Session 2: KNOW YOURSELF THAT YOU MAY KNOW GOD

We began last week by looking at Saul and the problem of emotional unhealthy spirituality. This week’s study looks at David and explores what it means to “Know Yourself That You May Know God.”

This is the first of the seven pathways to emotionally healthy spirituality. Why? Because an awareness of yourself and your relationship with God are so closely related.

Pretending be someone we are not is so big in our culture we rarely think twice about it. Politicians do it to get our votes. Business leaders do it to generate profits and attract investors. Magazine editors airbrush photos to make their models look more perfect and beautiful than they actually are.

It is so easy to pretend to be something on the outside that we are not on the inside. Students wear other people’s faces to fit in at school with their friends and teachers. Workers wear masks in the marketplace to get promotions. Young adults do it to impress their friends. Sadly, even in church, we sometimes put on a mask so that people will like us or think of us in a certain way.

All cultures pretend to a greater or lesser extent. But in the church of Jesus Christ, God invites us to be our unique selves before Him, not pretending to be someone on the outside that is not who we are on the inside.
We are actually called to be an alternative community, to be a sign to the world Jesus has made possible a way of life unlike anything the world had seen. We bear witness to the power of God by the way we live authentically, and with integrity, out of true selves.

In fact, the challenge 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 AD 500, Augustine wrote in Confessions, “How can you draw close to God when you are far from your own self?”

John Calvin in 1530 wrote: “Our wisdom . . . consists almost entirely 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.”

The vast majority of us go to our graves without knowing who we are. Without being fully aware of it, we live someone else’s life, or at least someone else’s expectations for us. As a result, we end up doing violence to ourselves, our relationship with God, and ultimately to others.

**STORY** – Me – focus in early years was on KNOWING GOD out there

Hearing God – outside of myself

I didn’t pay attention to what was going on inside me.
I knew – Jer. 17:9  “The heart is desperately wicked and deceitful, who can know it.” And Roman 7 “that in me dwells no good thing. “

The problem was that I was ignoring other Scriptures and truths and missing a lot of what God was saying and doing inside me.

I didn’t do emotions – especially the difficult ones like anger, sadness and fear. And I sure didn’t know the implications for my walk with Christ.

Once I begin to be aware of what I am doing, how I am feeling, and how it is impacting others, I began to ask myself the difficult “why” questions like:

- Why I am always in a hurry? Why am I so impatient? Why am I so anxious?
- Am I creating a life that is a gift to others or am I using them, trying to get them to validate me and tell me that I am okay?
- Why do I dread this meeting today at 2 P.M.? Why am I so flooded with fear?
- Why do I avoid confronting difficult people at church?
- Why do I have a need to immediately return all phone calls and emails? Is it because I want to please people?

Once I began to pay attention to God inside me and to how He had uniquely made me, it opened up a whole new world for me. It was like a Copernican Revolution.
--My relationship with God took on more listening, paying attention to Him and giving the Spirit space to search out my heart

--I became a more loving person to others.

--I became a lot more genuine and true to who had God had uniquely made me to be. I shed some false layers that I had been wearing. In a healthy way, I realized that I could only be me-(I could learn from others, but trying to be somebody I was not wasn't doing anybody any favors).

This Session - KNOWING MYSELF THAT I MIGHT KNOW GOD is rooted in our Lord Jesus Christ who models this beautifully.

In living faithful to His true self, Jesus disappointed a lot of people. Yet He was secure in his Father's love and in himself. Thus Jesus was able to withstand enormous pressure. He disappointed his family's expectations for his life. At one point, his mother and siblings wondered if he was out of his mind (see Mark 3:21).

He disappointed the people he grew up with in Nazareth. When Jesus declared who he really was as the Messiah, they tried to push him off a cliff (see Luke 4:28-29). He remained self-assured in his beliefs, regardless of the outrage of the crowds in his hometown.
He disappointed his closest friends -- the twelve disciples. They projected onto Jesus their own picture of the kind of Messiah Jesus was to be. This sure did not include a crucifixion. They quit on him. Judas, one of His closest friends, “stabbed him in the back” for being true to himself.

Jesus crowds wanted an earthly Messiah who would feed them, fix all their problems, overthrow the Roman oppressors, work miracles, and give inspiring sermons. They wanted to make him king. He disappointed them.

He disappointed the religious leaders. They did not appreciate the disruption his presence brought to their day-to-day lives or to their theology. They had to get rid of Jesus.

Jesus had a deep sense of self before the Father. He knew what the Father had given him to do. Who he was. At the same time Jesus was not selfish. He did not live as if nobody else counted. He gave his life out of love for others. From a place of loving union with his Father, Jesus had a mature, healthy “true self” out of which He offered his life as a gift to the world.

The pressure on us to live a life that is not our own is great. Powerful generational forces and spiritual warfare work against us. Yet living faithfully to our true self in Christ represents one of the great tasks of discipleship.
In this session, you will be looking at the story of David’s confrontation with Goliath as we see powerful forces coming against him to smother the unique, true life God had given to him.

In this famous story, the army of Israel faces the great army of the Philistines. For forty days, Goliath, described as nine feet tall and dressed in powerful weaponry, challenges any Israelite soldier to come out and fight him. When the Israelites saw him, however, “they all ran from him in great fear” (1 Samuel 17:24 NIV).

Yet David He knows who he. He is as a shepherd and expert with his slingshot as a young man. He is not a trained soldier like the rest of the army of Israel. He is not Saul who has lead armies to victory. He can’t wear his armor. His older brothers put him down. Goliath curses him. Yet David knows himself and he knows the living God who has made the heavens and the earth. With that alone, David is able to break through the barriers of his family’s negative views of who he is, the discouragement of Saul, an entire army living in fear, and the curses of Goliath.

This knowledge of himself and of God frees not only him from all the pressures around him. It frees everyone around him!

In the same way, powerful forces come against us to bury our true selves in Christ. Discipleship is yes “knowing God.” But it is also knowing yourself. When we bring these two elements together, great power is released.
As Rabbi Susya said “At the end of your life, God will not ask you why were you not Moses? He will ask, Why were you not you!? Why did you try to live out someone else’s life that was not your own!”

Part of your time in the group will be an exercise to pour out your heart before God and to feel. This is based on Genesis 1:27 and the reality that God has made us as whole people in His image. That image includes physical, spiritual, emotional, intellectual and social dimensions.

Allowing yourself to feel is an essential part of our humanity and unique personhood as men and women made in God’s image. It is an essential component to genuine transformation in Christ.

Scripture reveals God as an emotional being who feels—a Person. Having been created in his image, we also were created with the gift to feel and experience emotions.

* God beams with delight and joy in Genesis when he creates the world - “God saw that it was good . . . very good” (Genesis 1:25, 31). In other words, God delighted, relished, beamed with delight over us.
* “God was grieved that He had made humanity on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain” in the days of Noah (Genesis 6:6).
* “God refers to himself as crying out, gasping and panting in Isaiah 42. (Isaiah 42:14).
**We observe Jesus sorrowful and troubled, overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death” (Matthew 26:37-38).

* At that time we see Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit” (Luke 10: 21).

Take a few minutes and reflect on the implications of our God feeling. You are made in his image. God thinks. You think. God feels. You feel. You are a human being made in God’s likeness. Part of that likeness is to feel.

If we are going to do God’s will, it requires a complete commitment to do His will, follow Scripture, and seek wise counsel. Yet, in addition, spiritual formation includes experiencing our feelings, reflecting on them, and then thoughtfully responding to our feelings under the lordship of Jesus. We acknowledge them as a part of the way God communicates to us.

Getting to know yourself that you may know God is the discipleship work of a lifetime. Now let’s begin and take the first steps on this pathway to an emotionally healthy spirituality.

And let’s pray the great words of Augustine who prayed, “Grant, Lord, that I may know myself that I may know Thee.”