**LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT GROUP**

Topic: **Self-awareness and Dealing with Life Scripts**Speakers: **Jill Steel / Cass Tompich  
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### John Calvin on self awareness

John Calvin begins his monumental work, the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* with this statement:

**1.1.1 *Without knowledge of self there is no knowledge of God***  
  
Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But, while joined by many bonds, which one precedes and brings forth the other is not easy to discern.

**1.1.2 *Without knowledge of God there is no knowledge of self***  
(<https://www.christianpost.com/news/knowing-thyself-is-key-to-knowing-god-48995/> )

This quotation is further noted in Appendix 1 and I’d suggest a thorough meditative reading of this by all.

### Warren Bennis on self-awareness

Warren Bennis, one of the great researchers and teachers on leadership, believed that self-awareness was a NECESSITY for leaders. He referred to it as "the management of attention" and said it is the first leadership competency needed. By management of attention, he meant, the leader knows her or his values, their core beliefs, their passions… and leads out of that.

Bennis believed that leaders needed to be more than merely familiar with who they were. They needed a deep intimacy about their inner realities.

<http://lci.typepad.com/leaders_resourcing_leader/2010/04/self-awareness----warren-bennis-one-of-the-great-researches-and-teachers-of-leadership-almost-one-of-the-founding-fathers-o.html>

**Discussion: So what is it about self awareness that’s so important for knowledge of God and for leadership?**

* Take 5 minutes to discuss

**Knowing myself: what are the elements of self awareness*?***

I suggest that the most fundamental tasks of self awareness are to be able to identify:

* what am I feeling?
* what am I thinking?
* what am I believing about situations, circumstances, events?

**Then** armed with this awareness we have a platform for making choices about our beliefs, our thoughts, our behaviour, and our responses.

Sounds simple... what can possibly go wrong???

**Examples:** (Let’s take a few minutes to reflect on these)

Here are two examples in which people lacked self awareness in one way or other. See if you can identify:

* what self awareness each person possessed but where was each **lacking** in self-awareness?
* what was the type of help that Dr Cloud presented?

1. *Read* ***example*** *of Jane- pages 151-152* ***Changes that Heal*** *by Dr Henry Cloud (Zondervan Press 1992)*

Feedback on above questions.

1. *Another* ***example****: page 161 ibid*

Feedback on above questions.

**Blockages and defence mechanisms that hinder self awareness:**

The most fundamental blockage to self awareness from a Christian perspective, according to Calvin, is this:

“Again, it is certain that man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked upon God's face, and then descends from contemplating him to scrutinise himself. For we always seem to ourselves righteous and upright and wise and holy-this pride is innate in all of us-unless by clear proofs we stand convinced of our own unrighteousness, foulness, folly, and impurity.”

From a counselling perspective, many people conceal, deny or bury their “negative” feelings of anger, sadness, and fear. However, negative feelings are valid and they must be addressed rather than bury or hide them. Buried feelings are buried alive! But facing these feelings is the very process God uses to speak to us about ourselves, and more importantly, about Himself and His gracious capacity to bring light into dark places, to bring healing to past traumas and forgiveness to unresolved hurts, bitterness or anger. Also to console and comfort those who are grieving.

People may also have buried awareness of deeply held beliefs, even lies that have been spoken to them either by themselves, others, or the devil himself (e.g. Ps Ray Bettcher’s testimony). The truth that comes from God needs to be revealed, believed and brought to life by the Holy Spirit.

*So how does this work in practice?*

***An example:***

Some people whose trust muscle has been damaged in the past might deny their need of others (their need to love and be loved) so as to avoid getting hurt again. Others may substitute their need for love with drugs, food, sex, pornography, multiple relationships.

Dr Cloud makes the point that telling someone to repent and stop certain behaviours is a good idea, **but** unless the person becomes aware of the real need and has that met, the behaviour will most likely return.

In this case, the person needs to fill his or her soul with the love of God and others (Cloud p104).

* Can anyone recall what Sam Allberry had to say about this?

**Developmental stages from birth to adulthood**

Dr Cloud outlines four basic developmental tasks (Appendix 2). Cloud’s basic premise is that if any of these tasks fail to be achieved as part of our development or are injured at some point, then healing needs to occur. There are some great testimonies about this in *Changes that Heal* and also in Ps Bill Vasilakis’ book *The Me I Can Be.* The person needs to take steps to achieve these tasks before they can move on. It takes time to heal and grow and this occurs best in an environment of grace and truth, over time. Failure to grasp this can lead to impatient comments such as “Why can’t they just understand they are loved and get on with it?

**Understanding our inner being, as well as what we are telling ourselves in our minds.**

From a Christian perspective, I think one of the chief purposes of self awareness is so that we can gain greater understanding about ways in which we are not moving into God’s story for our lives and examine what is blocking this. For example, bringing together the objective reality of who we are in Christ (our mind understanding) and our inner subjective experience (to “know” as a heartfelt reality) is a task accomplished in cooperation with the Holy Spirit through prayer and meditation on God’s word.

Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians in 3:14-19 provides great insight into this process in that he prays that by the Spirit’s power the Ephesian Christians may have their hearts and affections engaged and shaped by the truths of the faith that they hold in their minds. This is the place (the inner being) where attitudes, feelings, and behaviours are altered. Tim Keller (*Prayer* p168) makes the point that “Paul wants his Christian friends to avoid being actually **rich in Christ but nevertheless living poor**.” In this example, living poor would occur when you have mind awareness that you are in Christ, adopted into his family, you have the very divine life within, you are loved and accepted by Christ… “but you are still dogged by old habits, often anxious, bored, or discouraged or angry. You may have many specific issues that need to be faced and dealt with.” **This is the point of developing self awareness**.

It is in the inner being that the truths we know with our mind about Father, Son and Holy Spirit can fail to register. The task is for the inner being to be affected by what the mind believes. Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 3 demonstrates that the Spirit must prepare the inner being to be reshaped and formed by the truth. It is by the strength and power of the Spirit within that we “grasp” (get a secure hold on so that our feelings and behaviours are affected) …. And in this case in Ephesians, what is to be grasped is the width, depth, height and breadth of Christ’s love.

So what is true in this Ephesians passage is also true for other situations.

**Now let’s take time to reflect and share: (10-15 minutes)**

* *In what ways can you relate either personally, or in regard to others you know, to any of these thoughts presented on this topic so far. Give examples if possible (but no names of course).*
* *What has been most interesting, surprising or challenging for you?*

**Dealing with Life scripts**

1. What do you think of when you hear the words “**life scripts**”? (5 minutes)
2. **Can anyone relate** to the thoughts expressed below? (5 mins)



Margaret

And I didn’t realise how ingrained my own cultural scripts were until I encountered my husband’s. I frequently find that the root cause of our disagreements come from differing ingrained ideas about how things “ought” to be done.

At some later point you might want to reflect on the life script questions in Appendix 3.

1. **Discussion in small groups: (15 mins)**

“The family was set up by God to be a spiritual system, to impart to children the spiritual laws of the universe. The family is where we were supposed to learn God’s way of loving attachment, freedom of choice, forgiveness, and growing in skills and talents. However, we do not live in perfect families, and many families’ rules are different from God’s.” (Cloud ibid p 105)

“A **life script** is another way of describing the meaning we attribute to the events that happen to us. Depending on our particular **script**, we can interpret an event in a number of different ways. Psychologists believe that our **life scripts** are usually created in childhood.” <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2009/mar/08/life-scripts>

(However, I would add that trauma or later life events can also lead to embedded scripts)

* If possible, share with others about the top scripts that you learnt in your family of origin.
* In what ways do these scripts either reflect or differ from God’s perspective (as outlined in scripture).

*One of the tasks of self awareness is to expose the lies that we have believed about our lives/ our story as we reflect on the truth that God outlines in his story.*

1. **Practical ministry: (10 minutes) in small groups**

Outline some practical steps you could take to assist this person...

“My script is that no-one could love anyone like me - not possible because as a toddler my mother was very ill and I wasn't allowed access to her. So I grew up believing that there's a poison in me that would chase anyone away who could potentially love me. It's a script that's very difficult to rewrite because people come and go into and out of our lives all the time. It's life. I just have to believe it's not my fault!”

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Questions you could ask |  |
| Encouragement you could give |  |
| Scriptures you could use |  |
| Prayers you could pray |  |
|  |  |

**Feedback: (10 minutes)**

**Conclusion: (5 mins)**

In what ways can we promote a growth and healing community:

* That encourages self awareness?
* Helps people to deal with life scripts?

**Appendix 1: The deepest form of self awareness**

**JOHN CALVIN: KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, KNOWLEDGE OF SELF**  
  
**1.1.1 *Without knowledge of self there is no knowledge of God***  
  
Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But, while joined by many bonds, which one precedes and brings forth the other is not easy to discern.  
  
Thus, from the feeling of our own ignorance, vanity, poverty, infirmity, and - what is more - depravity and corruption, we recognize that the true light of wisdom, sound virtue, full abundance of every good, and purity of righteousness rest in the Lord alone... we cannot seriously aspire to him before we begin to become displeased with ourselves.  
  
Accordingly, the knowledge of ourselves not only arouses us to seek God, but also, as it were, leads us by the hand to find him.  
  
**1.1.2 *Without knowledge of God there is no knowledge of self***  
  
Again, it is certain that man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked upon God's face, and then descends from contemplating him to scrutinize himself. For we always seem to ourselves righteous and upright and wise and holy-this pride is innate in all of us-unless by clear proofs we stand convinced of our own unrighteousness, foulness, folly, and impurity. Moreover, we are not thus convinced if we look merely to ourselves and not also to the Lord, who is the sole standard by which this judgment must be measured. For, because all of us are inclined by nature to hypocrisy, a kind of empty image of righteousness in place of righteousness itself abundantly satisfies us. And because nothing appears within or around us that has not been contaminated by great immorality, what is a little less vile pleases us as a thing most pure-so long as we confine our minds within the limits of human corruption.  
  
As long as we do not look beyond the earth, being quite content with our own righteousness, wisdom, and virtue, we flatter ourselves most sweetly, and fancy ourselves all but demigods. Suppose we but once begin to raise our thoughts to God, and to ponder his nature, and how completely perfect are his righteousness, wisdom, and power-the straightedge to which we must be shaped. Then, what masquerading earlier as righteousness was pleasing in us will soon grow filthy in its consummate wickedness.  
  
That is, what in us seems perfection itself corresponds ill to the purity of God.  
  
**1.1.3 *Man before God's majesty***  
  
As a consequence, we must infer that man is never sufficiently touched and affected by the awareness of his lowly state until he has compared himself with God's majesty.  
  
Yet, however the knowledge of God and of ourselves may be mutually connected, the order of right teaching requires that we discuss the former first, then proceed afterward to treat the latter.

**Appendix 2: Stages of Development**

**Overview of *Changes that Heal*** by Dr Henry Cloud Zondervan 1992

Three ingredients of growth:

* Grace
* Truth
* Time

**Four developmental stages**:

* Bonding to others- we need emotional bonds, to be connected to others.
* Separating from others – we need to know what is on our turf and what belongs to others. In particular, we are responsible for our body, our feelings, our attitudes, our behaviours, our thoughts, our abilities, our choices, our desires, and setting limits.
* Sorting out good and bad – we need to be able to handle both good and bad in this world, in ourselves and in others.
* Becoming an adult – we need to take charge of our life.

**Appendix 3: Examining Your Life Script**

<http://christynnelson.blogspot.com.au/2013/08/examining-your-life-script.html>

Here are some questions you can reflect on to understand more about your life script:  
  
1. What is your earliest memory?  
  
2. What did your mother and father each praise in you? What did they each criticize you for?  
  
3. How did you parents relate to each other? Were they affectionate with you? Distant?   
  
4. How did you play as a child? What did you want to be when you grew up?  
  
5. If you wore a shirt which had words written on it that reflects the you that is projected to others, what would it say on the front? What would it say on the back (the part of you that isn't shared with others)?  
  
6. What role did you play in your family growing up?

Were you the hero? The scapegoat? The joker? The fragile one?  
  
7. Did you experience loss growing up? Did it cause you to be more fear based?   
  
8. What was possible for women in your family? For men?  
  
9. What alliances were there in your family? Who was close to whom? How did family members connect?  
  
10. What lessons did you learn from your mother? Father? Grandmother? Grandfather?  
  
11. If you could make life changes, what would you like to be doing/experiencing  in 5 years?  
  
12. How would you like to rewrite your script? What part of your family's script would you like to reject?