

“What Else Does Everybody Know?” 22 July 2007

Bible passage: Psalm 139:1-6 (TEV)

**God, you have examined me and you know me.
You know everything I do;
from far away you understand all my thoughts.
You see me whether I am working or resting;
you know all my actions.
Even before I speak,
you already know what I will say.
You are all around me on every side;
you protect me with your power.
Your knowledge of me is too deep;
It is beyond my understanding.**

Sermon nugget: What do we really know about ourselves, and what do others know that could enhance our self-understanding, as well as our relationships? Let’s explore the ways in which we can know and be known by others.

Message 1:

I can remember so vividly the very first time a group of friends and Mike and I chartered a sailboat in the warm and beautiful islands. We, of course, had reserved a captain to guide the boat and help us learn what to do, and to enhance that experience, there was an orientation meeting the night before we boarded the sailboat.

We were total rookies when it came to being around that kind of water, and there was a lot of information to absorb. However, one of the more interesting comments that was made by the person who was giving us the information was that we shouldn’t swim at night. Another person in the group raised his hand, and asked, “Why shouldn’t we swim at night?” to which the teacher replied, “Well, everyone knows sharks feed at night.”

Very quickly, the hand of one of the guys in our group shot up, and the teacher called on him. His question was, “What else does everybody know?” We’ve gotten a good laugh from that for many years, because it can fit so many situations. There always seem to be

things that other people know and take for granted that the rest of us have missed out on.

That can even apply to our self understanding. For most of us, our lives are a journey of discovery, and it seems to me that that is largely what our spiritual journey is all about. It's a matter of having new experiences and learning new things about ourselves and others. In the process of learning to know ourselves better, we also begin to share of ourselves with others, build more trust and nurture relationships that are more meaningful and significant than we ever dreamed possible. And, the best part is that our deepened relationships with one another have a direct connection with our relationship with God. This is definitely a win-win.

However, this process of self-discovery can take a lifetime, and it's not always easy. I kept thinking that we would eventually arrive at the pinnacle of self-understanding, but I've begun to realize that's not going to happen. Just when we think we have a handle on it, some new experience or a different stage of life presents itself, and we're going down a new path once again.

In fact, I recall a time that shows my naiveté about life and its progression. It was when our daughter was a toddler. I was driving and she was safely secured in her car seat in the back seat. I remember distinctly turning the corner of the street where we lived, and saying to myself, "This is it. This is the way life will always be."

Boy, was I wrong! I hadn't even begun to experience the reality of a child growing up, leaving home and heading out on her own. Nor did I have any idea that my path in life would lead in a direction that was not at all what I thought my plan was. That was a time I should have asked those who were older and wiser the question, "What else does everybody know?"

I've discovered (and I would guess many of you have, too) that my life has been an unfolding story of self-understanding, and that self-discovery has come about through a variety of ways. One is simply through the process of living our lives, and yet another has to do with insights we gain about ourselves through the input and feedback of others.

Within the last six months, some members of The Garden staff have gone through an evaluation process, and some of you completed the online surveys that were sent out. Thanks for doing that, because you have provided all of us with helpful information. In many cases, the information we learned was something that we were aware of about ourselves, but that's not so in every single category. Some of us thought we were perceived one way, and found out that wasn't exactly so. As we have read and discussed the final version of the feedback, I think I'm safe in saying that every single one of us has learned something that we didn't really know. Your input has helped us begin to understand ourselves even better. Sometimes that kind of input is difficult to come by, and sometimes it's hard to receive, but it is inevitably valuable if we choose to see it as a way to grow in self-understanding and as a helpful tool in our relationships with other people.

There are some other tools around that are equally helpful for feedback. Those of you who are oriented more toward psychology probably are aware of something called the "Johari Window." It has to do with that which we know about ourselves that others also know, the things we know that others don't, the things others know that we don't, and that whole category of the things that are unknown by everyone—sort of the unconscious part that everyone has..

Let me see if I can explain this a bit. (slide one with highlighted upper left portion) Now, if I understand it correctly, the upper left quadrant indicates that which we know about ourselves that others also know. For instance, many people can tell the color of our eyes, our height, our occupation, and other such things. The basic idea is that the more we know about ourselves and the more we reveal of ourselves to others, the larger our open or public area is of the quadrant are.

This segment really has to do with self-disclosure, and most of us can probably see that early in a relationship, that quadrant is likely to be smaller than it will be later. When we first meet someone new, the size of the open quadrant is small because there isn't much time

to exchange information. In the process of getting to know a person and building trust, this segment tends to grow larger,

The upper right quadrant (**show slide of upper right quadrant highlighted**) of the Johari window consists of our blind spots—the things that others know about us that we don't know about ourselves. This is sometimes called the “spinach in the teeth” quadrant, and it includes things like physical mannerisms or personality characteristics. For example, we may be someone who frequently uses the phrase “you know” when we're talking. Other people hear it and notice, but we are not aware of it.

The lower left quadrant (**lower left quadrant highlighted slide**) is called the façade or hidden area, and it has to do with our personal, private selves, and things like our opinions, attitudes and biases. How much we keep hidden depends on how close we are to someone else; typically the closer we are, and the more trust we have, the more we'll reveal to the other person. This segment can refer to things like having a negative attitude toward another person, but doing our best to hide it and be nice.

And then there's the last segment, which is referred to as the unknown quadrant. (**slide with lower right quadrant highlighted**) It consists of the things that are hidden from ourselves and from others. Some call it the unconscious. There are times that part of who we are becomes known, as when we're put in a new situation. That type of setting can reveal information that was previously unknown.

Take, for instance, my experience with snowmobiling. My family has enjoyed going out on a snowmobile when we've been in Colorado, and one year they convinced me to go along. I had long resisted, saying they were too noisy for me; let me enjoy the quiet of snowshoeing. Nonetheless, I agreed to go, and got about a 100 yards before I had a minor panic attack, stopped the machine and got off, never to climb on one again. That had never happened to me before, and I had no inkling that such a thing would happen, nor did anyone

else. In that instance, what had been previously unknown became known.

When we discussed this service at worship team, one person ruminated as to what Jesus' Johari window might have looked like, and an interesting conversation followed. My hunch is that his open area—the upper left—might have been larger than most of ours. However, because I believe that he was a human being like you and me, my guess is that he also had blind spots and areas that others knew that he didn't. You may disagree with me, but that's what I think.

It seems to me that the question each of us could ask ourselves is “What does our Johari Window” look like? What are the arenas that others know about us that we don't know about ourselves? In whom do we have enough trust to seek honest feedback so that our open area can enlarge and our self-understanding grow?

Video: Foot Loose

Message 2:

I think it's important to have some trusted friends in our lives who will lovingly “tell it like it is.” I'm also aware that it may take a long time to develop that kind of relationship with a life partner or a dear friend, but they're important. I am convinced that our capacity for creating those kinds of relationships has a direct connection with our relationship with God

That's the kind of relationship that's talked about in our Bible passage for today. I've always appreciated the words of the psalmist in Psalm 139, because they are so personal. The version from The Message puts the first six verses this way:

**God, you have examined me and you know me.
You know everything I do;
from far away you understand all my thoughts.
You see me whether I am working or resting;
you know all my actions.
Even before I speak,
you already know what I will say.**

**You are all around me on every side;
you protect me with your power.
Your knowledge of me is too deep;
It is beyond my understanding.**

It's clear that the psalmist has a lot of trust in the God whom the writer believes can always be trusted, the one who always loves and understands us, the one who listens and helps us on our journey.

A large part of our ability to have that kind of relationship with God depends on our willingness to seize the opportunity to grow in trust with others. If we can learn to trust, in spite of hurt, rejection, fear and all the other things that plague many of us, we will discover that enhances our relationship with God.

The good news is that, with God, we don't have to fear rejection or hurt or love lost, because nothing can separate us from God's love. There is nothing we can hide from God, and the remarkable thing is God knows what we're really like, what our secrets and hidden parts are, and loves us anyway.

As you and I continue our journey of self discovery and understanding, as we grow closer in our connections with one another, I'm convinced that God is right in the midst of it all, always whispering in our ear, "Remember, I love you, my child. I love you."

Closing:

Victor Hugo once wrote, "**The greatest happiness in life is the conviction that we are loved, loved for ourselves, or rather, loved in spite of ourselves.**" And so it is.

Have a great Sunday, and go in peace. Amen.