

{Slide: Logo - I am}

Who am I?

Hi, my name is Marc and **I am** not self aware.

What does this opening remind you of?

Alcoholics Anonymous

This statement, highlights that once one has become addicted to alcohol, that this addiction will always be present in your life and even if you have kicked the habit, someone who was once addicted will always refer to themselves as a current alcoholic.

"**I am** ..." is probably the most unassuming but potentially powerful statements that we can come across because what follows could be life changing.

In the world of the AA, Alcoholics Anonymous, most of us have seen examples of the start of a meeting where somewhere stands up and says, "I am Marc, I am an alcoholic".

How easy was that to say?

It took a long time and much heartbreak and wasted finances and broken relationships and eventually intervention to get to that point.

And that's only the beginning.

Today I want to talk about becoming self aware.

And the first step in that journey is admitting it.

This is a journey, not a destination.

It's a time in our life journey where we become aware of the need for self evaluation and the fact that we are all in this room together, means you have become part of that journey.

What does **self aware** even mean?

{Slide: "Self awareness"}

*having **conscious knowledge of one's own character and feelings.***

"we're self-aware enough to know we're making mistakes"

Why is this important?

Well the Bible recommends it.

{Slide: 1 Tim 4v16}

1 Tim 4v16

¹⁶*Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.*

The Bible says watch your life closely.

We hear the words.

We understand their meaning.

But how exactly do we watch our life closely?

Just living my life from day to day, surviving the things life throws at me, reacting to my circumstances, is the exactly the opposite of watching my own life, closely.
It's not watching my life at all.

Let's stop this process called life for a moment.
Let's suspend it, like a scene from a movie where everything stays suspended in midair while the hero is allowed to move around freely.
Let's imagine that has happened.

What do you see when you look at me?
An honest look?
Oldish guy, grey to no hair, casual dresser, works for the church, preaches occasionally, visits a lot, organises some stuff.
Is that who I am?
Not at all, that's what I do.
So who am I?
That's more difficult to answer because I'm not very sure of that either.
You see I'm biased, I'm always going to consider myself in a more favourable light than the facts actually warrant.
I easily excuse my own faults.
How do I know that?
Because if I saw myself as I actually am, I would realise that I had a lot of work in front of me and I would be more inclined to do something about it.
It's like a tree that evaluates at its own fruits.
It doesn't work that way, our fruit can only be tasted by others.

So how do I watch my life closely?

By admitting that you need help.
The first step in the AA program can only start when the addicted person admits that they are powerless when it comes to alcohol.
You have to see the problem.

By asking others what they see.
But that's scary.

Why is it scary?

Because they might tell us the truth.

You remember what Jesus had to say about "truth" John 8v31

{Slide: John 8v31-32}

Joh 8v31-32

³¹To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³²Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

He said we will know the truth if we hold to his teachings.
And what did He teach or even better what did He model for us.

{Slide: Phil 2v3-7}

Phi 2v3

*Do nothing out of **selfish ambition** or **vain conceit**. Rather, in **humility value others** above yourselves, ⁴**not looking to your own interests** but each of you to the interests of the others.*

⁵*In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:*

⁶*Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;*

⁷*rather, **he made himself nothing ...***

I hear what Paul is saying directly, he's saying we need to have the same mindset as Jesus.

It's what he's not saying directly that concerns me more.

He's pointing us in the right direction.

My question is, where are we coming from, what is our default nature?

We are filled with:

- Selfish ambition
- Vain conceit (excessive pride in oneself)
- We are not humble
- We don't value others
- We look out for our own interests first
- We make out that we are something

That's where we come from.

The first step to recovery from anything is admitting it.

Works for the AA.

Works for becoming more self aware and therefore.

"Hi, my name is Marc and **I am** not self aware".

I asked Joan the other day, "if you had to pick something that I could change, what would that be?"

She said, "You're just awesomeness personified, I can't think of one thing that you need to change".

No, she said, "Just one?"

She said ... "Getting negative when I'm overwhelmed".

Then she asked me the same question.

Guess what I said, "You're just awesomeness personified, you don't need to change anything".

No I didn't, I shared something with her.

And yes, we are still happily married.

Because they might tell us the truth.

Is your heart pounding yet at the thought of asking someone what they see in you?

Or are you saying, and I've heard this more than once, "I can do this on my own, when I have a problem I'll call you".

I've been self sufficient for most of my life.

I hated organization, the sooner I could get out of a structured work environment the better I felt. Even though the money was less, a lot less mostly, the freedom I felt to do my own thing was worth it.

Was it healthy for my family?

Not really, we did a lot of limping.

Did I get lots of advice as to what would be the best way to do things?

Did I ask a lot of questions?

The older I got the worse I got, because now I have this thing called maturity on my side.

I heard a preacher say, in a sermon a few weeks ago, that it appears that the older one gets, the less motivated one is to do the work of the Lord.

I had to think about that one because he was probably talking about me. I think the older one gets, the more we think we have a handle on this Christian thing.

After 20+ years as a disciple, surely I know what I'm doing.

Do I?

Do you?

Does anybody other than Jesus?

If you've stopped asking questions, then I'm afraid that is proof that you think you have this Christian life sorted.

If you're a leader of any kind and you've not asked anybody any questions lately, then you're in the self sufficiency boat with me.

How do you get out?

Why don't you ask someone else what they think?

We saw Paul's view in Phillipians earlier.

Let's see how his picture of Jesus, changed his thinking.

2) "Who am I?"

What should self awareness look like?

{Slide: Eph 3v7-8}

Eph 3v7-8

⁷*I became a servant of this gospel **by the gift of God's grace given me** through the working of his power. ⁸Although **I am less than the least of all the Lord's people**, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ,*

Paul starts off by acknowledging how he even got to this point in his life. Through *the "gift of God's grace"* and through the working of God's power.

How is that different to how any one of us got to this point.

Who got here on their power?

Who stays here on his own power?

It's a gift of God and a demonstration of His power.

If we get that lesson and that's not a given because the next line describes the attitude of someone who gets this point.

The older we get the more we forget how we got here, the more we think it's under our own steam.

"I am less than the least of all the Lord's people"

As humans we seem to default to a hierarchical structure in our management of life.

Somewhere there is a boss and then some managers and then some worker bees.

What do we all aspire to?

We want to be managers.

We want to move up the ladder of life because that is what the world teaches us and be able to feel that we have gotten somewhere.

As usual, that doesn't describe God's Kingdom very well.

Paul started with the least of all the Lord's people ... and then...

Pitched himself in a position lower than that, a servant of the Gospel, less than the least.

He was aware of who he was before God, not before people.

So now we know how it should be done.

Where does that leave the rest of us?

Well, I know what's stopping me.

Me, I'm stopping me.

And I'm guessing here, I may be wrong, but I'm guessing you are stopping you.

And what is stopping us is that step of looking into who we really are,

That step of intentionally become more self aware.

Of asking others.

You see Paul gives us the clues as to how to spiritually prepare your own heart.

Step 1: Recognize how you got here in the first place, through God's gift of grace.

Not your own awesomeness

Not what talents you can bring into the Kingdom.

Not what you drive or what job you do or how clever the world tells you, you are

Step 2: Although you are among the Lord's People, if you consider yourself the least then your heart will be in the place of wanting to learn the most.

That's where Paul's heart was.

God allowed him to contribute a large portion of the New Testament.

I think he has something to teach us.

3) "I am"

{Slide: Logo - I am}

So if I am the one stopping me, maybe I need to have a better picture of myself

Trying to figure out who I am.

To understand this process better I want to show you an analogy.
I do better with pictures than with words.
A picture literally is worth a thousand words, for me anyway.

Imagine for a moment that you are a tree.

Now here is the question.
What do you think your tree looks like?
Because I think my tree looks like this.

{Slide: Good tree}

When it may actually look like this?

{Slide: Scrawny tree}

Which one represents reality?

The second one.

Are you ready for this?

How would I know what my leaves and fruit look like?

By asking someone.

And here we get to the scariest, most intimidating part of this whole lesson.
The only way I or you are going to know what the fruit of our spiritual lives look like is if we actually ask each other.

Why is it scary?

Because they might tell us the truth.

Is this even scriptural?

How much time do you have?

{Slide: Pro 12v15}

Pro 12v15

¹⁵*The way of fools seems right to them,
but the wise **listen to advice**.*

{Slide: Pro 11v14}

Pro 11v14

¹⁴*For lack of guidance a nation falls,
but victory is won through many **advisers**.*

{Slide: Pro 19v20}

Pro 19v20

²⁰***Listen to advice*** and accept discipline,
and at the end you will be counted among the wise.

Are you starting to get the picture?

Listen to advice.

Surround yourself with many advisers.

And most of agree that this is a good idea don't we?

And yet.

I'm not a great asker of advice, I'm a loner who can do most things adequately, but you know where that path leads, certainly not being counted among the wise.

So where did Paul end up.

Did he rise up the ranks in the Kingdom of his day.

Or did he keep his feet firmly on spiritual soil.

We take a quick peek into some of his writing later on in his life.

{Slide: 1 Tim 1v15-16}

1 Tim 1v15-16

¹⁵*Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—**of whom I am the worst.*** ¹⁶*But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.*

And straight after he wrote this, he wrote "Watch your life ... closely" in Chapter 4.

So, in summary

- 1) Admit that you are not very aware of who you really are.
- 2) Understand deep in your heart that you are only here by God's grace, it has nothing to do with you
- 3) I need a proper understanding of where I stand before God and His people and Paul's example of considering himself less than the least is a good starting point.
- 4) Ask someone

