

“The Gift of Being Yourself” Reading Report

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David Benner's book, "The Gift of Knowing Yourself," is a beautiful piece of the soul care puzzle that helps the reader to understand the "Sacred Call to Self-Discovery."

The three main points of "The Gift of Being Yourself" that impacted me are as follows; Comprehending how Intimately knowing God is the first gift of knowing yourself, understanding I have a false self, and learning about my true self.

The first impact of this book was comprehending how knowing God intimately is the first gift of knowing yourself. Benner explains that God deeply desires us to know him fully. God knows that understanding the depth of his love is the first step to "Knowing Yourself." Knowing and understanding God's love is why we were created. Benner explains that knowing God is the essence of eternal life (34). The knowing of God is not just knowing facts about him, but a knowledge that deepens with a personal relationship. Our "knowing" of God needs to move from facts we have learned from the Christian community and scripture to the profoundly intimate and personal information obtained from expressed intimacy. Benner states, "People who have never developed a deep personal knowing of God will be limited in the depth of their personal knowing of themselves" (27).

The second impact of this book was understanding that I have a false self. Benner explains, "Everything that is false about us arises from our belief that our deepest happiness will come from living life our way, not God's way" (68). Humans seek happiness, fulfillment, and acceptance within themselves. Fulfillment outside of God causes the false self to form. Benner suggests, "at the core of the false self is a desire to preserve an image of our self and a way of relating to the world" (70). Humans have a false self that shows the world what it wants them to see. They create and show their false self because they do not yet know, trust, or depend on the depths of God's love for them. Benner says, "Although we may say we want to trust God and

surrender to his will, deep down we doubt that God is really capable of securing our happiness” (67), so we create our false selves. The false self is how humans try to cope and accommodate their lives without God.

The third impact of this book was learning about my true self. Benner says our total and authentic self is “the image of God that you are—the unique face of God that has been set aside from eternity for you” (83). We can only truly find the true self when we stop searching for it and start our search for God. We find our true selves by seeking God himself. Benner shows us that “the foundation of our identity resides in our life-giving relationship with the Source of Life” (83). Humans can never be their true selves apart from God. If there is an identity apart from God, this will not be a true identity. Jesus is the only example of a true self that humans have ever seen. We must bind ourselves to Christ as our only source of true identity in God. Benner teaches, “The self we find hidden in Christ is our true self because Christ is the source of our being and ground our true identity” (84).

“The Gift of Being Yourself” gives me great insight for my future ministry. I am training to be a Chaplain, and I know that part of my ministry will be helping people with soul care principles. Understanding and being able to help others identify their true and false selves would be beneficial and valuable as a chaplain. Many people are in complicated and heart-wrenching circumstances because they do not understand their true selves. In fact, their false self is wreaking havoc on their spiritual lives. Coming alongside others in their journey of self-discovery for the sake of knowing God is one of the primary purposes of my life and ministry for Jesus. I also believe that just working through my own personal issues with my false self and other identity issues that came up while reading this book will help me be a better version of myself as I follow God in ministry.

“The Gift of Being Yourself” has impacted my theology by allowing me the freedom to look at myself. I have had so much teaching that explains that we are already self-focused and self-centered people, and we do not need to spend more time on ourselves. I was taught that I should give my sin up to God. I can see how these teaching have genuinely hurt my soul. I now understand the importance of profoundly knowing God so I can know myself and that spending time looking at my false self is extremely valuable and helpful to my relationship with him. I will be able to teach others that it is not selfish to look into the ways that keep you from going deeper with God. My theology and understanding of God’s character have now been deepened by the knowledge of how God truly loves me “just as I am.”

Personally, “The Gift of Being Yourself” has given me the courage that I know that God has wanted me to have by being able to answer the question that Benner quotes Richard Rohr saying, “the basic question we must ask is whether we are prepared to be other than our image of our self” (70). I now know that I can and will prepare to be *other* than my image of myself. I can see how my false self is damaging my soul and keeping me from deepening my relationship with the Lord. I need to spend some time alone in this next season of my life, relishing in the love that God has for me, knowing that he fully and completely loves me for me. Then, I will spend time identifying all the false selves I have created and learning how to present them to God so that he can help change me. The core of my false self that I quickly identified while reading “The Gift of Being Yourself” was holding on to the image that I have “everything together.” I have realized that I want people to see me as an accomplished person and that nothing phases me. Saying this out loud sounds ridiculous, yet it has already taken some of the power away from that false self.

With integrity, I have read this book

Thoroughly and Entirely— 100%

Quickly but Completely— \_\_\_\_%

Thoroughly but NOT Entirely—

\_\_\_\_%

Quickly and NOT Completely—

\_\_\_\_%

Not at all—\_\_\_\_%