



Session 2: Know Yourself That You May Know God

Introduction

Be open to yourself, to God, and to the people in your group. It is ok if you feel a little bit uncomfortable. Just know you are invited to be as vulnerable as you would like to be.

As a group let's remind ourselves of these guidelines:

1. Speak only for yourself, use "I" statements
2. Keep your sharing to 2-3 minutes, give room for others to share
3. No fixing, saving, or setting other people straight
4. Trust and learn from silence, there is no pressure to share
5. Observe confidentiality

Today we are talking about knowing ourselves that we may know God. Self-awareness is intricately related to our relationship with God. In fact, the challenge of Scripture to shed our old "false" self in order to live authentically in our new "true" self strikes at the very core of true spirituality.

In 1530, John Calvin wrote in his opening of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*: "Our wisdom...consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and 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."

For starters

After the following paragraph is read aloud, complete the questions below on your own and then be ready to share some of your thoughts with the group.

The journey of genuine transformation to emotionally healthy spirituality begins with a commitment to allow yourself to feel. Feelings are an essential part of our humanity and unique personhood as men and women created in God's image. Scripture reveals God as an emotional being who feels as a person. Having been created in his image, we also are created with the gift to feel and experience emotions. Some of us may have learned that feelings are not to be trusted; that they are dangerous and can lead us away from God's will for us. While it is true that we are not to be led by our emotions, they do serve a critical function in our discipleship and discernment of God's will.

Jot down some responses below.

What are you angry about?

What are you sad about?

What are you anxious about?

What are you glad about?

Which of these responses are you prepared to share with your group?

Scripture: 1 Samuel 17:26-45

In this well-known story we follow David as he confronts Goliath, the Philistine giant. As you listen to these Scriptures, pay attention to the emotions described in this story. Don't overthink the implications of this passage. Simply allow the story to be the story.

26 And David said to the men who stood by him, "What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" 27 And the people answered him in the same way, "So shall it be done to the man who kills him."

28 Now Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spoke to the men. And Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, "Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your presumption and the evil of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle." 29 And David said, "What have I done now? Was it not but a word?" 30 And he turned away from him toward another, and spoke in the same way, and the people answered him again as before.

31 When the words that David spoke were heard, they repeated them before Saul, and he sent for him. 32 And David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him. Your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." 33 And Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for you are but a youth, and he has been a man of war from his youth." 34 But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, 35 I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him. 36 Your servant has struck down both lions and

bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God.” 37 And David said, “The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.” And Saul said to David, “Go, and the LORD be with you!”

38 Then Saul clothed David with his armor. He put a helmet of bronze on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail, 39 and David strapped his sword over his armor. And he tried in vain to go, for he had not tested them. Then David said to Saul, “I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them.” So David put them off. 40 Then he took his staff in his hand and chose five smooth stones from the brook and put them in his shepherd’s pouch. His sling was in his hand, and he approached the Philistine.

41 And the Philistine moved forward and came near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. 42 And when the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was but a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. 43 And the Philistine said to David, “Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?” And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. 44 The Philistine said to David, “Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field.” 45 Then David said to the Philistine, “You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.

1. In your own words, what are some of David’s thoughts and feelings when he hears Goliath’s challenge to Israel (v.26)?
2. What feelings might you be experiencing if you were David?
3. What enables David to live out of his true self against the powerful forces and pressures that seek to mold him into someone he is not?
4. Where in your life, or with whom, is it difficult to be your true self?
5. What might it look like for you to take off armor that you are currently wearing that does not fit you?
6. Finish this sentence: What I am beginning to realize about myself is...