

SELF-AWARENESS

As you can see, we're discussing the need for self-awareness today. It's a blessing to have others who will help us mold into the image of Christ, but we don't want to lean on that too heavily. We must be willing and able to look in the mirror and confront what we find. How wonderful it would be if we all did that. Yet, throughout history, people have a tendency to hide who they are and sweep their flawed character under the rug. We can play the ignorant card when we know good and well what's going on. It's no surprise that confronting such realities is difficult, but I would argue that it's a blessing and a process of growth and walk with the Lord. Imagine how small the disciples of Jesus must have felt as they walked with Him daily. Yet, Jesus was one to build up and not break down. So, it is with a spirit of gentleness and support that we discuss this chapter. I'd like to begin by sharing a few examples.

- Hazael: 2 Kings 8:7-15. (Cross reference 1 Kings 19:15-18 - Ben-hadad was the name of more than one king. This seems to be the same king who was an enemy of Ahab, King of Israel).
 - It's an awkward scene, isn't it? Could you imagine someone telling you exactly what you're going to do . . . and you do it anyway? Have you ever had someone warn you of something but you denied the counsel and it comes true? Did we learn or justify our decision to refuse counsel?
- David: 2 Samuel 12:1-7a
 - We have more sympathy for David because we know more about him, but at the same time, it's a big pill to swallow. How could he not see it? Here's the crazy thing - David couldn't see himself in this parable because he wasn't looking for it. Yet, we know that he struggled with secret sin from passages like Psalm 32:1-4.
- Corinthians: 1 Corinthians 3:1-4
 - Do you think they viewed themselves as infants? They seemed pretty boastful throughout the letter, but were complete amateurs in life. It seems as though they were ruining everything they got their hands on.

There's a documentary that Jordan and I watched in 2015 called (Dis)Honesty: The Truth About Lies. Towards the beginning, a man asked an audience how many people had lied at least once since the beginning of that year (2014). There was laughter, and almost everyone (if not everyone) raised their hand. Then he asked how many of them viewed themselves, in general, as honest, wonderful people. They all raised their hands again. He said, "It turns out it's all about rationalization. On one hand, we want to look in the mirror and think that we are good and honest wonderful people. On the other hand we want to benefit selfishly by being dishonest." Maybe I'll cheat just a little. It's what he calls the "fudge factor." The speed limit says 55, but I'm okay driving 60. Cheating a little bit on taxes. Exaggerating your dating profile, etc.

Now, this can happen to us all. Those who "walk in the light" still sin as John points out in 1 John. However, God knows (and we should know) whether we're walking in the light or

darkness. We should know if the thing in mind is something we're working on or have totally given into. But we see how we have a tendency to justify or ignore our short-comings.

So, we are invited to look into the mirror:

- James 1:22-25. What kind of things do we see? What do we say to ourselves? I was reading back over Jesus' statements to the several churches in Revelation 2-3. Here are some traps we can fall into. Remember, Jesus rebuked 5 out of 7 churches. They had decided themselves and needed awareness.
- Ephesus: You've done well, but your heart isn't in it. You have difficulty looking at the heart of the matter. You're checking the list that gives you security, but Jesus hasn't necessarily secured your heart. You don't feel the need to look any deeper.
- Pergamum: "It's hard, so God will understand."
- Thyatira: "I can't get everything right!" Right? I'm getting most of it right, so I can allow a little in my life. Or maybe we go down the, "fine, no matter what I do it's not good enough" road?
- Sardis: "Others say I'm okay."
- Laodicea: ". . . ." Do you think anything? Do you feel anything? Do you care? Or has our comfort and wealth fooled us into thinking things are fine? This is a frustrating kind of people and the only group that Jesus doesn't commend for doing something good. At least Jesus acknowledged some in Sardis haven't soiled their garments. All that wealth . . . and they're doing what?

However, not everyone is fooled. Not every church was in the wrong. Not everyone in the churches rebuked by Jesus were fooled either.

I was really encouraged by a couple of you on Wednesday. One was so willing to receive feedback. As I said, we're going to walk this road together and will receive feedback from loved ones every now and then. The other one shared some changes they're going through. See, you've become self-aware. It's not that these areas in life weren't there the whole time. It's that you didn't see them for whatever reason. Sometimes, it's simply getting older. This leads me to the last point: self-awareness can be difficult and even embarrassing at times, but it's an absolute blessing from God. It's God giving us time to see, turn, and change. It's God refining, so we come out stronger and wiser. It's God molding us into the image of His Son. It's God pruning the branch. It's something that God will allow you to go through because He loves you so.