



BELOW THE SURFACE

Below The Surface

Small Group Material

Leader Guide

Part 1 - "Seeing Below The Surface"

June 25th, 2017

Bottom Line: *An accurate assessment of self requires an authentic encounter with God.*

Study Verses: *Psalm 139:1-17,23-24*

Define The Win: *Participants would understand the importance of displaying both self-awareness and self-assessment. They would admit there are issues taking place below the surface of what they can see that require their attention. Group members would pinpoint how they can slow down this week to encourage the formation process they desire.*

Key Points

- We often assume everything is okay until it's not.
- Formation doesn't occur in a hurry.
- The formation we crave requires us to invite other voices into the conversation.
- Self-awareness without self-assessment is reckless and harmful.
- Self-assessment without self-awareness is pretty much useless.
- God knows you better than you know you.
- God knows you fully and loves you completely.
- God knows exactly where you are today.

- God's pursuit of you is perfect.
- God knows the you who you were made to be.
- An authentic encounter takes times, tools and trust.

ENCOUNTER

- We often assume everything is okay until it's not. Why do you believe many of us fail to pay attention to the conditions of our heart?
- Why does one need both self-awareness and self-assessment? What are the repercussions if you have one without the other?
- What are some warning signs or gauges you look towards to determine if there is something demanding your attention below the surface of what you can see?
- How does the pace that comes with formation go against the grain of today's culture?

FORMATION

- Read Psalm 139:1-6. God knows you better than you know you. How does this statement sit with you (hesitant, thankful, free, ashamed, etc.)? In what ways does your answer influence your willingness to bring all your issues to God?
- Read Psalm 139:7-12. How does this passage speak to God's pursuit and His presence in our lives? How would you describe God's pursuit of you over the years?
- Read Psalm 139:13-17. God knows the you who you were made to be. What does it look like to assess yourself against who God made you to be?
- Read Psalm 139:23-24. What can we do to know the true condition of our heart?

EXPRESSION

- An authentic encounter takes time, tools and trust. Of the three, which one do you struggle with the most?
- Formation isn't found in a hurry. How can you slow down this week and pay attention to the condition of your heart?

- What lies “below the surface” that you have been attempting to ignore or pretend it isn’t there? Why is an authentic encounter with God needed in this area?

LEADER INSIGHT: *Life comes at us quickly. We move at such a fast pace that we don't think we have any time to spend on taking care of ourselves. As long as nothing is majorly wrong, we don't pay attention to the condition our hearts. We often assume we are okay until we are not.*

Most of us desire to grow, but the formation we desire will never happen in a hurry. It requires us to slow down and take the time to reflect on our own, as well as invite other voices into the conversation. We need to slow down long enough to give some careful thought to what is going on below the surface of our lives.

Self-reflection is a vital part of our walk with God. In order for the reflection that leads to transformation to take root in our lives, we must learn the art of self-awareness and self-assessment. These two ideas are vitally connected to each other and don't work without the other. Self-awareness without self-assessment is reckless and harmful. Knowing you have a short fuse or are prone to worry but do nothing to learn why you are that way will lead you to hurt yourself and others by just “being you.”

On the other hand, self-assessment without self-awareness is pretty much useless. The problem with just having self-assessment is that our heart can be deceptive and prevent us from noticing our blind spots or the raw, real condition of what is happening below the surface. Our hearts aren't completely well and the truth is we can be easily fooled. Regardless of whether you are super self-aware or you are an avid self-assessor, we all need other voices in our lives to help us turn self-reflection into transformation.

An accurate assessment requires an authentic encounter with God. The only person who can understand the true condition of your heart is the One who created you. Psalm 139 speaks to the care, love, and grace God extends to each one of us. The reality is that God knows you better than you know you. This statement can leave some of us uneasy. Our greatest desire is to be known, but our greatest fear is to be known and not loved. We are worried that if God sees all of us that he will reject us. Yet, Scripture reminds us time and time again that God knows us fully and He loves us completely.

Being known by God is a safe place. So, why would we ever run? After all, Psalm 139 speaks to this being a futile venture anyway. We cannot outrun God. We can run, but the truth is He is there. His pursuit of us is perfect.

God knows exactly where you are in relation to Him. He also knows the you who you were made to be. God understands how you work: your personality, how you think, how you process and how you make decisions. He also recognizes what is going to trip you up, what's going to tempt you every time, and what has the

potential to bring you down. We shouldn't assess ourselves against who we think we should be, but rather against who God has made us to be.

God knows us fully, loves us completely, pursues us perfectly, and created us wonderfully. So, in light of all this, what can we do to know the condition of our hearts? We should follow the lead of David later on in Psalm 139 when he makes a simple, yet incredible authentic request of God: search him and know him. When you encounter God authentically, it positions you to ask this question, "God, what do you see in me?" It's only when you encounter God authentically that you will be able to see yourself accurately.

An authentic encounter with God takes time. You can't do this in a hurry. An authentic encounter with God takes some tools: a Bible, a journal, and a pen. And lastly, an authentic encounter with God takes trust. Will you trust God with what He brings to light? When you see the true condition of your heart, and it's not as neat and tidy as you thought, will you trust Him? To come before God and ask, "What do you see in me?" might just be the scariest thing you do, but it could also be the most formative thing you do. This honest encounter won't just happen. It's going to take intentional time, some helpful tools, and authentic trust.