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Soul Care

Reading Report: The Gift of Being Yourself

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The book “The Gift of Being Yourself” by David Benner brought me to several moments of self-reflection and desire to become more self-aware as I continue to know God more. Benner clearly states that in order to know God. The main points of his book is, “The goal of the spiritual journey is the transformation of self.. This requires knowing both our self and God. Both are necessary if we are to discover our true identity as those who are “in Christ” because the self is where we meet God” (Benner, 16). The three main points that stood out to me are the unmasking and awareness of your false self, becoming your true self, and your vocation grounded in identity.

Benner gets the reader ready to face the identity portion of our walk with God by first acknowledging that knowing ourselves can only be found in knowing God and that knowing God will reveal more about ourselves. Christians who have grown up in the church, know all the good things about God, have sound theology, and are living what seems to be a righteous life may seem like they really know God. Those people may also be religious and accidentally resemble the Pharisees more than they resemble Christ. They have attained all the knowledge that can be attained, but that knowledge did not quite make it to the heart yet. This is why Benner’s point about the false self stood out to me the most. He says, “Personal knowledge is never simply a matter of the head. Because it is rooted in experience, it is grounded in deep places in our being...People who have never developed a deep personal knowing of God will be limited in the depth of their personal knowing of themselves” (Benner, 27). People who seem religious or

have a shallow depth of their relationship with God may just be that they have not come face to face with their false self. The false self is the persona, which is “how we want others to see us” (Benner, 99). Sometimes, it might even be how we incorrectly view ourselves. Basil says, “The core of the false self is the belief that my value depends on what I have, what I can do, and what others think of me (Benner, 74). Benner says that the “roots of our pretend self lie in our childhood discovery that we can secure love by presenting ourselves in the most flattering light” (Benner, 57). I agree with Benner when he says, “People who are afraid to look deeply at themselves will of course be equally afraid to look deeply at God” (Benner, 27). When we recognize and become self-aware of our false self, we can accept that we have fallen short in those ways and let Jesus restore and cover those areas of insecurity and brokenness.

Accepting the false self and being willing to allow Jesus to transform that is the first step into becoming the true self – which is the second point that stood out to me the most in this book. Benner says, “Deep knowing of God and deep knowing of self always develop interactively. The result is the authentic transformation of the self that is at the core of Christian spirituality” (Benner, 32). His presence transforms us, and the only way for that to happen is to spend time with Him. The best way to discover our true self is to see the clearest example of that in Jesus Christ. “Jesus knew who he was in God. He could therefore resist temptations to live out a false center based on power, prestige, or possessions” (Benner, 80). These three P’s were what satan tempted Jesus with in the wilderness during his fast. True identity will always be tested, and identity found in God will get you through the trials. Living in our true identity is also found in the unique ways that God created us. We are all unique creations of God, and we all have different strengths that contribute to and reveal the Kingdom when our true self is founded in God.

This leads to the third point that stood out to me the most – our vocation is to live out our true self. Benner says, “Our vocation is always a response to a Divine call to take our place in the kingdom of God. Our vocation is a call to serve God and our fellow humans in the distinctive way that fits the shape of our being” (Benner 87). Another word for vocation is “calling.” Vocation is not an occupation or a job, but it is “the place God calls you to where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.” That place is where you can bring heavenly solutions to earthly problems. In summary, Romans 8:19-21 cries out for the need for the children of God to be revealed. The true self of the children of God to be revealed, so that creation would be set in order – into the freedom and glory of the children of God. Our unique callings or vocations need to be so urgently revealed so that the kingdom of God would dwell on earth as it is in heaven

This reading is absolutely relevant and can be applied to my current ministry context. The ministry that I’m serving in now is in the worship team. Personally, I have gone through layer and layers of “false selves,” especially because I’ve had to face them. As a worship leader, I have had tons of moments of wanting to look more spiritual, holy, or mature so that people wouldn’t see the nervous or performance minded worship leader. This came out more through the prayers that I’ve had to pray to open and close the session. Prayers were wordier and longer than they should be. God’s grace carried me through all along because I have led worship when I really shouldn’t have because my identity was still unstable and being a worship leader was such a strong part of my identity. Right now, as I’m building my team at my church, I do want to help people journey through this process of becoming their true selves so that their unique expression through their true self identity could be released. Through reading this book, I am still uncovering layers of insecurity and defense mechanisms that I need to revisit from childhood. I

also picked up the meditation practices that Benner led us through and intend to use it in the rhythms of my quiet time with the Lord.

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—____%

Bibliography

Benner, David. *The Gift of Being Yourself*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004.