

Self-Awareness
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Okay, good afternoon! I'm gonna read a few scriptures. And I didn't make... I don't think I made the transfer from King James to the RE edition. So, *For...*

Galatians 6:3—*For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself* (see also Galatians 1:23 RE).

2 Corinthians 13:5—*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?* (see also 2 Corinthians 1:48 RE).

1 Corinthians 13:12—*For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known* (see also 1 Corinthians 1:53 RE).

Psalms 26:2—*Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart* (see also Psalms 26:1 RE).

Proverbs 14:8—*The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the folly of fools is deceit* (see also Proverbs 2:124 RE).

Now, what all of these scriptures have in common is this element of awareness and the importance of knowing yourself. So I'm gonna spend a few minutes and talk about self-awareness. And I'm gonna start by telling you what self-awareness is not. Self-awareness is not self-absorption. It is not any kind of conceit. It is not any kind of excess investment in yourself to elevate yourself or make yourself better than other people. Self-awareness, in its truest form, is an understanding of who you are: your strengths, your weaknesses, your characteristics, the qualities that you have, your emotional states, the things that trigger you or upset you. And it is an understanding of that, and it's an understanding of how you came to be this way. Your history, your family, your context, your experiences in life all impact how you see yourself (or alternatively, how you *don't* see yourself).

The other part of self-awareness is how your being impacts and influences the people around you. For example, you might be a school teacher who is really, really in tune with how his or her students see you or take you in or understand you. You might be a manager, and you might be really, really conscientious of how you are perceived by your team. You might be a coach, and you might care a lot about how your players see you, whether they respect you, how they respond to you. Those are a little bit easier to invest in because they're not as close relationships as our families and our partners and our spouses. It's harder to be a mother and to care or really want to know how you are perceived by your children—because there's this power structure, and I want to maintain my power structure, and so it's hard for me to be vulnerable and be willing to ask my kids, maybe, what their

opinion is of me. And that's a really important thing to begin to understand. I might be a wife, and I might have a really hard time wanting to know how I am perceived by my husband. How do I fight? How do I communicate? ~~How do~~ How well do I listen? That's hard, because someone's gonna tell me the truth. And then I'm gonna have to do something about it.

The hallmark of a self-aware person... I'll give you this information, and then we'll talk about some other things. Self-aware people recognize that there is a difference between their emotions and their feelings. *Emotions* are your instinctive reactions to experiences and situations. Your *feelings* are how you mentally portray that representation of that emotion. The key difference between these two things is that you cannot ex... You can't control your reactions to things, but you can choose how you feel about it. I'm gonna say that again: **You can't control your instinctive reaction, but you can control how you feel about it.** So most of our difficulties in our contentions or our problems in life is not the issue itself but how we think and feel about the issue. So we have the opportunity to choose how we're gonna feel, and then we choose how we're going to behave based on how we feel. So that's the hallmark of a self-aware person.

Okay...

So, I've done a little bit of research on self-awareness. And there are some funny things. So the research that I was reading, the researcher—her name is Tasha Eurich—she went out, and she found what she thought were self-aware people. And the way she did it was ~~she found someone~~ she found people who thought they were self-aware, and then they had to have someone in their life who could corroborate the truthfulness of that statement. So someone had to agree that they were self-aware. This same person had to believe that they had improved in their self-awareness, and then someone had to agree that they had improved in their self-awareness. If you go out and ask people if they're self-aware (or if they think they're self-aware), 95% of people will tell you they are self-aware. Only about 10-15% of the people actually are. So we live in a world where 85% of the time and 85% of the people: we are lying to ourselves about whether we “get ourselves” and how we are interpreted by the people around us. This is not a small thing. This is a very, very big thing.

Three components of self-awareness include your emotional self-awareness—this means you know what you're feeling and why you are feeling it. So think, for a minute, the last time you were upset about something: could have been at a kid, could have been at a co-worker, whatever. When was the last time you were upset? When was the last time you remember thinking about *why* you were upset? And I'm certain it was because somebody made you upset, right? Of course, somebody made you upset—or maybe not. If you are emotionally self-aware, you understand the connections between your feelings and then what you say and then how you behave because of that. Again, when we get feeling unpleasant emotions—anger, sadness, frustration—we generally behave from an emotionally dysregulated place. And so we tend to be mean; we tend to be sarcastic; we tend to be defensive; we tend to push people away instead of bring them closer. If you are emotionally self-aware, you recognize how your feelings impact your success in life or your lack of success in life. You know how to experience your emotions.

Another component is an accurate self-assessment. If you're a self-aware person, you understand pretty clearly your strengths and your limitations. You may know where you are good in relationships; you also know where you struggle. If you have an accurate self-assessment, you tend to learn from your experiences. Everything is an opportunity to change, do something different, stop doing something that was not serving you and start doing something that will make your life better and the life of the people around you better. If you are a good at self-assessment, you are open to feedback. Feedback means someone tells you something about yourself, and you take it in, internalize it, and use it to improve yourself. Feedback is a very, very difficult thing for people to take. We don't like feedback, and we certainly don't like asking for feedback. And you cannot be a self-aware person or understand yourself without feedback.

A self-aware person is pretty self-confident. They believe that they are a good person and that they can do good things. They believe that they have value and can add to the world. If you are a self-aware person, you believe you're capable and have many opportunities to be successful. A self-confident, self-aware person has goals, and they want to accomplish things.

~~This~~ These are qualities and characteristics of a person who is self-aware. And unless you are practicing self-awareness, you are not self-aware, because it is not a natural state of the human condition. It is a trait and a skill that needs to be understood, and it needs to be practiced.

We grow up, and we learn all kinds of things: we start as toddlers, learning how to dress ourselves, share, ~~play with~~ play nice with others. We grow up; we learn how to drive. We might balance a checkbook or learn how to log into our Wells Fargo or our America First bank account so that we know how much money we have. We learn to get jobs, go to college—but we very rarely learn how to be good people in a relationship. We just think that we can do and say and be exactly how we are, and the people around us will just tolerate it—because that's what we're supposed to do. And unless someone is willing to look at you and tell you that you are lacking in a skillset or that you have a difficult time with this particular issue, we don't learn these things.

The benefits of self-awareness are pretty far-reaching:

- First and foremost, it increases your ability to have empathy and compassion with other people. Empathy is being able to be with someone else in their emotional states. That's important. That is a connecting, intimate skill that brings people together.
- Your life will be more fulfilled.
- You tend to be more creative.
- You're better at communicating.
- You're less likely to lie, cheat, or steal.
- You are going to be a more effective leader.
- You will take more accountability and greater responsibility for your own life.
- You will stop blaming people for the things that are happening to you.

- If you are self-aware, you are more willing and open to take feedback and criticism with humility and curiosity.

We need this skill. Christ has this skill. We need to be more Christ-like, and we need to learn this.

So I'm gonna go through a list pretty quickly. But I want you to listen carefully because these are signs that you are self-aware:

- You take responsibility for how you respond to things in people rather than trying to change those things in people.
- You do not assume that you are better.
- You are conscious of the fact that how you speak says more about you than what you say.
- You acknowledge and accept other people's feelings, even if you don't understand or agree with them.
- You do not start conversations about politics, religion, or strongly-held beliefs with the intent to prove you are right. You only do this in an effort to better understand another person's perspective.
- You are responsive; you are not reactive.
- You see any kind of discomfort as an opportunity to grow.
- You do not assume that you know how other people perceive you, but you try to remain conscious of social cues to make sure that you are not being ignorant of other people's needs or their level of comfort.
- You do not overshare or speak to others with the intention of getting a response from them.
- You do not insult other people in order to make yourself feel better.
- You accept critical feedback as crucial information you will need to learn and grow, not as a condemnation of your ability or character.
- You are kind to people who do not necessarily deserve it.
- You know it is not your job to determine who is worthy of kindness, but show it, no matter what.
- You are highly introspective. You evaluate your feelings, and you want desperately to grow personally and know that understanding yourself is the key to understanding others.
- You do not expect to feel good all the time. Therefore, you do not extrapolate the meaning of a bad mood or a bad day to be anything other than a moment in time.

Signs that you are *not* self-aware:

- You get defensive easily.
- You control and are controlling.
- You act passive-aggressively.
- Your behavior changes depending on the scenario.
- You make excuses for your behavior.
- You micromanage.

- You refuse to take feedback or deny that anything anybody says to you has any valid reality.
- ~~You don't like it if you~~ You don't know who you are. You feel like you're not following any real purpose or path in life, and you feel generally unhappy and unfulfilled.

Now, those are pretty general statements about self-awareness, but given the last few years of my life, I can attest that they're pretty accurate, and they're pretty important to pay attention to.

Okay, so that leaves us (briefly) to: How do we do something better? How do we cultivate self-awareness? And what are the barriers that we come across when we are trying to do this?

The first and most important thing you need to do is *slow down, stop moving, and be quiet*. Your best connection to understanding your self-awareness is through mindful practices, prayer, meditation, and just slowing everything down. Take time to connect with yourself every single day in some sort of quiet, non-active space. Avoid digital distractions (which includes Scriptures, podcasts, any other good thing that you're investing in). Take some time to literally do nothing. Carve out some solitude. Practicing mindfulness, pay attention to your inner state as it arises. Try being mindful when you're walking, when you're eating, when you're listening—just do something that shuts all of the distractions out.

Journal some of your newfound awareness; process your thoughts through writing. Write down how you're feeling. After a terrible argument with a child or a spouse, write down what that was like for you. What did you feel? When did you feel that way? Why did you react that way? What about your own personal experiences or history made you say that to that other person?

Practice listening. We do not listen well in our society. I have had so many experiences... The other day, I asked a direct question to one of my kids, didn't listen to a single thing she said when she answered me—literally immediately—after I asked the question. And I'm like, "Oh, I'm so sorry. I didn't even hear you." So, pay attention to the speaker; observe the emotions and the body language of the speaker. Do not listen with the intent of solving, changing, or offering up your own viewpoint—for the most part, nobody cares; if they do care, they'll ask you. So, no judgment or evaluation.

Gain a different perspective. You can only gain a different perspective if you **ask**. Ask the people around you to give honest feedback. How do you communicate? How are you when you are upset? How do you react when you're hungry and tired and have had a bad day at work? Ask those people who love and care about you to tell you these things so that you can increase in this awareness.

Some of the barriers we have to self-awareness are:

- A lack of mindfulness, meaning we never slow down long enough to actually be with ourselves, to understand how we feel, why we're cranky, why we're tired, why we don't like listening to someone when they talk about that particular subject. That's all inside of you. You just have to be quiet and listen for it.

- Our cognitive biases get in the way.
- Our unwillingness to listen to people tell us or criticize us or give us feedback gets in the way.
- Our confirmation bias gets in the way.
- And then we tend to forget to experience ourselves as “Self.” That's a hard one to explain. But it just goes back to being quiet and listening to yourself and understanding where you are.

So the reason this is an important topic and the reason this is important to know is because this is a community of people who are engaged in a lot of good work: a lot of good work trying to do a lot of good things, a lot of conversations ~~going about~~ going around about a lot of really difficult subjects. And I'm... My observation—to the extent that I have ~~observed~~ the powers of observation—is that we are lacking in empathy and charity and self-awareness. And we fill ourselves with our Scripture study and our podcast listening and our things, and we go out, and we talk, and we communicate, and we blurt out things—and we are deaf, dumb, and stupid to the fact that if you do not understand yourself or why you react certain ways or why you think certain things, you're going to continue to spin your wheels and spin your wheels in contention and arguments and disagreements, all while patting yourselves on the back because you think because you read your Scriptures that morning, that everything's gonna be fine. And it's not.

To deconstruct the self and to deconstruct the “natural man that is an enemy to God” requires you to do the work of understanding why you are like you are.

- What makes you mad?
- What gets your ire up?
- What makes you happy?
- What makes you sad?
- Why does this conversation always bother you?
- Why does this kid always bother you?
- Why do you always get mad at your spouse when he or she does this?

These are important things to understand, and they're important things to take the time it will take to deconstruct all of the mess and all of the angst you've got going around it.

I started out with the Scriptures because this **is** in the Scriptures. The whole idea of understanding your emotions and your feelings and the way you act in the world is actually part of deconstructing the natural man. If human beings are one of the only mammals (or God's creation) that has feelings that have such a tremendous impact on our ability to be in the world with people, we better pay attention to 'em. And it doesn't matter how old you are; doesn't matter how young you are. There is no time when this is not gonna benefit you. No time. And I think the time to start is now.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

[Transcription v1.1]