

“Knowing yourself in knowing God” (1 Samuel 17:26-45)

We are taking a journey of the series “Being Set Free.” Today we will look at two characters from the Old Testament, Saul and David. They are great examples of the importance of self-awareness for our spiritual growth. Self-awareness is deeply related to our relationship with God.

1. Only Two Directions

Inigo Lopez (or known as Ignatius of Loyola) said there are only two directions, either turning toward God or turning away from God. And our feeling or emotions indicates which way we are heading toward. And he describes this concept through two words, Consolation and Desolation.¹

Consolation: When your heart is turned to God and you are aware of divine love, you are filled with a sense of deep peace and well-being. It is the way our souls light up when we turn toward God and find ourselves aligned in our depths with Ultimate Reality. It is the coming alive that we experience when we are in the presence of Grace and Truth. ... It calls us outside and beyond ourselves to serve others in love and with creativity and passion.

Desolation: A sign of a disordered desire. What happens in your depths when you turn away from God. You may notice yourself becoming more self-preoccupied, more negative, drained of energy, or even mildly depressed or irritable. As you turn away from God, your borders become smaller and your soul shrivels and shudders.

While turning away from God, we cannot know our true self, because we are created by God. He knows who we are because he designed us.

“God has shaped and crafted us internally – with unique personality, thoughts, dreams, temperament, feelings, talents, gifts, and desires. He has planted “true seeds of self” within us. They make up the authentic “self/ who we are.” We are also deeply loved. We are the treasure. Only the love of God in Christ is capable of bearing the weight of our true identity.”²

Without knowing our self in knowing God, it is impossible to know our true self and how much we are loved by God. Then we never know our true value.

¹ It is introduced by David G. Benner, *Desiring God's Will*, IVP, 2005, pp.100-103

² Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality (Book)*, Zondervan, 2006, p.75

Then how do we know ourselves? Where do we get our identity? How do we measure our value? Peter Scazzero says there are three ways how we know ourselves.³

- I am what I do.
- I am what I have.
- I am what others think.

And I'd like to add one more. That is, I am what happens to me.

They are all false ways of knowing ourselves.

Today we will look at Saul and David. Saul as an example of Desolation, and David as an example of Consolation. We will observe what they do, how they think, how they feel, how they react, and so on. You can see Saul knew himself through the false ways. And it brought him into a broken life, real disaster, and it became from worse to worse. And in David's life, you can see how he knew himself in knowing God. And how it led him to overcome different kinds of emotional and spiritual attacks.

2. Saul: Desolation

1 Sam 13:8-12

He waited seven days, the time set by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and Saul's men began to scatter. ⁹ So he said, "Bring me the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings." And Saul offered up the burnt offering. ¹⁰ Just as he finished making the offering, Samuel arrived, and Saul went out to greet him. ¹¹ "What have you done?" asked Samuel. Saul replied, "When I saw that the men were scattering, and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Micmash, ¹² I thought, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the Lord's favor.' So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering."

Here Saul offered the burnt offering by himself. But actually that is the priest's job, not a king's job. So he crossed over the line. And why did he do that? Because he was afraid that people would leave him, and at that time the

³ Ibid., pp.75-78

Philistines were coming to attack him. Everything looks going against him. He saw him "I am what happens to me." And he thought if he offered the burnt offering, he would get the favor from God so that he could continue to be a king, and people would follow him.

At the end, what did God say?

1 Sam 13:14

But now your kingdom will not endure; the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the Lord's command."

That was the consequence of his action. He's a kind of fearful man. He feared the people, but didn't fear the Lord. He cared more about how people see him than how God sees him. His inner direction was to please people, not to follow God. He saw himself "I am what I do" and "I am what others think." And the consequence was, God said, "Okay, you are losing your kingdom. I appointed you. I made you a king. But you didn't see you in knowing me, and didn't follow me. So you are losing your position and your kingdom."

Now we come to the next story of Saul.

In 1 Samuel 15, God spoke to Saul through Samuel. "I [God] will punish the Amalekites. Go, attack them and totally destroy everything, not only their belongings but all of them. (vv.2-3)" So then, what did they do?

1 Sam 15:9

But Saul and the army spared Agag [the king of Amalekites] and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs -- everything that was good. These they were unwilling to destroy completely, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed.

Yes, they destroyed, but only bad ones, and kept good ones. But Saul said, "I have done what the Lord told me (v.13 CEV)." But in the eyes of God, this was completely disobedient.

Samuel said, "The Lord anointed you king over Israel. And he sent you on a mission, saying, 'Go and completely destroy those wicked people' Why did you not obey the Lord? (vv.17-19)"

How did Saul respond?

1Sam 15:20-21

"But I did obey the Lord," Saul said. "I went on the mission the Lord assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king. ²¹ The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the Lord your God at Gilgal."

He tried to compromise with God. "I didn't disobey God. I accomplished my mission. I followed your word, but not all of them." He made excuse. "Okay, this is actually not my idea, they did this." But actually when you look at v.9 it's very clear about Saul's involvement. He was there. But he said "no, no, no, that's not my fault. People did it." And now he tried to make discount. "Actually they did it for your God, to worship your God. What's the matter, Samuel?"

So Samuel said, "To obey is better than sacrifice" (v.22).

1 Sam 15:24

Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned. I violated the Lord 's command and your instructions. I was afraid of the people and so I gave in to them.

Here again he made excuse before God. He said "I have sinned." But he's still making excuse. "That is not my fault, but their fault. I was afraid of them. Rescue me!" He actually didn't admit what he did. Okay. Who is the king? Saul. He's supposed to look after people, to lead people not to be led. Who did make him king? God. It was his responsibility to guide them and lead them to follow the word of God, and he should have helped them not to disobey God.

What direction did he look at in confession of his sin? It looked as if he repented before God, he confessed his sin. So did he truly repent? No. He just didn't want to look at his sin, and he wanted to move away from dealing with his issues as quick as possible. He just wanted to get away from the consequences of his irresponsible. His intention was to keep his position, power, honor and respect, and probably favor from the people. Is that repentance?

Repentance means, "Okay God, I understand what I did was wrong before you and I'll leave that wrong and come back to you." But Saul's attitude shows something different. "I want to have people around me. I want to be honored. Then I became 'I am important'." That's his direction. It looked as if he

was listening to God. But actually he did not like to come close to God, rather he wanted to get out from His presence.

We will look at one more story of Saul.

1 Sam 18:6-9

When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with tambourines and lutes. ⁷ As they danced, they sang: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands." ⁸ Saul was very angry; this refrain galled him. "They have credited David with tens of thousands," he thought, "but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?" ⁹ And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.

David went to fight for the kingdom, and he won the victory. People were praising him, and they were singing and dancing for the victory he won. The whole city was celebrating and rejoicing the victory. But there was one man who was very angry. Who was that? Saul. Saul was very angry. He was not happy at all. Why? Because people credited Saul with thousands and David with tens of thousands. This is just singing a song. But Saul saw himself "I am what I have." I was given only thousands, but for David tens of thousands.

Saul was still the king who had a mighty warrior, David, that's his man. Instead of being proud of his man, he became jealous, "Why is he more popular than me?" He became jealous and since then jealousy becomes his inner direction for how he relates to David.

David was fighting for the kingdom of Israel. Saul was her king. Each time David did something good for the nation, Saul became more jealous. When he saw people praising David, he got angry. He didn't pay attention to his emotions. He didn't take care of his inner problems. So he was driven by jealousy and anger. He wanted to destroy David. But instead, his own family was destroyed and he destroyed his own life. That's a very sad ending, isn't it?

3. David: Consolation

Now we will look at the other character, which is David.

1 Sam 17:33-37

Saul replied, "You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy, and he has been a fighting man from his youth."³⁴ But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock,³⁵ I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it.³⁶ Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God.³⁷ The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."

Here is just before his fighting with Goliath. In v.33, David was told something. What did he hear? You are only a boy. Is it true? Yes, it's true. And Goliath is a fighting man from his youth. This is very true. In fact, he's a champion. Based on these facts Saul said, "don't be fool, don't go, you can't win, and we will lose everything." This is very logical from human perspective.

But David didn't look at the situation like that. He saw the situation in knowing God. The battle is the Lord's (v.47). That giant has been defying the armies of the living God (v.26; 45). I will fight in the name of the Lord (v.45). And God will deliver me from the hand of the fighter (v.37).

How could he be so sure about this? Because he learned to fight in the name of the Lord, and experienced his deliverance many many times. He was just a shepherd boy. He took care of sheep. Sometimes a lion, sometimes a bear came and took his sheep. Each time he fought against the lion or the bear, in the name of the Lord. He relied on God. He put his trust in God. He exercised it and practiced it over and over and over. Now he learned and mastered how to fight in the name of the Lord.

David looked at things in knowing God. He knew himself in knowing God. Through his experiences, he knew what was true, what is real in knowing God. What Saul said was also true from human perspective. But David chose to see things in knowing God. He listened to God's voice more than Saul's, which were only man's words. He identified himself as the person God said he was, and rejected what Saul said.

Let's continue to look at the story.

1 Sam 17:37-40

Saul said to David, "Go, and the Lord be with you." Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. ³⁹ David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them. "I cannot go in these," he said to Saul, "because I am not used to them." So he took them off. ⁴⁰ Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.

Saul said, "okay now I understand you'll fight in the name of God and you're pretty sure that God will deliver you. Hope God will bless you." And he said, "here is my whole armor, and you can take it." It's a great honor for David because he got the offer to use the king's whole armor which is kind of a symbol of king.

Of course David put it on, tried it, but it didn't work well. Then what did he do? People believe that the fighters must have that kind of armor. They have to have that kind of protection and sword for a fight. Otherwise they have neither protection or victory.

So what did David do? He said "no thanks" to king Saul. It was very shocking, unbelievable from human perspective. And something more shocking came after. David took his shepherd stick and his sling. When Goliath saw him, he said "Please tell me this is a joke. Do you think I am a dog? Don't you know this is a real battle in war? Life or death? It's not playing around sheep, kid."

David didn't pretend to be a warrior, professional fighter. He didn't pretend to be like king Saul. He just remained true to himself, knowing himself in knowing God. So he was confident in being himself.

He knew what he could do. And he was confident in fighting with slings. Everybody has starting point. A super professional musician also started from ABC, he was just a beginner. He made horrible sounds thousands of times every day. He practiced it, tried it, and developed his skills. It's the same for the gift from God. If we don't practice it, don't use it, don't develop it, just leave it there, you will never be skillful with the gift. A shepherd boy tried his slings over and over and over. Now he knows he can beat the giant within five throws.

You must see that he was taking the risk of losing his life. And it's not just for his life, but if he loses, all citizens of Israel will become slaves, the whole kingdom just disappears, gone, over, finish. Now you can see how confident he was for this fight.

In knowing God, David recognized who he was, and he developed his skills, and he was confident in being himself and in using his gift.

Another story of David.

1 Sam 24:4-7

The men said, "This is the day the Lord spoke of when he said to you, 'I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish.'" Then David crept up unnoticed and cut off a corner of Saul's robe. ⁵ Afterward, David was conscience-stricken for having cut off a corner of his robe. ⁶ He said to his men, "The Lord forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, or lift my hand against him; for he is the anointed of the Lord." ⁷ With these words David rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul. And Saul left the cave and went his way.

This was the scene when David was chased by Saul, and he got away from him. And Saul went into a cave. And actually David and his men were hiding far back in the cave.

Saul was not armed. He was really uncovered. "This is a chance for you to get your enemy down." David's followers said, "God gave you the favor. This is your opportunity." But David didn't follow their suggestion. He just cut a small part of Saul's clothes. And that's it.

Then David was troubled in his heart because of that (1 Sam 24:5 NKJ). He was conscience-stricken, he felt he had done something he shouldn't have done. What was wrong? Because he missed the great chance to kill Saul? What bothered him? He realized that he stretched out his hand against the one God anointed. When he did it, he took over the control from God's hand. He rejected God. When he realized it, he admitted it. He didn't deny it. He didn't take it lightly. He didn't make any excuse. He immediately repented, turned back to God, handed over Saul's issue into God's hand. This is the major difference between David and Saul.

So David said;

"May the Lord be our judge and decide between us. May he consider my cause and uphold it; may he vindicate me by delivering me from your hand" (v.15).

This is his heart, his motivation, the direction he looks toward. As for his hardships caused by Saul, he submitted himself to the Lord 100%, wholeheartedly. Like he sang in Psalm 23. The Lord is my shepherd, I'm his

sheep, I'm attentive to listen to his voice always. He guides me in paths of righteousness, so I will follow wholeheartedly. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me, and I submit myself to you, Lord.

Lastly we'll look at 2 Samuel 16.

2 Sam 16:5-6

As King David approached Bahurim, a man from the same clan as Saul's family came out from there. His name was Shimei son of Gera, and he cursed as he came out. ⁶ He pelted David and all the king's officials with stones, though all the troops and the special guard were on David's right and left.

This is after David became the king. A man named Shimei cursed David not only by words but he was throwing stones at him. When his officials saw it, one said "Let me go over and cut off his head" (v.9). It's very natural, right?

But again David said something very surprising thing.

2 Sam 16:11

David then said to Abishai and all his officials, "My son, who is of my own flesh, is trying to take my life. How much more, then, this Benjamite! Leave him alone; let him curse, for the Lord has told him to."

How could he think like that? What was he looking at? What was his concern?

2 Sam 16:12

"It may be that the Lord will see my distress and repay me with good for the cursing I am receiving today."

David said, "hey guys, don't do that. This is also the day God has made. God is in control. What if this is from God, then it's not right to go against him. So don't do that." And David understood that God was looking at his mind, his heart, his thoughts, and his motivation. "I want to be pure before the Lord. I don't mind whatever that man said, whatever that man did." David deeply understood the importance of watching over his emotion.

4. Knowing yourself in knowing God

Today we looked at two characters from the Old testament, Saul and David.

Saul was such a great man. He was tall, handsome, good looking. He was a good fighter. And he was the one God chose to be the first king of Israel. At the beginning, he must have been a good man, he was capable.

But later he became mentally sick, he got spiritual disease. He was filled with fear, anger and jealousy. God removed him from his throne. How did it happen? What was his problem? He wasn't aware of his emotion.

The emotion is like a signal. It indicates what is happening in our inner being so that we can take care of ourselves properly. And other problem is he didn't come to God. He didn't spend time with God. Even when his sin was pointed out, he took it lightly. He just wanted to get away from his presence.

David was different. He was not like Saul. David is a great example of someone who knows himself in knowing God, and be true to himself. He humbly comes before God, and he is attentive to God's word, spends enough time with God to search his heart and to know God's will and to wait for God. His guidance comes from his relationship with God.

David faced so many difficulties, challenges and hardships, and also unfair treatments. Then he always comes to the Lord. David is not a perfect man. He made mistakes, committed adultery, killed his faithful man to cover up his sin, and so on. But he is a man of repentance, which shows he is true to himself. And his life was not divided. He knows who he is. And he lives true to who he is in God's eyes. He had integrity.

The key for this is being aware of your emotion (emotional health). It indicates what is happening in your inner being so that you can take care of yourself properly. And another key is to come to God, spend time with God (contemplative spirituality). So the Holy Spirit in you counsels you and guides you in the way you should go, and he encourages you and strengthen you on the way you go, if you give him time and be attentive to his voice. If your sin is pointed out, don't try to escape, don't make excuse, rather repent immediately wholeheartedly. Then you will know you are forgiven, how great his grace is. Knowing yourself in knowing God.

David could defeat Goliath because he was true to himself. He was free from whatever people around him said. His victory brought freedom to the entire nation of Israel. You see. When you're authentic yourself knowing yourself in knowing God, it's the whole world that might know the Living God. When you freely live who you are, everybody gets blessed around you, your children, your family, your friends, your co-workers.

Dear Father, thank you for taking us through this journey of "Being set Free." All of us are on the process of becoming mature, becoming more like you Jesus. Thank you very much for sending us the Holy Spirit. And you're guiding our lives and you are shaping us to be more like Jesus. Help us to be aware of our emotions, help us to bring our inner problems, brokenness before you. You never get mad, or upset, when you look at the bad stuff in us. Because you understand we are sinners, that's why you came to us, that's why you died on the cross. Father, when we understand we need you, we honestly sincerely come before you and we submit ourselves into your hands so that we can grow. It's all about you. May our life become more like you. In Jesus name we pray, amen.

For Lifenet groups and personal reflection

- 1) Read 1 Samuel 17:26-45. What feelings would you have if you were David? Toward his brothers? Toward Saul? Toward Goliath?
- 2) How did David live out his true self overcoming those feelings?
- 3) What forces and pressures from circumstances and people cause you to shrink back in fear or wear "armor" that does not fit your true self?
- 4) How would you develop "Knowing yourself in knowing God"? What would you do or change something in your daily life as the first step?

Some are taken from "Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Course Work Book" by Peter Scazzero, Zondervan, 2014, p.38