

1) Am I? (Ready)

Hi, my name is Marc, I'm still not self aware.

However, I'm a week down the line.

Last week we looked at self awareness and how on the one hand, if we considered what our spiritual appearance looks like, many of us thinks it looks like this tree and yet

The reality is that it probably looks more like this scrawny specimen.

The question is, how would we know?

The answer was to actually ask someone.

Who of you were brave enough to ask someone this week?

How did that go?

Were you ready for some of the answers?

Were you surprised by some of the answers?

Was your reaction like:

- That's not me you're talking about is it?
- Or was your reaction a, "Really?", you know with the unbelieving arched eyebrow.
- Or was it a genuine, "I didn't know".
- Or a more a more edgy but a little playful, "No I don't".
- Or was it a harder less playful reaction, "No I don't".
- Or did the melancholy take over and all you could think, "I just can't get this Christian thing right".

I need to learn to deal with my own reaction to anything that I hear that concerns me.

I'm going to realise a very big thing.

**I have a problem.**

Whether I believe it or not.

Let's take my problem of getting overwhelmed when too much stuff heads my way.

There it sits, its been said, it's out in the open.

Or, that I dominate conversations with extended descriptions of everything that comes to my mind

Or, I'm too intense, people are actually too scared to approach me

Or I'm too opinionated

I now have a problem.

The next move is up to me.

I can either choose to ignore the problem, which is definitely the more comfortable option and carry on as if nothing happened.

OR, I can take it to the next stage.

**Realise my problem is a problem.**

Once I get serious about my problem I start pointing resources at it.

You may not think that this is the next step but it is, like knowing your tires are bald but not doing anything about them.

Once I get to that point I am starting to look for solutions and then I can take it to the final stage.

**Do something about it.**

Actively work on the problem.

Last week and in the coming weeks we are going to ask the good folks around us and we are going to realise we have some problems.

Today we are going to discuss some tools to help us with the process.

Are you ready to take it to the next level?

2) I am a tree

I am going to develop this tree thing a little further today.

Remember, I need pictures to understand stuff better and therefore we are going to develop the tree analogy a little further.

There is a great Scripture in Jeremiah that paints this picture for us:

{Slide: Jer 17v7-8}

Jer 17v7-8

<sup>7</sup>*“But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD,  
whose confidence is in him.*

<sup>8</sup>*They will be **like a tree** planted by the water  
that **sends out its roots by the stream.***

*It does not fear when heat comes;*

***its leaves are always green.***

*It has no worries in a year of drought  
and **never fails to bear fruit.**”*

It starts with trust and confidence.

The Scripture says we are blessed if we trust and have confidence in God.

What does that mean?

It means that we will follow the advice of whatever we are trusting in.

I put my daughter on the work surface in the kitchen

I tell her jump.

She looks at me with suspicion at first.

I keep telling her jump.

She eventually does and I catch her.

The next time I tell her to jump the first time, she jumps and I catch her.

I did it the first time and so she has confidence in me that I will keep doing it.

Until that time when I did not say jump and the routine was so ingrained in her that she just jumped as I was turning away and she bounced off my back and landed on the ground with a thump.

Guess what, less trust the next time.

Our children grow in trust as we are consistent in what we say and do.

Trusting in God however and having confidence in Him, takes it to another level.

It means deeply believing what He says and acting upon that belief.

If we don't act on it, we don't believe Him.

The God of the Universe, our Creator and Maker.

If, we do believe AND act on it, the Scripture says we are ***blessed***.

But then it takes it further and builds on our tree analogy.

It says we ***will be like a tree planted by the water***.

What water, well in this example it must be the water of life, a Heavenly stream, not just any old tap water.

Not only are we planted but as the tree we have the choice of what to do with the roots. In our example, our tree ***sends out its roots by the stream***.

The result.

It's not worried about the heat, external influences do not concern it.

The leaves it produces are consistently green because they consistently tap into the stream.

Even the long term does not concern this tree, a year of drought means nothing.

Even better, it keeps bearing fruit in spite of the negative circumstances that surround it.

So, enough of the tree picture.

The point of this whole preamble is that it is important that our roots are dipping into the right stream, to make sure we can handle what comes after we ask someone the question, "What do you think I could change?" and they are prepared to answer.

You see

It's one thing to ask somebody what they personally see in you.

It's another thing to be ready to receive what they are about to tell you.

It's one thing to know to know you have a problem

It's another to know your problem is a problem.

"Am I" ready?

To get ready we need to dip our roots into three areas of character development that God looks on with favour.

### 3) Dip the roots

I'm going to suggest that we dip our roots into three important soils.

{Slide: Isa 66v2}

Isa 66v1-2

*“Heaven is my throne,  
and the earth is my footstool. Where is  
the house you will build for me? Where  
will my resting place be?  
<sup>2</sup>Has not my hand made all these things,  
and so they came into being?”  
declares the LORD.  
“These are the ones I look on with favor:  
those who are **humble** and **contrite** in spirit,  
and who **tremble** at my word.*

Three friends I must bring with me to any party that is going to discuss who I am.

{Slide: Humble ...}

**Humble** (having or showing a modest or low estimate of one's own importance)

**Contrite** in spirit (feeling or expressing remorse or penitence)

**Tremble at my word** (shake involuntarily, typically as a result of anxiety, excitement, or frailty)

**Why are these three friends so important?**

Because God, looks on with favour, those of His children, who have it on their heart to grow in these qualities.

Is God interested in your good looks, money, deeds, hard work, I don't think so.

Our ongoing work with these three friends is what floats His boat.

**What is humble?**

Having a modest opinion of myself.

Removing the big green tree picture of myself and replacing it with the scrawny tree, because I can work with a scrawny tree, it needs help, with a big green tree I may think I have nothing more to do.

Our natural human tendency is to consider ourselves extremely humble.

I have met people who, in spite of the most glaring evidence to the contrary, cannot see any fault in themselves. It's like doing a study on Discipleship, you ask the questions:

Are you making disciples, denying yourself, taking up your cross, counted the costs, surrendered to Him, have you made Jesus Lord, being generous to God, a servant to His body - Oh Yes

And the evidence?

None whatsoever, it's all in the mind, we have all the good intentions.

This is the state I need to be in as I approach the conversation.

I prepare my heart for humility.

**What is contrite?**

Contrite kicks in when someone answers me.

And they say something I did not expect, something honest.

Something that may have been extremely difficult for them to say.

- “You’re not self aware”
- “You dominate the conversation, by talking too much”
- “You get angry quickly”
- “You’re a permissive parent”
- “You’re opinion dominates every conversation you’re in”
- “You’re avoiding someone”
- “You’re difficult to talk to”
- “You don’t listen well”

Now contrite kicks in.

Humility allows you to see the problem.

Contrite acknowledges that the problem is a problem.

Contrite says, “Really, I’m so sorry”, or, “Please point is out to me when I do it”, “Please help me with that”.

### **What is trembling at my word?**

This one barely needs explanation.

I think Werner put it most succinctly, meaning in a clear and expressive manner a few sermons ago.

He said our default status when it comes to God is that we are all going to hell.

Only those who obey Him and follow His Word will go to heaven.

That’s a good cause for trembling.

So when I’m made aware of what I need to change, I now approach the Bible for answers.

- **“You’re not self aware”** - 1 Tim 4v16 - *“Watch you life ... closely”*
- **“You dominate the conversation, by talking too much”** - Jam 1v19 - *“be quick to listen and slow to speak”*.
- **“You get angry quickly”** - Jam 1v19 - *“slow to become angry”* - Eph 4v26 - *“In your anger do not sin”*.
- **“You’re a permissive parent”** - 1 Cor 11v1 - *“Follow my example , as I follow the example of Christ”*.
- **“You’re opinion dominates every conversation you’re in”** - Phi 2v3 - *“in humility value others above yourself”*.
- **“You’re avoiding someone”** - Mat 5v23 - *“go and be reconciled to them, then come and offer your gift”*.
- **“You’re difficult to talk to, you’re stubborn”** - Isa 46v12 - *“Listen to me you stubborn hearted, you who are now far from my righteousness”*.
- **“You don’t listen well to advice”** - Pro 12v15 - *“The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice”*.

So now the Bible gives answers and directions.

**Not trembling** is closing the Book and moving on with the day

**Trembling** is closing the Book and

- meditate on what you’ve learned
- applying it when appropriate
- calling others in the help and hold you accountable

- keeping going with the study every day until the results speak for themselves.

When head knowledge has become heart knowledge.

And when these three friends are in place we are ready to have that most freeing of conversations, not just once but all the time, keep asking the questions.

- “What can I change?”
- “What do you see in me?”
- “Help me”

Because those who tremble are not concerned about their opinion of themselves and are ready to accept and change what they hear.

When my friends Humble, Contrite and Tremble are close, I will realise:

**I have a problem**

**My problem is a problem**

**I will attend to it.**