explanations. This can lead to a cyclical pattern that leads to no progress. However, when they start asking "what," then they can start making progress. The focus is on being proactive and making progress.

Researchers did a study on college students to see if asking "why" or "what" had any difference in impact.<sup>63</sup> These students would be given an evaluation of their personality based on an assessment they had taken earlier in the semester. They were to judge the accuracy of those assessments. They were given evaluation from a negative perspective and a positive one. Before the evaluation, the students were divided into two groups and given time to reflect. The first group was asked to find out why they were the kind of person that they are. The other group was asked to think what kind of person they were. Research found that students in the "why" group were defensive and unwilling to take the negative feedback. They spent their time defending, justifying, and explaining themselves. The "what" student group took the feedback more willingly. In fact, they

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<sup>62</sup> Eurich, *Insight*, 99.

<sup>63</sup> Gregory J. Hixon and William B. Swann, "When Does Introspection Bear Fruit? Self-Reflection, Self-Insight, and Interpersonal Choices," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 64, no. 1 (1993): 35-43.

were open to hearing it, thinking that it could help them grow and improve. When people ask the “what” question, then they are more open to different options and possibilities. When they are focused on the why, then they can get stuck in the past and try to explain themselves rather than move forward.

Asking the “what” question can help Christians move forward; however, moving forward needs to be done in relation to Christ. Paul shows this attitude and mentality in Philippians 3. He shares that he wants to forget what is behind and strain toward what is ahead (Phil 3:13). Paul has not forgotten his own past (Phil 3:4-6). He does not want to dwell on the past by asking the “why” question. He is focused on his relationship with Christ. He considers all his accomplishments and accolades a loss compared to knowing and having a relationship with Christ (Phil 3:7-9). Paul understands his identity and worth comes in Christ. Paul strives and strains to know Christ and live for Christ in the present. He is focused on what he can do for Christ today. When believers have this desire to know Christ then are able to ask what they can do for Christ today. They don’t become stuck in the past. This allows believers to be proactive and take initiative for God.

Christians have wrestled with the idea of self-reflection and self-awareness. Many Christians view introspection as being self-absorbed and greedy and conclude that it is not important to examine our feelings.<sup>64</sup> However, Scazzero argues that “honest examination of our emotions and feelings is central.”<sup>65</sup> In fact, Scazzero’s books combine the idea and concept of emotional awareness and faith. His approach has become widely

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<sup>64</sup> Scazzero and Bird, *The Emotionally Healthy Church*, 78.

<sup>65</sup> Scazzero and Bird, *The Emotionally Healthy Church*, 78.

used and recognized in the church. There is more of an emphasis on and need to examine our emotions honestly and openly. People see the dangers when leaders and pastors are not aware of themselves. Pastors either quit or are forced into resignation because of secret sins, moral failures, or leadership issues. Linhart argues that the “emotional side of life is one of the most common areas leaders and their supervisors tend to ignore—to their own detriment.”<sup>66</sup> Henri Nouwen shares that Christians should “spend 50 percent of our time living our lives and the other 50 percent reflecting on what is being lived.”<sup>67</sup> Reflection helps believers do what God has called them to.

### **Importance of Journaling**

Another helpful practice to build internal self-awareness is journaling. Journaling allows people to understand themselves as they write and express. Geri Scazzero shares that journaling allows us to develop self-awareness by revealing our feelings.<sup>68</sup> How people journal matters. Most people use journaling to write down what happened in their day. It is used more as a way to document experiences or jot down some thoughts and feelings. However, it usually does not go any deeper than that. Psychologist James Pennebaker shares that effective journaling involves writing between twenty to thirty minutes our “deepest thoughts and feelings about issues that have made a big impact on [our] lives.”<sup>69</sup> It is being able to spend a short amount of time to express a range of emotions. Research has shown that the focus of journaling is to “explore the negative and not overthink the positive.”<sup>70</sup> Journaling helps us be honest with our dark

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<sup>66</sup> Linhart, *The Self-Aware Leader*, 98.

<sup>67</sup> Geri Scazzero and Peter Scazzero, *I Quit! Stop Pretending Everything is Fine and Change Your Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 111.

<sup>68</sup> Hixon and Swann, “When Does Introspection Bear Fruit?” 35–43.

<sup>69</sup> Eurich, *Insight*, 103.

<sup>70</sup> Eurich, *Insight*, 104.

side and painful feelings. This can be used as a prayer tool. A journal entry can be a prayer that is written to God to express one's feelings. Journaling is being honest with what they are feeling.

Research confirms the power of journaling. Researchers label it as “expressive writing.” Dr. James Pennebaker, chair of psychology department at the University of Texas at Austin conducted research to find the benefits of expressive writing. His research found that writing a person's emotions and feelings boosts their immune system especially for patients with illnesses such as HIV/AIDS, asthma, and arthritis.<sup>71</sup> Joshua Smyth conducted an intensive research review on writing and found that writing one's feelings does help with lowering stress and anxiety.<sup>72</sup> Smyth discovered that just venting one's emotions was not enough to help and be effective. Rather, how people interpret their situation as well as identify the accurate words of their emotions determine the effectiveness and healing power of journaling. Smyth shares that people need to better understand and learn about their emotions. There needs to be a connection with their feelings and meaning. Psychology researcher Susan Lutgendorf found that those who are able to find meaning when writing expressively were able to develop greater awareness about their negative experience.<sup>73</sup>

On the flip side, Lutgendorf's research found that those who relived those painful moments through writing without finding meaning reported poorer health and stress. She makes the connection that journaling is only effective when a person can find meaning and purpose from that traumatic experience.<sup>74</sup> Believers can find meaning in

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<sup>71</sup> Bridget Murray, “Writing to Heal,” *American Psychological Association* 33, no. 6 (June 2002): 54.

<sup>72</sup> Joshua Smyth, “Written Emotional Expression: Effect Sizes, Outcome Types, and Moderating Variables,” *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 66, no. 1 (1998): 174–84.

<sup>73</sup> Philip M. Ullrich and Susan K. Lutgendorf, “Journaling about Stressful Events: Effects of Cognitive Processing and Emotional Expression,” *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* 24, no. 3 (August 2002): 244–50, [https://doi.org/10.1207/S15324796ABM2403\\_10](https://doi.org/10.1207/S15324796ABM2403_10).

<sup>74</sup> Ullrich and Lutgendorf, “Journaling about Stressful Events,” 244-50.

their experience through God. Joseph is a prime example of this. He experienced trauma at the hands of his brothers and was unfairly treated by Egyptians. He had the opportunity to have revenge toward his brothers. However, he decided not to. He shared that even though his brothers “intended to harm me . . . God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives” (Gen 50:20). In the end, he is able to connect his painful moment with God’s purposes. He may not have used journaling as an exercise of internal self-awareness. However, he most likely spent hours praying and talking to God about this. Journaling can be an effective tool for believers to process, express, and connect with God and his purposes.

Peter Scazzero shares the importance and power of journaling. His quiet time with God not only includes reading the Bible but also expressing where he is at. It was not an easy journey. He shares that “in the beginning, my ‘feeling muscles’ were so weak I had difficulty distinguishing anger from sadness from fear—or sometimes feeling anything at all. Over time, however, I grew in my awareness of what was going on internally within me and integrated that into the larger issue of discerning God’s will.”<sup>75</sup> Writing down and exploring our feelings and emotions allows believers to hear God’s voice. This helps them to go beneath the surface so that they can understand God’s heart and desires for them. Scazzero shares some questions that may assist in starting this process. They include, “What am I feeling? And what am I feeling about that feeling? What am I sad about? Glad about? Angry about? Anxious about? Where in my body am I feeling the tension or stress (e.g., shoulders, neck, stomach)? What might this be telling me about what is going on inside me?”<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: It’s Impossible to Be Spiritually Mature, While Remaining Emotionally Immature*, Updated ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 52.

<sup>76</sup> Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How Transforming Your Inner Life Will Deeply Transform Your Church, Team, and the World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 71.

## External Awareness in the Church

According to Eurich, external self-awareness is “understanding yourself from the outside in—that is, knowing how other people see you.”<sup>77</sup> Most people think that if they have a high level of internal self-awareness then they will also have a high level of external self-awareness. However, Eurich’s research shows that there is in fact no correlation between the two.<sup>78</sup> Having a high level of external self-awareness does not correlate to having a high level of internal self-awareness. Each focus on a different aspect of awareness. Therefore, it is important to build and grow external awareness in the church.

External self-awareness helps people to have a better and fuller understanding of themselves. This is achieved by knowing how others perceive them and the impact they have on others. Eurich shares that “other people generally see us more objectively than we see ourselves.”<sup>79</sup> People have a view of themselves that may not be completely true since they are biased. They typically view themselves more favorably. Daniel Anderson shares that “the greatest challenge is to see oneself as others do. Using multiple sources of feedback can be very useful.”<sup>80</sup> When they are the only source of feedback then they are limited. However, when people have multiple points of references then they can have a fuller understanding of themselves. Proverbs 15 confirms this when it says, “Whoever heeds life-giving correction will be at home among the wise” (Prov 15:31). When people listen to advice from others it makes them wise. The sources of that wisdom can be our friends, family, co-workers, and community members. Strangers can also be a valuable source of feedback for us.<sup>81</sup> A stranger’s perspective may not be completely

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<sup>77</sup> Eurich, *Insight*, 8.

<sup>78</sup> Eurich, *Insight*, 8.

<sup>79</sup> Eurich, *Insight*, 147.

<sup>80</sup> Anderson, *Introducing Emotional Intelligence*, 87.

<sup>81</sup> Eurich, *Insight*, 147.

accurate, but it does provide insight on how outsiders perceive us or the first impression that others have of us. This is a valuable resource for any leader and employee. Cloud shares that the “number one reason for lack of growth in people’s lives, I have observed, is the absence of joining forces outside themselves who push them to grow.”<sup>82</sup> People grow when they invite and seek other’s opinion, feedback, and thoughts. It helps them to see themselves more openly and honestly.

### **Positive and Negative Feedback**

While many know it is important to receive feedback for growth, leaders tend to not want to receive negative feedback. Marshall Goldsmith shares that “successful people only have two problems dealing with negative feedback. However, they are big problems: (a) they don’t want to hear it from us and (b) we don’t want to give it to them.”<sup>83</sup> Leaders, especially successful ones, rarely want to hear about negative feedback about themselves. Rather they typically want to focus on their strengths, accomplishments, and achievements. They may admit they have weaknesses but do not want to make that their focus. The other issue is that people tend not to want to give negative feedback. Rosen and Tessor calls this the MUM effect.<sup>84</sup> Their research shows that when people have information that may make someone feel uncomfortable, they tend not to share it or say anything because of how the person will react. People do not want to be responsible for or the cause of creating negative feelings in others. Therefore, they are willing to withhold information or tell white lies. People would rather keep the peace rather than to stir up possible conflict. Peter Scazzero refers to this unresolved conflict as “false peace.”<sup>85</sup> Scazzero shares that “unresolved conflicts are one of the greatest tensions

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<sup>82</sup> Cloud, *Integrity*, 221.

<sup>83</sup> Goldsmith and Reiter, *What Got You Here Won’t Get You There*, 111.

<sup>84</sup> Eurich, *Insight*, 150.

<sup>85</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, 186.

in Christians' lives today."<sup>86</sup> These unresolved conflicts and tensions create a gap in their understanding among believers.

Feedback is not just about negative information. It is also about sharing positive information too. Feedback can be about positive traits, skills, abilities, and talents. Most feedback focuses on the negative, but sharing the positives is just as important. When people do this, they either affirm those aspects to that individual or help them discover a new strength. Others may discover strengths that a person had not known about themselves. It allows them to discover their potential, strengths, and opportunities. These interactions and positive feedback can be life changing for so many people. It gives confidence in the individual who hears it. It empowers them to explore and invest in this new strength, and they may not have done so if this information was not shared and given. Jesus affirms Peter for knowing the identity of Jesus and affirms his role as a leader in the church (Matt 16:18-19). Paul also encourages the church to share "what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen" (Eph 4:29). The church is to encourage others and help build them up. This means to highlight their strengths and share with them how they can continue to build those strengths.

Research shows the power of feedback in relationships. John Gottman, researcher and psychologist, has studied what makes marriages healthy and strong. Healthy marriages value and implement external feedback because they are very aware of each other's reality.<sup>87</sup> Gottman calls this idea and concept a "love map." These couples have high emotional intelligence because they understand their spouse's tendencies and personalities. They also are able to update that information based on circumstances and

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<sup>86</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*.

<sup>87</sup> John Mordechai Gottman and Nan Silver, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work: A Practical Guide from the Country's Foremost Relationship Expert* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1999), 53-67.

different life stages. They use this new information to better communicate, connect, and resolve issues. They are continually sharing and helping each other to understand each other. They are aware of the external influences that impact the couple as well as how they are impacting each other.

In modern day, the traditional way of doing feedback is the 360-degree feedback. It was started in the 1950s as a way for managers to receive feedback not only from other fellow managers but from a variety of viewpoints.<sup>88</sup> The strength of the feedback is that it is anonymous. This allows the person to give more honest and open feedback. It takes away the fear of giving negative feedback and the consequences that could be associated with it. Another strength of this type of feedback is that it helps people to see themselves from multiple points of view. They have a more wholistic view of how others perceive their leadership skills. They can see if there are common patterns or trends in their leadership. It highlights areas or habits that need to be addressed. The disadvantage of this feedback is that it is typically measured by numbers or numerical values, which makes it hard to interpret or understand.<sup>89</sup> The information may not be as helpful depending on the type of assessment that is done. There may be a lack of clarity and next steps from these assessments.

Feedback is one of the best ways to build and develop external self-awareness. The Bible affirms feedback in Proverbs 27:17, which states, “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.” Iron gets sharper when it is rubbed with another piece of iron. The iron gets better when there is friction. People can improve and grow when there is friction. Walvoord and Zuck share that this friction can come in the form of “discussions, criticism, suggestions and ideas.”<sup>90</sup> This is feedback for improvement and

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<sup>88</sup> Eurich, *Insight*, 159.

<sup>89</sup> Eurich, *Insight*, 163.

<sup>90</sup> John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 964.

growth. That is a mark of maturity and wisdom. Wise people are open to “life-giving correction” (Prov 15:31). Wise people are open to listening to good advice (Prov 15:12). Jesus teaches the importance of giving feedback especially when a believer sins against another believer. They are to “rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them” (Luke 17:3). Jesus teaches that believers need to confront other believers that hurt or harm them. This feedback is so that there can be healing, forgiveness and reconciliation.

### **Types of Feedback**

Eurich shares three important components to do feedback better. It includes asking the right people, asking the right questions, and using the right process.<sup>91</sup> It is important to ask the right people. Eurich labels the right person as a “loving critic.” It is someone who is able to be “honest with us while still having our best interests at heart.”<sup>92</sup> This person is someone that does not criticize everything about us nor do they only give positive statements about us. Rather, they have a fair but loving assessment of us. Choosing these types of people gives us a better understanding of ourselves. Next, the right questions need to be asked in an effective feedback. Eurich recommends asking specific questions that focus on one or two areas of growth.<sup>93</sup> When people ask for general feedback such as “What should I work on?” then they will get a variety of answers. However, if their questions are focused on one or two areas that they want to improve on, then they will receive a more helpful response. For instance, someone may want feedback on their leadership meetings. They may ask questions specifically on one or two areas on how to improve those meetings. They may include, “Is the meeting format effective?” or “How can I get more engagement from employees?” This will give them a better response that is more helpful and applicable. The last part of feedback is

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<sup>91</sup> Eurich, *Insight*, 164–67.

<sup>92</sup> Eurich, *Insight*, 164.

<sup>93</sup> Eurich, *Insight*, 167.

using the right process. When people ask for feedback, Eurich argues that it is important to give people space and time to think through their answers before hearing their feedback.<sup>94</sup> Typically people are given very little time and space to process and share their feedback. They may be asked without any notice in a meeting. This does not give a fully developed answer. It is important to prepare people and give them time to think through their answer. Then it is vital to create a time to listen to their feedback. Time will need to be set aside and scheduled so one can hear what they are sharing about ourselves.

Garrett Kell uses the term “constructive criticism” when referring to feedback. He argues that the goal of giving feedback is for growth of the fellow believer based on Ephesians 4:14-15.<sup>95</sup> The goal is to help the person receiving the feedback to be able to be built up and not brought down. This requires that the giver of feedback be careful with their words and take it seriously. There needs to be thought and wisdom put in the feedback and criticism. It needs to be done to honor the person as well as God.

Goldsmith shares another way of giving feedback called “feedforward.” He argues that most feedback is focused on past behavior, actions, or events. However, when giving feedback, it usually creates unintended hurt, consequences, and pain. Goldsmith shares a different approach. Feedforward, according to Goldsmith, is not about looking at the past but looking to the future. Goldsmith believes that feedforward overcomes “the two biggest obstacles we face with negative feedback—the fact that successful people in dominant positions don’t want to hear it . . . and that their subordinates rarely want to give it.”<sup>96</sup> Feedforward helps executives and leaders not become defensive and allows the sharer to not feel pressure. Feedforward is about progress and the future. It is about improving areas that the person wants to improve on. Goldsmith argues that the feedback

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<sup>94</sup> Eurich, *Insight*, 167.

<sup>95</sup> Garrett Kell, “Giving and Receiving Godly Criticism: Sharpening Each Other With Your Words,” 9Marks, February 3, 2015, <https://www.9marks.org/article/giving-and-receiving-godly-criticism-sharpening-each-other-with-your-words/>.

<sup>96</sup> Goldsmith and Reiter, *What Got You Here Won’t Get You There*, 173.

does not become about right and wrong behavior, but rather on future solutions.<sup>97</sup> This means that people are less likely to be defensive or take things personally. They are focused on working and improving their skills. It becomes more collaborative when they ask for feedforward from others.

Feedforward is done in four steps, according to Goldsmith. First, the person seeking feedforward needs to pick one behavior that they want to change that would have a significant impact on their life.<sup>98</sup> For instance, they may want to be a better communicator. The second step is sharing this objective with others. This can be family members, friends, co-workers, and even strangers. Goldsmith believes that it can be anyone because anyone can give you tips, ideas, and suggestions to improve. They do not need to be an expert to provide insight and assistance. They will all have ideas and ways for the person to improve their communication skills. Third, the one requesting feedforward must ask the person to give two suggestions that will help them achieve a positive change in that area. There is only one ground rule. Goldsmith shares that if the person has a personal relationship with feedforward giver, then they cannot talk about the past.<sup>99</sup> The focus is on improvement and growth for the future. The last step is to listen carefully and attentively. He shares that the ground rule is that “you are not allowed to judge, rate or critique the suggestion in any way.”<sup>100</sup> The idea is to listen, absorb, and find ways that they suggestion may possibly help you move forward.

There are different types of feedback that research shows to be effective and helpful. Regardless of which type of feedback is used in the church family, the goal and intent of the feedback needs to be to grow and mature the believer and the church (Eph 4:14-15). Paul shares that his letter can be harsh, but it is to build up the believers and the

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<sup>97</sup> Goldsmith and Reiter, *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*, 174.

<sup>98</sup> Goldsmith and Reiter, *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*, 171.

<sup>99</sup> Goldsmith and Reiter, *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*.

<sup>100</sup> Goldsmith and Reiter, *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*, 172.

church, not for tearing them down (2 Cor 13:10). This creates mature and healthier disciples of Christ. Therefore, it is important that the way feedback is given to be particular to the believer. Paul encourages that our words be to build up “according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen” (Eph 4:29). The feedback needs to be not for our benefit, but for the benefit of the hearer. This will filter out what people say and how they say it. The goal and intent of feedback is for the unity and building up of believers and the church.

Prayer along with God’s Word is another way to start the process of feedback. The Theology of Work Project shares the idea of praying Psalm 25:1-12 as a prayer of feedback.<sup>101</sup> It starts with having a mindset to trust in God and put our hope in God (Ps 25:1-2). It then invites feedback from God on our lives. There is an aspect of recognizing our weakness, sins, and failures, as well as confessing them (Ps 25:11). It concludes by asking God to guide, deliver, and come through (Ps 25:12). The prayer from Psalm 25 can be prayed every day. There are other passages that can be prayed to better understand ourselves. God’s Word is the foundation for giving us feedback about our thoughts, attitudes and intentions (Heb 4:12). God’s Word sets the believer’s mindset on God and invites God to search our hearts, as well as encourages believers to examine themselves.

### **Conclusion**

Research confirms biblical truths that people have gaps in understanding themselves. This problem will only continue to grow unless the church’s members, leaders, and pastors make an intentional decision to close the gap. The gap needs to be closed by our internal and external awareness of ourselves. Christians can utilize prayer, meditation, and journaling to have a better understanding of their internal self. This gives them a greater insight to what they are feeling and what they believe. They will have

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<sup>101</sup> Theology of Work Project, “Giving and Receiving Feedback,” Theology of Work Project, accessed September 20, 2020, <https://www.theologyofwork.org/small-group-studies/topics/giving-and-receiving-feedback>.

more clarity and be able to control and manage their emotions, especially in stressful and difficult moments. Feedback is an effective tool that the church can implement to build external awareness. It will be able to affirm strengths that an individual knows as well as help them discover new strengths and passions. The person will also be able to understand how they are impacting others around them. Feedback can be difficult and painful in the short term. However, when Christians choose to receive it, it will only make them a better follower of Christ and leader in the long run. They will be able to step into the life that God has called them to so they can live out their purposes in their lifetime.

## CHAPTER 4

### DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Having laid the biblical and sociological foundations of self-awareness in the first three chapters, this current chapter describes the process of preparation and implementation of the project to build self-awareness among the members and leaders at Saddleback South Bay. This chapter will share how the curriculum was developed and approved by an expert panel. An important part of this project was the implementation of that curriculum that followed. There was a six-session curriculum that was taught over the six weeks to members and leaders of the church. Each participant was given a pre- and post-survey to test the validity and efficacy of the curriculum.

#### **Preparation for Self-Awareness Training**

In the Fall of 2020, twenty-five leaders and members at Saddleback South Bay successfully completed the six-session curriculum. Before the curriculum was taught and implemented, the curriculum had to be created and approved.

#### **Curriculum Development and Approval**

The six-session curriculum was created using three resources.<sup>1</sup> The first source is the Word of God. The Bible needs to be the foundation for any and all self-awareness training. The biblical background is mentioned in chapter 2. Another source was from Pastor Peter Scazzero and his books that include *Emotionally Healthy Leader*, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, and *Emotionally Healthy Church*. Certain biblical principles and concepts were adapted into the curriculum. Lastly, practical applications

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 3.

and exercises were drawn out from Dr. Tasha Eurich's *Insight*.

After the curriculum was created, the faculty supervisor, Dr. Kevin Peck, reviewed the material along with an expert panel of six people. Five of the panelists were pastors at Saddleback Church. Each panelist at Saddleback Church has been a pastor with significant experience and Bible teaching. They also have an understanding of Saddleback culture and teaching. The last panelist was an accredited executive coach. He coaches CEOs and other high-profile leaders. He is also a Christian and has worked with churches, non-profits, and Christian schools. He provides a unique perspective on the biblical perspective as well as practical application to build self-awareness.

Each of the six panelists reviewed the curriculum and filled out a curriculum evaluation tool. Each panelist marked the rubric as being either satisfactory or exemplary in all the categories. These categories include biblical accuracy, scope, pedagogy, and practicality. The curriculum was sent to the Ethics Committee at Southern Seminary. It was approved to implement. With the curriculum approved, it was time to execute and implement the curriculum.

### **Self-Awareness Questionnaire**

The survey used to do the pre-test and post-test is called the Self-Awareness Outcome Questionnaire (SAOQ). It was developed by Professor Anna Sutton from the University of Waikato. It is a survey that measures the effectiveness of self-awareness interventions or curriculum.<sup>2</sup> For this reason, this survey was chosen to test and see if this six-session curriculum would help build more self-awareness.

The questionnaire is a thirty-eight-question survey that measures four categories of self-awareness—reflective self-development subscale (RSD), acceptance of self and others subscale (Acceptance), proactive at work subscale, and emotional costs of

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<sup>2</sup> Anna Sutton, "Measuring the Effects of Self-Awareness: Construction of the Self-Awareness Outcome Questionnaire," *Europe's Journal of Psychology* 12, no. 4 (2016): 645–58.

self-awareness (Emotional Costs).<sup>3</sup> The reflective self-development subscale has eleven questions that measure the ability to be aware and conscious of oneself. The acceptance of self-subscale uses eleven items that measure the person's positive view of themselves as well as understanding of others. The proactive at work subscale is a nine-item scale that measures self-awareness in the workplace and their approach to work. Sutton shares that the emotional cost subscale is a seven-item scale that measures the "potential negative emotional impacts of being more aware of oneself, such as guilt, fear, vulnerability and fear."<sup>4</sup>

### **Selection of Participants**

Three different groups were asked to do the six-session curriculum course. These groups are all members of the church as well as some leaders of the church. The groups varied in ages. One group was made up of young professionals or those in their 20s and 30s. Another group was an all-men group, and the last one was a married-with-young-kids group. Each group agreed to do the study. There was a total of twenty-seven people that started the six-week session; however, only twenty-five participants completed the curriculum. These twenty-five participants did complete the pre- and post-test of the survey. The results of the survey and learning outcomes will be discussed in chapter five.

### **Implementation of Self-Awareness Curriculum**

This section will provide a detailed summary of the curriculum content and training implementation. The objective of the session and the training will be discussed. Normally these sessions would be conducted in person; however, with the pandemic, all the sessions were done over Zoom. This was to ensure safety and protection of the

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<sup>3</sup> Sutton, "Measuring the Effects of Self-Awareness," 651.

<sup>4</sup> Sutton, "Measuring the Effects of Self-Awareness," 651.

participants.

### **Session 1**

Each participant was instructed to take the pre-test, which was the Self-Awareness Outcome Questionnaire. After completing the questionnaire, the session started. The objective of the first session was to create an understanding of what self-awareness is not. It was an introduction in understanding that we have blind spots and are unaware of ourselves. The session started by asking participants to rate how they saw themselves in four categories—physically, emotionally, spiritually, and relationally. They were to assess if they were either “very self-aware,” “somewhat,” “not really” or “none.”

The main text used to teach this session was 1 Samuel 15:1-23. It is the story of Saul disobeying God’s command to completely destroy the Amalekites. Saul’s failure and mistakes in this passage highlight Saul’s delusion of himself. He was unaware of himself, as well as God. This is called “Saul’s Disease of Self.” It is the condition when you may feel you know better than God, see yourself better than you truly are, cannot admit mistakes, or serve God for your own benefit. Saul’s condition was used to help identify areas in our own life where we may have blind spots or be unaware of ourselves.

The application portion focused on the concept of humility. Saul’s focus was on himself. Humility is not thinking of yourself first. Humility is knowing and recognizing the need for God. It is the starting point for self-awareness. James 4:6 highlights how God gives more favor toward the humble. People need humility in order to build self-awareness.

Each session has a takeaway homework. This session had two options. The first was to write a prayer to God sometime during the week. This prayer is about revealing and expressing feelings and thoughts. It is about confessing and sharing about what is going on inside. The other homework was taking a self-awareness test that was

developed by Tasha Eurich.<sup>5</sup> It is a fourteen-question quiz that gauges a person's understanding of themselves. Then the person has someone they know and trust take that same quiz. A report is given to show which areas are matched and which areas are different. It gives a more balanced view of a person based on another person's feedback.

## **Session 2**

The goal of the second session was to help participants understand and live out their authentic true self. This requires having self-awareness and an understanding of oneself. The session started with the introduction question, "If you knew you could succeed in anything, what would you choose to do today and why?" It helps the participants to think about possibilities, dreams, and the future.

The text to back this up was 1 Samuel 17:26-40. It is the story of David defeating Goliath. The session focused on understanding David's bravery, confidence, and ability in fighting Goliath. David had self-awareness about who he was and who he was not. He had convictions, values, and a confidence in God and himself. Saul suffered from a "Disease of Self." David, on the other hand was different from Saul. David had wisdom of himself. The session unpacked what "wisdom of self" includes, such as knowing their strengths and weaknesses, having and living out their values and beliefs, and knowing how they impact others. The point of the lesson was that we can do greater things for God when we have a better understanding of ourselves. It allows us to accomplish great things in our workplace, family, and community.

The session concluded with some practical homework. The focus was on having participants understand themselves more. There are a variety of personality tests and assessments that people can take. It was recommended to take the Myers Brigg personality test, as well as the Enneagram test. They were also encouraged to take the

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<sup>5</sup> "The Insight Quiz," Tasha Eurich, accessed August 8, 2020, <https://www.insight-book.com/quiz>.

Strength Finders test. This helps them understand themselves more.

### **Session 3**

The focus of session three was helping believers understand their negative emotions and how to express them in an appropriate way. The session started with an opening question on how their families dealt with both positive and negative emotions. Every family handle emotions differently. This is a question to have the participants reflect the conscious and unconscious ways that their families have impacted their understanding of how to deal with emotions.

There were several texts used to understand the emotions of Jesus, including the way Jesus expressed positive emotions such as love (John 11:5) and joy (Luke 10:21). Jesus also expressed negative emotions. He was troubled (Mark 14:33), in pain and agony (Luke 22:42), angry (Matt 23:33), and more. The discussions were based around Jesus' negative feelings and the participant's understanding of negative emotions. The focus was to break the myth that Christians should not feel negative emotions or that they are bad people when they do.

The study went deeper by learning how to handle and deal with our emotions from the heart (Prov 4:23). Participants were taught different ways that people typically handle negative emotions. People typically ignore, distract, blame, or blow up when they experience negative emotions. They were also taught on how to understand and handle their emotions—know your emotions, express them in an appropriate way, and do so without sinning. There was a discussion on how they handle their emotions and the ways that they need to improve.

The homework assignment was to practice processing and expressing these painful emotions. There were questions provided to help them process, such as, “What are your feelings? What is giving you anxiety? What or who is bothering you right now? How are your emotions impacting others?” There was also a feeling chart provided for

them to identify their emotions.

#### **Session 4**

The focus of session four was understanding how people's past may be impacting them today. This understanding helps them recognize unresolved burdens, pain, and issues and learn to forgive and move forward. The opening question was, "Where do your thoughts and feelings camp more—past, present, or future? Why?"

There were several texts to build on the goal of this session. It started with the third commandment from Exodus 20:4-6. God shares that there are generational blessings and curses. The point was helping people understand the impact that our families have on us. There are both positive and negative traits that have shaped people in the present.

Joseph was a case example in understanding how family and the past impact people in the present. The life of Joseph was quickly shared. The primary focus was on Genesis 50:15-21 where Joseph forgave his brothers. There was a discussion on how Joseph was able to forgive and move beyond the pain. He was able to lead and love his family even in the midst of that pain. This was personalized for the participants in examining their own past hurts and unresolved issues. They were also asked to describe how they can move forward and forgive.

The homework assignment for that week was to do a life map. It is an exercise where they get an overview of their life. They have a large piece of paper with a line in the middle. They have sticky notes of positive things, events, and people on the top line. They also have a different colored sticky note of negative things that have happened in their life. Those are put on the bottom of the line. After completing the sticky notes, the participant takes a step back and examines their life. They process and see where they may still be living in the past. They also reflect on God's presence in their life both in the good and difficult times.

## **Session 5**

The focus on the next two sessions was on external self-awareness. This was about understanding how people impact others. There is both a positive and negative impact that we and others have on people. This session was focused on understanding positive ways that people impact others. The opening question was for the participants to reflect on how an adult said something positive to them and how that impacted them.

The text used to reinforce this was from Matthew 16:13-19. It is the passage where Peter confirms Jesus' identity, and Jesus affirms and encourages Peter. Participants were also given an opportunity to think through different passages, stories, and moments where God affirmed or encouraged someone and how that changed and impacted them. Many shared Bible characters such as Moses, Gideon, Abraham, and David. They were then shown that God affirms them with their gifts, talents, and strengths. They were taught that affirmations from others can confirm a belief about themselves, or it can provide awareness to a new passion or ability. This opens the door to do something new that God may be opening up. They were encouraged to understand that they have that same impact on their family, workplace, and community.

The homework in this section was to seek after positive affirmations from close and trusted people in their lives. It is so that they can confirm strengths they may have or discover something new. It also encourages them to affirm others and impact others in a positive way.

## **Session 6**

The focus of the last session was on understanding how people can have a negative impact on others. The opening question was for them to process when they received criticism or negative feedback and how they handled that.

They were also taught that many of us do not like negative feedback for a variety of reasons. However, it is important for our growth and development. The text used for this came from Matthew 16:21-23. It is when Jesus called Peter "Satan." The

lesson was on how Peter handled that feedback and how people handle it themselves today. They were given tools on how to handle feedback. They shared how they could handle negative feedback better and what they could do differently.

Lastly, the homework was to seek after negative feedback from those they trusted. It was seeking after blind spots or areas that they may be unaware of. They were tasked with asking five to ten close friends, family, co-workers, and church members. They were then to reflect on their responses and decide to respond accordingly. After the last session, the participants were asked to fill out the Self-Awareness Outcome Questionnaire again.

### **Conclusion**

The six-session curriculum on self-awareness was a significant step in building and developing self-awareness among members and leaders at Saddleback South Bay. As a result of the study, people shared that they were challenged and learned more about themselves. They had a better understanding of themselves in ways that they would not have if they did not go through the curriculum. The final chapter will discuss the results of the survey as well as key learnings.

## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

The project was successfully completed by twenty-five participants at Saddleback Church in South Bay. These members and leaders of the church completed the six-session curriculum on self-awareness. Self-awareness is an important discipleship issue that is needed more than ever in the church. This chapter will evaluate the project overall as well as provide insights on the effectiveness of the project. There will also be theological and personal reflections from this project.

#### **Evaluation of the Project's Purpose**

The purpose of the project was to build self-awareness among the members and leaders at Saddleback Church in South Bay. There are two parts to self-awareness. First, internal self-awareness is having an understanding of yourself. This means understanding your emotions, feelings, passions, strengths, weaknesses, values, and more. Second, external self-awareness is being able to recognize the impact that your behavior and attitude have on others around you. Twenty-five members and leaders participated in the project successfully. They developed more awareness of themselves and had a greater understanding of how they influence others. Therefore, the purpose of the project was successfully achieved.

#### **Evaluation of Project's Goals**

There were three goals at the outset of the project: (1) assess the current level of self-awareness among the members and leaders at the church, (2) develop a six-session curriculum on self-awareness, and (3) increase self-awareness among members and leaders at Saddleback South Bay by implementing the six-session curriculum.

### **Assess Self-Awareness**

The first goal was to assess the level of self-awareness among the members and volunteers at the church. The goal was measured by administering the Self-Awareness Outcome Questionnaire.<sup>1</sup> The goal was considered successfully met when twenty-five participants from the church completed and returned the questionnaire forms.

### **Develop Curriculum**

The second goal was to develop curriculum to teach and build self-awareness in the church. A six-session curriculum was designed and developed to increase self-awareness.<sup>2</sup> Each session is addressed in chapter 4. The topics addressed in the curriculum included internal self-awareness, which was to help participants understand more about their emotions, feelings, values, strengths, and weakness. They also learned about external self-awareness, which was how they are impacting others around them. To measure the goal, an expert panel comprised of five Saddleback pastors and a certified executive coach evaluated the curriculum. They rated the curriculum with the rubric to evaluate biblical accuracy, scope, teaching methodology, and practicality of the material.<sup>3</sup> This goal was considered successful when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria met or exceeded the sufficient level. The rubric is based on a four-point scale. Each section of the rubric would need to score a numerical value of three out of four. The numerical value of three represents sufficiency, and the numerical value of four represents exemplary. All six evaluators rated the curriculum with a three or four. There were no scores below a three for any sections of the curriculum.

### **Implement Curriculum**

The third goal was to increase self-awareness by executing the curriculum on

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 1.

<sup>2</sup> See appendix 3.

<sup>3</sup> See appendix 2.

the participants that took the pre-test. This goal was measured by administering the Self-Awareness Outcome Questionnaire (SAOQ) a second time as a post-test survey. The goal was met successfully when the t-test of dependent samples showed a positive statistically significant difference between the participants pre- and post-test scores.

The SAOQ is a thirty-eight item questionnaire that measures four subscales. The four subscales are reflective self-development (RSD), acceptance, proactive at work, and emotional costs. Reflective self-development subscale refers to the continual awareness of self. It is being able to reflect and learn about yourself on an ongoing basis. The acceptance subscale measures the amount of positive self-image that a person has of themselves and others. The proactive at work measures the objective ability to deal with work-related issues. The emotional cost is having an awareness of the negative emotions that can arise from learning more about oneself.

Table 1 shows the increase in emotional costs from the curriculum. The table shows that the curriculum increased their understanding of emotional cost through the curriculum.

Table 1. Average scores for emotional cost

Category	Pre-Test Emotional Cost	Post-Test Emotional Cost	Percentage of Increase
Average Score	3.09	3.28	6
Lowest Score	1.71	2.14	25
Highest Score	4.14	4.57	4

As shown by the t-test, the self-awareness curriculum had a statistically significant difference in the subscale of emotional costs ( $t_{(24)} = 2.533, p < .01$ ). This

means that the curriculum helped participants be aware of the negative emotional impact when learning about self-awareness. This is shown in table 2.

Table 2. T-test of emotional cost

	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	3.0964	3.2824
Variance	0.438465667	0.352610667
Observations	25	25
Pearson Correlation	0.834613381	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	—	
df	24	
t Stat	2.533643001	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.009116185	
t Critical one-tail	1.71088208	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.01823237	
t Critical two-tail	2.063898562	

As far as the other three subscales are concerned, the t-test of dependent samples showed that there was not a statistically significant difference when measuring participants' pre- and post-test scores. Table 3 on the next page shows that there was no significant difference in the reflective self-development subscale. There was a small increase in the mean score between the post-test and the pre-test. However, that difference was not a statistically significant change. One possible explanation may be that the participants scored themselves too high in the pre-test. Since this was a self-administered assessment, the participants may have given themselves a higher score. Research has shown that people tend to think of themselves more highly than may be accurate.

Table 3. T-test of reflective self-development subscale

	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	3.6992	3.7036
Variance	0.40643267	0.354324
Observations	25	25
Pearson Correlation	0.80568319	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	—	
df	24	
t Stat	0.05694299	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.47753102	
t Critical one-tail	1.71088208	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.95506204	
t Critical two-tail	2.06389856	

Along with that, table 4 shows that there was no significant difference in the acceptance subscale. The mean score did change from the post-test and the pre-test, but it was not a statically significant change. This may suggest that this group of participants may have rated themselves too high on the pre-test.

Table 4. T-test of acceptance subscale

	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	3.682	3.7152
Variance	0.347475	0.368351
Observations	25	25
Pearson Correlation	0.857176634	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	—	
df	24	
t Stat	-0.51850279	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.304427697	
t Critical one-tail	1.71088208	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.608855393	
t Critical two-tail	2.063898562	

Lastly, Table 5 shows that there was no significant difference in the proactive at work subscale. The post-test mean score was lower than the pre-test score. One possible explanation may be that the focus of this study was not on work performance. The curriculum was centered more on relationships with God and themselves. Therefore, the scores may be a reflection of the participants own views of their own workplace situation.

Table 5. T-test of proactive at work subscale

	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	3.7484	3.72
Variance	0.219730667	0.641216667
Observations	25	25
Pearson Correlation	0.522742916	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	24	
t Stat	0.207456505	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.418701799	
t Critical one-tail	1.71088208	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.837403599	
t Critical two-tail	2.063898562	

### **Strength of the Project**

There are several strengths of the project. The first strength of the project was that the curriculum had a significant impact on the participants in the area of emotional cost. The research shows that participants had a greater understanding of how this curriculum would affect their emotional state. There was a recognition that doing self-awareness work creates a level of positive and negative emotions. This curriculum helped participants to bring up these issues and recognize it for themselves.

Another strength was that each lesson was rooted in a biblical passage to highlight a specific point about self-awareness. Participants shared informally that they

had a greater appreciation for how feelings are a part of God's character and kingdom. They shared that they learned how Christians are to embrace negative emotions and feelings, especially since Jesus dealt with them as well. There was a greater awareness about how emotions are created by God and need to be explored in our spiritual growth and development.

The third strength of the project was the connection that it created in their learning communities. Participants shared that they learned more about each other's story, passions, and desires. They were able to have deeper conversations, which created a closer connection and relationship with each other. The topic of self-awareness allows for greater and deeper conversations about an individual.

The fourth strength of the project allowed participants to have a greater awareness of themselves and how they impact others. They were able to reflect and consider how they are impacting others in their personal lives and professional lives. Participants shared that the curriculum and exercises created a great understanding of themselves and the influence that they have on their families and co-workers. That knowledge created the opportunity for them to do something different. The project allowed for additional insight and truths for them to wrestle with and led them to consider improving their relationships and quality of life.

The last strength of the project is that the curriculum can be utilized for a broad range of people. The participants in the project ranged from young professionals in their 20s to men and women in their 50s and 60s. There were also married couples with young children. Each group benefited from the sessions. This project can be utilized for a wide audience and can be effective.

### **Weakness of the Project**

There were three weaknesses of the project. The first weakness was that the curriculum had no significant change in the three other subscales (Reflective,

Acceptance, and Proactive at Work) for the participants. While the curriculum did help some participants improve in some of these subscales, it was not a statistically significant change. The curriculum does not seem to help participants in the area of reflective self-awareness, which is being able to reflect and grow in self-awareness. The other area that the material does not help in is in the acceptance subscale. This means that that the material was not as effective in helping building confidence or a stronger self-image. Lastly, the curriculum is weak in helping participants be more proactive in the workplace.

The second weakness was that the curriculum was taught all online through Zoom. This was not the original intent, but the teaching portion was moved all online through Zoom due to the pandemic. While the teaching was still effective, the experience was not optimal. There are several limitations with online teaching. Participants can lose focus and not engage as long. It is harder to create an open and intimate environment. Technical difficulties can create awkward moments and interrupt the flow of the conversation. It is more challenging to subdivide and break the group up as well. These challenges were all experienced while doing these sessions online. The original intent and design of this curriculum was to be in person and live. This would allow the facilitator a better level of engagement of the participants. It would also allow for a more intimate environment to continue the conversation without any interruptions.

The last weakness of the project was the length of the project. The curriculum was a six-session series that lasted about an hour and half for each session. While this was adequate considering the circumstances, I believe that more sessions could be added to create a great understanding and awareness. These six sessions served to be a good introduction to the topic of self-awareness. I think the project could have been extended another two to four sessions. Along with that, the curriculum was more focused on the teaching portion. I think there needs to be more exercises and activities to reinforce the concepts. These activities were optional at the end of the study. The participants could do them after the sessions. However, the weakness is that most people did not do them

afterwards. The time constraint and the limited number of sessions was a weakness of the project.

### **What I Would Do Differently**

The biggest change that I would do with the project would be to teach the sessions in person. While the curriculum was effective through Zoom, I think doing it live and in person would help create a more effective learning environment. I believe this would have created more self-awareness and perhaps been more effective.

Another thing that I would do differently would be the teaching format. I would want to allot two hours for each session with the extra time being on an activity or exercise. For instance, I would have the participants take one of the assessments, such as the Myers Brigg Personality test or Enneagram. After taking it, we would discuss their results and help them better understand themselves. Another activity would be to give them time to practice journaling. Afterward, we would discuss their experience with journaling. The group discussion could help bring new ideas, methods, and insights on journaling. They would be able to learn from each other as well as encourage each other more. Each session would have an activity that is not just assigned but done together as a group. I think this would reinforce the lesson not only in a cognitive but also in an experiential way. This would create higher participation in the group. I think the participants would increase engagement and excitement. The lesson and points would most likely be retained better too.

Another thing that I would do differently would be to have each participant assess the effectiveness of each session. I had them take a survey before and after the project. The survey and results showed the curriculum was helpful in the area of understanding their emotional costs. However, I do not have data to show which of the sessions was more effective in that and which sessions were less effective. By doing a survey after each session, I would have a better understanding of the strengths and

weaknesses of each session. This information would allow me to see where I can strengthen or change the session. It would give me an idea of where I can add and deepen the content or where I need to perhaps cut content.

### **Theological Reflections**

There are three theological reflections from this project. First, the church needs to have a theologically deeper understanding and awareness of emotions, especially in the area of negative emotions. The church traditionally focuses on positive emotions, but there needs to be teaching on negative emotions. As mentioned in chapter 2, Jesus not only shared positive emotions but also expressed negative emotions. Jesus felt anger (Mark 11:15-18), sorrow (Matt 26:38), and many other difficult emotions. Jesus was aware of these emotions and expressed them in appropriate ways. He turned to God and allowed God into the most painful and darkest moments of his life. It is an example that the church and Christians need to understand and follow. However, many Christians feel shame and guilt when they experience negative emotions. They wrestle with these feelings and have an unbiblical view of God and themselves. This creates distance in their relationship with God and other believers. Counseling and Celebrate Recovery are two places that are being utilized to help people with these emotional issues. While these are great starting points, I believe that the church can do more in bringing awareness and resources to help believers struggling with feelings of shame and guilt. This can be done by teaching about this topic more on Sunday mornings as well as utilizing Bible studies to understand these concepts. This will allow Christians to have a theological framework to understand their feelings, as well as a pathway to handle and work through those negative feelings. When churches do this, there will be more healing and hope for believers.

Second, a lack of self-awareness has a dangerous impact on a pastor's ministry and calling. Jesus was most critical toward the religious leaders. In Matthew 23:33, Jesus

calls them “snakes” and “brood of vipers.” He labels them as being hypocrites because they knew the truths and commands of God but did not follow them. They demonstrated little to no self-awareness in the area of their sins. They were unwilling to acknowledge and confront their sins even when Jesus rebuked them. They were too focused on their self-righteousness and religion that they could not see their true faults. Jesus did not tolerate this two thousand years ago and does not tolerate it now. The group most likely to represent the religious teachers today are pastors, elders, and leaders of the church. Pastors and leaders of the church are supposed to shepherd the church. However, when pastors are unwilling to acknowledge and confront their own sins they put their leadership and church at risk. The Pharisees and religious teachers probably never had any intent or desire to be hypocrites, but it was one self-righteous decision after another that led to blindness and hypocrisy. Jesus gave them a chance to repent, but their hearts were too hardened. As leaders of the church, pastors must guard and examine their hearts or else they may fall into this trap. Pastors must always reflect and be aware of their weaknesses and sinful tendencies. If they choose to ignore, avoid, or suppress the Spirit’s convictions, then it will lead to leadership and ministry failures.

God has given us the Word of God and the church as resources to build self-awareness. God’s Word is the best tool to understand yourself, as seen in Hebrews 4:12. God’s Word unearths our real motivations and desires. Our true motivations and desires can be hidden from us because our hearts are deceitful, but God’s Word brings that to light. The Spirit convicts us when we read his Word and brings awareness of our sins and failures. The Word of God gives us the opportunity to repent, confess, and return to God. It restores our relationship to God and ourselves. It is a guiding light for our thoughts and emotions. Therefore, the Word of God needs to be a top priority among believers. Believers need to hunger and set aside time for God’s Word every day. It means reading, studying, and chewing on the Word of God throughout our lives.

The other tool is the church. God has given us the church to build and

encourage each other (Eph 4:12-13). The church is the greatest support group and small group for every believer. It is the family of God in which we belong to a spiritual family. The church is the physical representation of the invisible God. This means that we need to practice on earth how we will live for in eternity. It is in the church that we can build each other up and support each other. We share what we see and dream for each other. We also have the church to sharpen and keep each other accountable. It is a place that is a constant source of positive and negative feedback. The church is supposed to be a safe place for us to be ourselves, but also to be the best version of ourselves. It is a place that allows us to be who God created us to be.

### **Personal Reflections**

I am convinced more than ever about the importance of self-awareness, especially for pastors and church leaders. I am hearing more stories of senior and lead pastors of megachurches leaving their ministry for moral failures or leadership problems. It breaks my heart to hear of all the pastors and church leaders that have left the ministry in the past couple of years. My heart grieves and prays for each of them, as well as their churches and ministry. God holds pastors and church leaders to a higher standard, as mentioned in James 3:1. Pastors are judged differently by God. When pastors fall, it hurts not only their own lives but also the testimony of Jesus and the church. It also gives more evidence for why outsiders should not join the church or why the church is a corrupt institution. Thus, it is more important than ever for pastors and church leaders to embrace self-awareness. When pastors are intentional about understanding themselves and the impact they have on others, then I believe they give God an opportunity to disciple and transform them. It gives them the opportunity to stay more grounded in God and their family.

I believe that pastors and church leaders need to build self-awareness, specifically in the area of accountability and feedback. In most large companies, the CEO

has enormous power and authority. There is very little accountability and feedback. The same is true for large churches. The senior pastor typically does not receive feedback from others nor is accountable to anyone. This is true in smaller churches as well. This hurts their leadership and the health of the church. The culture and attitude need to change. We need to embrace our own personal self-awareness for our own leadership but also as a corporate church body. It needs to be part of the church culture and a value in the church.

While self-awareness is an important tool that needs to be embraced, how it is done needs to be different. Every person is on a different journey. Everyone is on a different part of the self-awareness spectrum. Some are farther along. Some can embrace feedback and not take it personally. They are able to handle difficult and painful emotions fairly well. They have healthy support groups and coping mechanisms. They are open to different ideas and to hearing the word “no.” However, there are other believers who have not done much self-discovery. They may not be able to understand why they feel what they feel. They may have very little awareness about their gifts and weaknesses. They may be avoiding some sort of truth for a variety of reasons. Every person is on a different level and place. It is important and vital to be aware of this and not to treat every person as the same. There need to be different forms and strategies to engage people on the different levels of self-awareness. There needs to be a lot of grace and mercy. It needs to be lead out of grace and truth.

### **Conclusion**

Self-awareness is a journey. It is not a destination. If you think you have arrived, then you have missed the point. It is a discipleship issue that will require us to continually “deny [ourselves] and take up [our] cross daily and follow [Jesus]” (Luke 9:23). Self-awareness means choosing to look in the mirror and to remember that it is about God, not me. When we do this, we become more like Christ and see God do

“immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work with us” (Eph 3:20).

## APPENDIX 1

### SELF-AWARENESS OUTCOME QUESTIONNAIRE

The following instrument is the Self-Awareness Outcome Questionnaire (SAOQ). It's developed by Dr. Anna Sutton to measure self-awareness. It's a thirty-eight-question survey with a six-point Likert scale. The instrument has been tested for reliability and validity to measure self-awareness.

## SELF-AWARENESS OUTCOME QUESTIONAIRE<sup>1</sup>

Below is a list of statement about your general experiences. Using the scale, please indicate how frequently you experience or engage in each of them.

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Almost always	N/A
1	2	3	4	5	N/A
					1 2 3 4 5 N/A
1. I learn about myself and how I see the world					
2. I understand my emotions					
3. I am content with my work situation					
4. I find it scary to try something new or step out of what I know					
5. I focus on ways of amending my behavior that would be useful					
6. I have fun					
7. I recognize the stress and worry in my current work					
8. I feel vulnerable					
9. I reassess my own and others' responsibilities					
10. I have compassion and acceptance for others					
11. I see my work life as something I have power to affect					
12. I feel my emotions deeply					
13. I am aware of my abilities and limitations					
14. I am objective					
15. I understand how I work within a team					
16. I have had to revisit difficult past experiences					
17. I "observe" myself					
18. I understand myself well					
19. I can "take a step back" from situations to understand them better					
20. I feel exposed					
21. I feel generally positive about self-awareness					
22. I am consistent in different situations or with different people					
23. I think about how my personality fits with my work role					
24. I find making changes is difficult and scary					
25. I have insight into myself					
26. I stop and think before judging					
27. I have changed the way I work					
28. I feel guilty for criticizing others					
29. I look at why people act the way they do					
30. I am confident					
31. I take control of my work					
32. I am continuing to work on and develop myself					
33. I interact well with colleagues or peers					

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<sup>1</sup> Sutton, "Measuring the Effects of Self-Awareness: Construction of the Self-Awareness Outcome Questionnaire."

- 34. I think about how as colleagues or peers we interact with each other
  - 35. I am realistic about myself
  - 36. I feel on the whole very comfortable with the way I am
  - 37. I am reflective
  - 38. I have a good self-image
- 

**Scoring:**

To score the SAOQ, calculate the mean for each scale using the following key: (N/A responses should be left out of the calculation)

Higher scores represent a greater frequency of experienced outcomes

<b><u>Subscale:</u></b>	<b><u>Mean of Items:</u></b>
Reflective self-development (RSD)	1, 5, 9, 13, 17, 21, 25, 29, 32, 35, 37
Acceptance (Acc)	2, 6, 10, 14, 18, 22, 26, 30, 33, 36, 38
Proactive at work (Pro)	3, 7, 11, 15, 19, 23, 27, 31, 34
Emotional Costs	4, 8, 12, 16, 20, 24, 28

## APPENDIX 2

### SELF-AWARENESS CURRICULUM EVALUATION

The following evaluation will be sent to an expert panel of two pastors at Saddleback Church, one accredited coach and one local pastor in the Los Angeles area. This panel will evaluate the course curriculum to confirm that it is biblically based and faithfully holds to the word of God.

Name of Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Curriculum Evaluation Tool</b>					
<b>1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary</b>					
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Biblical Accuracy</b>					
Each lesson was sound in its interpretation of Scripture.					
Each lesson was faithful to the theology of the Bible.					
<b>Scope</b>					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
The curriculum sufficiently covers a biblical pedagogical methodology.					
<b>Pedagogy</b>					
Each lesson was clear, containing a big idea.					
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.					
<b>Practicality</b>					
The curriculum clearly details how to develop self-awareness.					
At the end of the course, participants will be able to have a better grasp of their feelings and emotions.					

Other Comments:

## APPENDIX 3

### SELF-AWARENESS CURRICULUM

The following is the six-session curriculum on self-awareness that was developed for this project. Chapter 4 gives an overview of each of the sessions.

## **SESSION 1**

### **INTRO**

Rate how self-aware you think you are about yourself in these following categories?

PHYSICALLY:      Very Self-aware    Somewhat    Not really    None

EMOTIONALLY:    Very Self-aware    Somewhat    Not really    None

SPIRITUALLY:     Very Self-aware    Somewhat    Not really    None

RELATIONALLY:    Very Self-aware    Somewhat    Not really    None

In *Insight*, Tasha Eurich shares that people think they are 95 percent somewhat or very self-aware. However, her research shows that only 15 percent of people really are.

- What causes the big gap and difference in reality (15% versus 95%)?

Self-awareness is an important part of our growth and development. Many of us have a big gap with our self-awareness. We'll look at one example in the Bible, Saul.

### **BIBLE STUDY PORTION:**

Read 1 Samuel 15:1-23

Samuel said to Saul, “I am the one the Lord sent to anoint you king over his people Israel; so listen now to the message from the Lord. **2** This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt. **3** Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy all that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.’”

**4** So Saul summoned the men and mustered them at Telaim—two hundred thousand foot soldiers and ten thousand from Judah. **5** Saul went to the city of Amalek and set an ambush in the ravine. **6** Then he said to the Kenites, “Go away, leave the Amalekites so that I do not destroy you along with them; for you showed kindness to all the Israelites when they came up out of Egypt.” So the Kenites moved away from the Amalekites.

**7** Then Saul attacked the Amalekites all the way from Havilah to Shur, near the eastern border of Egypt. **8** He took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and all his people he totally destroyed with the sword. **9** But Saul and the army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs—everything that was good. These they were unwilling to destroy completely, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed.

**10** Then the word of the Lord came to Samuel: **11** “I regret that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions.” Samuel was angry, and he cried out to the Lord all that night.

**12** Early in the morning Samuel got up and went to meet Saul, but he was told, “Saul has gone to Carmel. There he has set up a monument in his own honor and has turned and gone on down to Gilgal.”

**13** When Samuel reached him, Saul said, “The Lord bless you! I have carried out the Lord’s instructions.”

**14** But Samuel said, “What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear?”

**15** Saul answered, “The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites; they spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the Lord your God, but we totally destroyed the rest.”

**16** “Enough!” Samuel said to Saul. “Let me tell you what the Lord said to me last night.” “Tell me,” Saul replied.

**17** Samuel said, “Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The Lord anointed you king over Israel. **18** And he sent you on a mission, saying, ‘Go and completely destroy those wicked people, the Amalekites; wage war against them until you have wiped them out.’ **19** Why did you not obey the Lord? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the Lord?”

**20** “But I did obey the Lord,” Saul said. “I went on the mission the Lord assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king. **21** The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the Lord your God at Gilgal.”

**22** But Samuel replied:

“Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices  
as much as in obeying the Lord?

To obey is better than sacrifice,

and to heed is better than the fat of rams.  
23 For rebellion is like the sin of divination,  
and arrogance like the evil of idolatry.  
Because you have rejected the word of the Lord,  
he has rejected you as king.”

### **Questions:**

1. In verse 3, what is the assignment that God gives to Saul through Samuel the prophet?
2. How does Saul handle that assignment in verse 9 through his actions?
3. How does Saul celebrate his victory in verse 12?
4. What does Saul’s answer in verse 13 show about Saul’s heart?
5. How does Samuel Describe Saul’s disobedience in verse 22, 23?
6. After Samuel confronts Saul, how does Saul’s attitude and behavior change?  
(verse 24-25)

### **Going Deeper: Saul’s Disease of Self**

Saul is sent on a mission from God to completely destroy the Amalekites. Saul only partially obeys. He allows the Amalekite King to live. The prophet Samuel confronts Saul about his lack of obedience and calls his actions “evil in the eyes of the Lord” (verse 19). It’s evil not only because Saul fails to obey God but also in the way that Saul does so. Saul is shocked and in disbelief by Samuel’s statement. Saul argues that he did obey God in verse 20 by completely destroying the Amalekites. Saul then contradicts himself when he says that he spared the king of Agag. He is not aware of this contradiction. Then Saul blames his soldiers and army for taking the plunder even though he was the one in charge. He won’t take responsibility and own his mistakes as the leader. Not only that, Saul justifies his actions before Samuel. He says that the plunder was meant to be given back to God in verse 21.

Saul can’t admit his disobedience and justifies himself in front Samuel. Saul suffers from a disease of self-delusion. He wasn’t honest before the prophet Samuel. This is the same as not being honest with God since Samuel is a prophet that represents God. And when Samuel confronts him, Saul blames everyone else, but himself. Saul is not aware of his own motives and reasoning for his disobedience. His disobedience is called “evil” (Verse 21) as well as rebellious and arrogant (verse 23). Saul isn’t aware of his own delusion. Delusion is the opposite of self-awareness. It’s not knowing what’s really happening and going on with what you are feeling and what you are doing. There is a disconnect between your mind and reality. This leads to blaming others or not being able to admit your mistakes. We’re going to call this condition, Saul’s Disease of self. It’s a false sense of yourself. You believe things that aren’t true about yourself. This may be to make yourself feel better or for others to think better of you. Below are a list of some of the condition.

### **Conditions of Saul’s Disease of Self:**

- Feels unique, special and you know better than God
- Sees self-better than truly is

- Focused more on pleasure than truth
- Can't admit faults or mistakes
- Believes he deserves a second chance (not truly sorry)
- Willing to serve God for own benefit or in own way
- Wants to celebrate himself more than God
- Apologizes but not true sorry (Saul says he is sorry in verse 30 but it's only after he was rejected as king that he apologizes. He's only sorry because of the consequences of his actions. He did not apologize when Samuel confronted him).

**Questions:**

- In what ways does our society promote the Saul's disease of self?
- In what ways do you show symptoms from Saul's disease of self?
- What positive steps could Saul have done to not be infected by the disease of self?

**Application:**

Only cure for the disease is humility. It's the confession of our heart and soul. God wants a humble heart that is repentant. A humble heart is able to recognize that we can live a delusional life. It understands that we aren't always aware of ourselves. Humility allows us to recognize that and ask for help from God. It's a posture of a learner and someone that is willing to grow. When we choose to live by the disease of self, we are choosing arrogance and pride. We think we know better and this is a problem with God. That is why Scripture says:

God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble. James 4:6

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. James 5:16

Our pride and disease of self blinds us to the reality of our mistakes. Humility allows us to take responsibility for our actions and ask for help. It's admitting our faults and wrongs. We don't blame others or judge others. We understand that we can't do this without God. We need a humble heart.

It's only when you are humble that you can recognize and see yourself more clearly. You aren't impacted by the disease of self. You are able to understand your thoughts and emotions. You can see yourself the way that God sees you. Your humility allows you to have more self-awareness of yourself and God.

You can try these two things to help you be humble and honest with God:

1. Write a prayer to God expressing your thoughts and feelings about how you are living out the Saul's disease of self. Also spend time to confess, share and get right with God.
2. Take a self-awareness test to gauge how self-aware you are: <https://www.insight-book.com/quiz>

## SESSION 2

### **INTRO**

If you knew you could succeed in anything, what would you choose to do today? Why?

Oftentimes, we are afraid to try or do something because we think we will fail. What if you had such confidence in your skills, talents and abilities? What if you truly knew how God gifted and shaped you? How would that impact how you live? We'll look at a story of someone that did.

### **TEXT**

This is the well known story of David battling Goliath. The Israelite army is camped on one side and the Philistine army on the other side. For forty days, Goliath, the nine foot giant with heavy armory, mocks and challenges the army in hand to hand combat. The Israelites are all afraid and run away. The young teenage boy, David, hears this and inquires of what's going on.

Read 1 Samuel 17:26-40

**26** David asked the men standing near him, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

**27** They repeated to him what they had been saying and told him, "This is what will be done for the man who kills him."

**28** When Eliab, David's oldest brother, heard him speaking with the men, he burned with anger at him and asked, "Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the wilderness? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle."

**29** "Now what have I done?" said David. "Can't I even speak?" **30** He then turned away to someone else and brought up the same matter, and the men answered him as before. **31** What David said was overheard and reported to Saul, and Saul sent for him.

**32** David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him."

**33** Saul replied, "You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth."

**34** But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, **35** I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. **36** Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. **37** The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine."

Saul said to David, “Go, and the Lord be with you.”

**38** Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. **39** David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them.

“I cannot go in these,” he said to Saul, “because I am not used to them.” So he took them off. **40** Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd’s bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.

Questions:

1. What question does David ask the soldiers? Verse 26
2. Why is David confident that he can battle Goliath? Verse 34-37
3. What is David’s response to King Saul when he tries his armor? Verse 39
4. What does David take to battle against an experienced warrior with metal weapons and armor? Verse 40

Last session, Saul suffered the Disease of Self. Today, we see that David has wisdom of self. What are the components of wisdom of self?

David as a young boy has wisdom. He knows God and he knows himself. He is self-aware of who he is as well as who God is. We see this based on the passage above. David volunteers to fight Goliath because of his past experiences killing large animals (lions and bears). He has confidence in his ability to fight and win. He recognizes that it was God who gave him victory. He is aware of God’s presence and hand in his life.

He is also aware of how he is to fight. Saul tries to have him be a traditional warrior. This includes wearing armor with a heavy sword. David tries it on but quickly is aware that this isn’t him. He knows he can’t fight like this. He tells King Saul that he can’t wear it. He rejects the king’s offer. That takes a lot of guts and self-awareness. He then goes to battle with a sling and stones. This is not how warriors went into battle but David isn’t try to please others or do what others expect of him. He’s aware of how he needs to fight because he has done it before. He knows the type of warrior and fighter he is. He knows how powerful and strong God is.

Self-awareness is the ability to understand ourselves (values, patterns, passions, impact on others) as well as how others see us. David has a firm understanding of himself as well as how others see him. He is also fully aware and recognizes the role of God in his life. John Calvin wrote, “Nearly all wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But as these are connected together by many ties, it is not easy to determine which of the two precedes and gives birth to the other.”

David knows himself and knows God. This makes him very wise. When we have a true understanding of ourselves and God, then we have a wisdom of self. Here are some traits:

### **Components of Wisdom of Self from David**

- Knowledge of our contributions and strengths (verse 34-37)
- Aware of our weaknesses (verse 39)
- Grasp of our values and beliefs (verse 26)
- Understanding how we impact others (verse 29)
- Knowing how others see us (verse 32)

When you have this wisdom, there are tremendous benefits that we see from David:

- Confidence to speak up
- Not pleasing others but God
- Use talents and gifts for God's glory and kingdom
- Handle trials and overcome to be mature and complete, not lacking anything (James 1:2-4)

**Reflection:**

1. In what ways, do you not live out your authentic self?
2. What is one area from the list of wisdom of self that you need to develop?
3. Prayerfully ask God how you might be more aware so that you can follow God?

**PRACTICE**

Step to knowing yourself is getting to have information about yourself. Take these two assessments and write down what you agree or disagree about each assessment. Discuss these results with the closest people in your life to see their thoughts.

1. Myers Brigg Personality Test
2. Enneagram
3. Bonus- Strength finders (20 dollars)

## SESSION 3

### **INTRO**

Growing up, how did your family handle and deal with emotions (happiness, joy, sadness, grief/ loss, anger)?

### **TEXT**

Feelings are a part of who we are. Every family handles emotions differently. Some families are very expressive and open about all types of feelings. Some families may have unspoken rules about how to handle negative emotions. Those emotions may not be embraced nor expressed. Regardless, we have been taught consciously or unconsciously how to deal with our emotions.

We learn from Scripture that God is a feeling God. God created feelings. Scripture is filled with how God shares and expresses emotions. He is emotional. We see this in Jesus Christ. He expressed positive and negative emotions. Read the verses and answer the questions below.

### **TIRED:**

Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." Mark 6:31

### **ANGRY**

**33** "You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? Matthew 23:33

### **DISGUST:**

**13** When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. **14** In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. **15** So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. **16** To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" **17** His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me." John 2:13-17

### **SADNESS/ GRIEF:**

**33** When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. **34** "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. **35** Jesus wept. John 11:33-35

### **SHAME**

...fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:2

### **TROUBLED**

**33** He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. Mark 14:33

#### LOVE

**5** Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

#### PAIN AND AGONY

**42** “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”

#### JOY:

**21** At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do. Luke 10:21

#### FEAR AND ANXIETY

**7** During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Hebrews 5:7

#### Questions

- What emotions and feelings from Jesus surprise you the most? Why?
- What does this teach you about having “negative” emotions especially since Jesus also had “negative” emotions yet, did not sin?
- How do you think Jesus handled negative emotions and feelings?
- Which one is the hardest for your or the one you struggle to handle/ deal with?

#### GOING DEEPER

Above all else, guard your heart,  
for everything you do flows from it. Proverbs 4:23

It’s important that we guard our hearts. This means that we are to be careful with our emotions. Do we let our emotions control us or can we control our emotions? How do you know when you are not controlling them well? You allow your emotions to control you when you do these things:

- **IGNORE THEM-** don’t think or feel them. You just avoid them.
- **STUFF THEM/ DISTRACT THEM:** You avoid thinking of your negative feelings by focusing on something else. It can range from bingeing TV, alcohol, sexual activities or always being around people. You know you are distracting yourself because you are trying not to feel whatever the pain or emotion it is.
- **BLAME.** You think that it’s someone else’s fault for what you are feeling or going through. You may think that an outside force is to blame. You take little to no responsibility.

- BLOW UP. We think that anger is an acceptable emotion that people understand. You may get angry at others and blow up to their face. You may get angry with yourself and say and do regretful things.

“We do not mature in our Christian experience unless we mature emotionally. What happens to us emotionally is not peripheral but central to our religious experience. To put it bluntly, people who are out of touch with their emotions are out of touch with God, for God speaks to us through the ebb and flow of our emotional life.” GORDON SMITH

You can't have a strong relationship with God if you don't aren't aware and able to handle your emotions. You need to be able to express and convey them in a healthy way that doesn't hurt, destroy or negatively impact you. Let's look at how we can handle these emotions.

Ways to handle emotions:

1. Know your emotion. Be aware of what you are feeling and what your body is telling you
2. Express your emotions in an appropriate way. You need to get your feelings out and express it. This doesn't mean you do whatever you want. You need to find a way that allows you to express it but it doesn't hurt your or others
3. Express it without crossing the line to sin. Jesus was able to handle angry and negative emotions without sinning. He was able to take appropriate actions and control his emotions while still expressing them.

## PRACTICE

Take some time to process and understand what is going on inside of you. It may be painful and hard to write and express it. It's important to stay in that moment and process it. You will feel better. The situation may not change but you will feel like you are not holding it and carrying it around. This is part of the healing and maturing process.

Questions to help you process.

1. What are you feeling? (feeling chart)
2. What are your thoughts?
3. What is giving you anxiety/ fear?
4. What or who is bothering you right now?
5. How is your emotions impacting others?
6. What is God saying to you about this?
7. What could be something you can do about this that would help?

# HOW DO I FEEL RIGHT NOW?

						
Aggressive	Angry	Anxious	Ashamed	Bashful	Bored	Cautious
						
Confident	Confused	Curious	Depressed	Determined	Disappointed	Disbelieving
						
Disgusted	Ecstatic	Embarrassed	Enraged	Envious	Exasperated	Exhausted
						
Frightened	Frustrated	Grieved	Guilty	Happy	Hopeful	Hurt
						
Indifferent	Interested	Jealous	Joyful	Lonely	Loved	Loving
						
Miserable	Optimistic	Overwhelmed	Pained	Puzzled	Regretful	Relieved
						
Sad	Satisfied	Shocked	Shy	Smug	Sorry	Stubborn
						
Stupid	Surprised	Suspicious	Thoughtful	Withdrawn		

## SESSION 4

### **INTRO**

Where do you live? Not your physical home but as far as in time. Where do your thoughts and feelings camp more: past, present or future? Why?

Many of us live in the past. We do because of our family. Our family shapes us and impacts such a pivotal part of our development. According to the Bible, family usually represents not just your immediate family. It represents two to four generations. You are a product of not just your parents but their parents and their parents.

We see how our family's impact us in Exodus 20: 4-6. In the third commandment, God shares the blessings and consequences.

“You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. **5** You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, **6** but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

- Have you noticed any family patterns that have been passed down in your family?

We'll look at the story of Joseph to show how our past impacts us not only in the present but also the future. We'll examine three ways that we live in the past from the life of Joseph.

### **TEXT**

Joseph lived in a complex family dynamic. His father had two wives and two concubines and each had children. They all lived together but Jacob favored Joseph. This created jealousy and anger among his brothers.

#### *PAST HURT FROM OTHERS*

- Who hurts Joseph?

**28** So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels<sup>[b]</sup> of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt. Genesis 38:28

#### *PAST MISTAKES*

- What mistakes did he make even if he did not commit them?

**16** She kept his cloak beside her until his master came home. **17** Then she told him this story: “That Hebrew slave you brought us came to me to make sport of me. **18** But as soon as I screamed for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house.”

**19** When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, “This is how your slave treated me,” he burned with anger. **20** Joseph’s master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king’s prisoners were confined. Genesis 39: 16-20

#### *PAST HURT FROM OTHERS*

- The cupbearer promises to help Joseph but once the cupbearer gets out of jail, does he keep his promise?

**23** The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him. Genesis 40:23

#### Going Deeper:

You are Joseph and you are in prison for 13 years. Your brothers caused this. They sold you into slavery and then you become falsely accused and go to prison. Your friends forget you and there seems like there is no hope. How would you feel about your brothers? What would you do if you saw them and had power over them?

Joseph gets that chance. God lifts Joseph’s circumstance and he becomes second in command. He has power over his brothers. They come to him to get food. Joseph has an opportunity to exact revenge. The brothers fear that he will.

Read Genesis 50:15-21

**15** When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, “What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?” **16** So they sent word to Joseph, saying, “Your father left these instructions before he died: **17** ‘This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.’ Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father.” When their message came to him, Joseph wept.

**18** His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. “We are your slaves,” they said.

**19** But Joseph said to them, “Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? **20** You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. **21** So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.” And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

#### Question:

- What would you have done and what does Joseph do?
- Why do you think Joseph chooses forgiveness?

Joseph’s greatest victory wasn’t getting out of prison and becoming second in command. His biggest victory was forgiving and loving his brothers. He could have chosen to be angry and bitter. That would have caused generational pain and division. He chose something different. He wanted to write a new story for his kids and their future kids.

God wants to redeem your past. He wants to free you from those past chains of hurt, mistakes and broken relationships.

Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, **14** I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.  
Philippians 3:13-14

Forgetting doesn't mean that you ignore, forget or repress. Forgiving doesn't mean that you forget either. It means that you are aware of what happened and you decide to break the cycle and chain like Joseph did. You choose something different. You choose to do what God wants. You choose to forgive. This allows you to break free from the past and to live in the present and the future that God wants for you.

- What is one experience from the past hurts, past mistakes and past broken relationships that you are holding onto?
- What do you believe God wants you to do with it?
- What would it look like to break free from that cycle?
- What is one thing you can do today?

#### HOMEWORK:

Get a large construction sheet of paper. You can also tape many sheets of paper together. You will draw a line in the middle of the paper. You'll need to get two colors of sticky notes. On the top area of the line, post the sticky notes of positive things that have happened in your life. You don't need to write it all down. It can be a word, phrase or name.

On the bottom of the line, write down all the negative things that have happened in your life. Write down significant people in your life who have helped bring life and also caused hurts.

After you complete it, take a look and write down your observations:

1. What did you learn about yourself?
2. What stuck out to you and why?
3. Where are you living in the past today?
4. What are you still holding onto?
5. Where was God in the story?

## SESSION 5

### INTRODUCTION

Have you ever had a teacher, coach, mentor, or adult say something positive to you? How did that make you feel and what impact did that have in your life? Share this to the group.

The ear that listens to life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise. Whoever ignores instruction despises himself, but he who listens to reproof gains intelligence. The fear of the Lord is instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before honor. Proverbs 15: 31-33

Self-awareness is not just about knowing your emotions and thoughts (internal self-awareness), it's also knowing how others see you (external self-awareness). Most times, we either see ourselves in a better light. Listening and seeking wisdom from close and trusted people in our life gives us a balanced perspective of who we are.

Most often, people can see us more objectively than we can see ourselves. God knows our heart and uses people in our life to speak truth. We just need to be open to listening to know who God has made us to be.

Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart. Proverbs 21:2

### TEXT

**13** When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

**14** They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

**15** “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

**16** Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

**17** Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. **18** And I tell you that you are Peter,<sup>[a]</sup> and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades<sup>[b]</sup> will not overcome it.

**19** I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be<sup>[c]</sup> bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be<sup>[d]</sup> loosed in heaven.”

Matthew 16:13-19

Question:

1. Jesus is perfect and fully self-aware. He knows who he is and others see him. Why do you think Jesus asks, “Who do people say I am?”
2. What does Peter's answer show you about his understanding and faith? Verse 16
3. What does Jesus say about Peter's strength and future in the church?
4. Peter at this point is volatile, unstable, naive and arrogant. Do you think he and the disciples are surprised when Jesus calls Peter to be the rock and leader? Why?

5. How do you think that changed and impacted Peter's faith and attitude?

God has given each of us so many gifts, talents, passion and abilities. Some of us know this and some of us have very little awareness. When a close and trusted person is able to speak into it then it either 1) confirms what we believe in ourselves or 2) surprises us. We may not have known that or seen that like Peter. This typically gives birth to a new passion and desire to focus, invest and develop that passion and desire. This requires that we hear and listen to our close and trusted people in our lives. We need to seek after their opinion and thoughts. We need to ask them to see the good that we may or may not see in ourselves.

Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future. Proverbs 19:20

**PRACTICE:**

You will seek after positive feedback from those that you trust. Ask 5-10 different people that may know you very well. You don't ask anyone. This is the type of person you need to ask:

- Someone that knows you well
- Someone that isn't afraid to give you open and honest feedback
- Someone you trust that has your best interest

You will want to ask a variety of people to give you a better understanding of yourself in different situations. They may include spouse, children, family members, co-workers, employer, friends, neighbors, club members, church members and more.

There is no right way or the way to ask for this. You can either email or ask the questions below to the people you choose. The questions will focus on what strengths people see in you.

1. What do you think I am good at?
2. Where have you seen me be most passionate about?
3. Where have you been pleasantly surprised as far as my abilities and work?
4. What strength and area do you believe I should continue to focus on?

Write down your thoughts when you collect all these response:

1. What did you learn about yourself?
2. How did it make you feel the read or hear this?
3. What was confirmed for you through these responses?
4. What surprised you? Why?
5. What is one thing you can do with this positive feedback?

## SESSION 6

### INTRO

Think of a time when you received criticism or negative feedback, how did that make you feel and how did you handle that moment?

Self-awareness is being aware of how others see us. It's not just the positive ways but also the ways that we need to grow, mature and improve. This part is crucial in our development. Some of us may be aware of it, but most of us aren't. Here are the common reasons we don't want to hear or find out:

1. **BOSS Disease-** typically if you have a lot of success and in a power of position, you don't want to hear it. You think you know it and focus on your strengths and what got you here. Also, there is a power dynamic where you won't consider your employees input as much as someone on your same level.
2. **EXCUSE:** we may believe that we don't need to ask for it or.
3. **Uncomfortable:** It's painful and hurts to hear something negative. It doesn't give life but feels bad and we normally can't handle it well.

Why it's important to hear it:

1. Can't get an accurate picture of yourself without hearing the good and the areas to improvement
2. You will get a new perspective on your behavior. You will see things you didn't see about yourself. This gives you more information and more opportunities to grow and develop. It will make you mature and complete.  
**2** Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, **3** because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. **4** Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. James 1:2-4
3. You can only change the things you know about. It may improve your work output, relationships with family and friends and build trust with your organization and team. You can be the best version that God made for you.

### TEXT

Last session, we saw Jesus praise Peter. He told Peter who he is and what he will be doing. He focused on what he saw in Peter. A moment later and Jesus gives Peter painful feedback.

**21** From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

**22** Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"

23 Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.” Matthew 16: 21-23

Questions:

- Why do you think Peter was so adamant about Jesus not suffering?
- Peter had a belief of how Jesus was supposed to be the savior. We all have some sort of belief or idea of how our lives or things in our life should turn out. It's this view that life should happen this way. What are one or two beliefs that you have carried that may not necessarily be true or biblical?
- What does Jesus rebuke Peter about in verse 23?

Hearing negative feedback is hard and painful. It hurts. We typically don't handle it very well. Even with this harsh criticism, Peter doesn't stop following Jesus. Even when Peter denied Jesus three times, Peter still followed Jesus. He confessed, repented and changed. It's a great example for how we are to handle painful feedback.

Tasha Eurich in her book, *Insight*, explains a way to handle feedback. It's called the 3R. It's to receive, reflect and respond.

RECEIVE:

You need to ask for the feedback. People do not want to initially share it. You need to show that you are willing to hear it. You need to listen and not be angry. That's how to receive.

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, **20** because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. James 1:19-20

Here are some questions you can ask to help you receive:

- Can you tell me more about what you mean when you ...?
- Can you give me a few examples?
- When did you first notice this behavior?

REFLECT:

It's important to listen to the feedback and give yourself time to process this. You need to give yourself some space and time to understand the feedback and wrestle with it. Is this something you agree or disagree? What about it bothers you or stings? What course of action should or shouldn't you take? There is sometimes feedback that isn't necessarily true and accurate. This is your time to ponder and take all sides into consideration.

Lamentations 3:40 — "Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord."

**RESPOND:**

You've done the hard work and now you can decide how to respond or not respond. You may agree with the feedback and make changes to your thought, action or behavior. You may disagree and stick to what you believe is true. Regardless, it's important to find the best way to respond accordingly.

**15** But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, **16** keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. 1 Peter 3:15-16

**PRACTICE:**

Go back to the same people you asked for positive feedback and now ask them these questions or a specific question you want feedback on. You may want something specific to ask about (how you do meetings, a certain incident or personality trait). If not, here is a list of possible questions you may want to ask :

1. What are my blindspots?
2. What are things that I do that are not beneficial to me or others?
3. How do I hurt others without even knowing it?
4. What is one thing I can change that would benefit my work and relationships?
5. What are my weaknesses?

Follow through with the 3R. Write what you learned and how you want to respond.

1. What did you learn about yourself?
2. How did it make you feel to read or hear this?
3. What was confirmed for you through these responses?
4. What surprised you? Why?
5. What is one thing you can do with this feedback?

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## ABSTRACT

### BUILDING SELF-AWARE LEADERS AT SADDLEBACK SOUTH BAY CHURCH

Samuel Yoon, DMin  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2021  
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Kevin Peck

This project is designed to help pastors, ministry leaders, and leaders in the local church with building healthier and more self-aware leaders. Self-aware leaders will be able to understand what and why they do what they do. They will have a better understanding of how to work with others on their team or organization. This creates more unity and ability to work together for the kingdom of God.

Chapter 1 provides the context, rationale and direction for self-awareness in the church context. Chapter 2 provides the biblical and theological framework for understanding the importance and value of self-awareness in the local church. It will help understand that self-awareness is a biblical concept rooted in scripture. Chapter 3 will unpack the theoretical and sociological support for creating and developing healthier and more self-aware leaders. This will look into spiritual disciplines such as prayer, meditation, journaling, and feedback. Chapter 4 describes the project itself with a detailed understanding of the curriculum and training material. Chapter 5 brings the project together by making an analysis and discussion of the project goals and outcome of self-awareness in the local church.

## VITA

Samuel Yoon

### EDUCATION

BA, University of California Irvine, 2004  
MDiv, Gateway Theological Seminary, 2009  
MFT, California State University Long Beach, 2013

### MINISTERIAL EMPLOYMENT

Student Pastor, Irvine Baptist Church, Irvine, California, 2006-2013  
High School Pastor, Mariners Church, Irvine, California, 2013-2015  
Associate Pastor, Saddleback Church Newport Mesa, Costa Mesa, California,  
2015-2017  
Campus Pastor, Saddleback Church South Bay, Torrance, California, 2017-