

Why We Need Mirrors

by Annette Gullick, Copyright 10/1/2001

Lesson One

Lesson Objective: That students recognize their need to learn about themselves in relationship with God and others.

Bible Passage: Luke 18: 9-14

Bible Truth: God's perspective of who we are can be very different than what we think of ourselves.

Memory Verse: Psalm 51: 6

Before You Begin:

- ◆ prepare skit, "What do you see in me?"
- ◆ copies of handouts "Mirror, Mirror"
- ◆ "Mirror of Affirmation"
- ◆ optional: video camera

Opening Activity:

- ◆ Pretend that you work for a movie company which is looking for a number of young people to serve as extras in a movie that is going to be filmed in the area. Explain that the job doesn't require acting or any special abilities and it will pay very well. The selection process will be as follows: you will pretend to be filming each student as they describe themselves as best they can in 20 seconds. Remind them that they do not need to describe themselves physically because that will be on the "film." Give them one minute to prepare and then go around the room "filming" each person individually. [If you have access to a video camera, actually film them and then watch it at a later time, like during a social event. Students enjoy watching themselves and their friends "on TV."] Start by announcing a name and after 20 seconds say, "Cut". When everyone has had a chance, thank them for their time and say, "Don't call us, we'll call you." Then ask, [in this part be very careful not to allow critical comments to be made about anyone in the group]
- *What is something you learned about someone else in the group that you didn't know before?*
- *In general, did people describe themselves the way you would have described them or differently?*

Illustration:

How many of you have ever heard of George Lucas? What is he famous for? He's the guy who produced the Star Wars movies and the Indiana Jones trilogy. But do you know how he got into producing movies? It's doubtful that Lucas would have made anything at all out of his life, had he not come to terms with who he was and why he

was here on earth. You see, during his teen years, a lot of people considered him a loser who was going nowhere in life. He never applied himself in school and dreamed only about racing cars. But his dreams all ended just a few days before his graduation. While driving home from the library in his Fiat, he prepared for a left turn by glancing in his rearview mirror. But as he started the turn, he heard the sound of another car, a blowing horn, and the impact of a speeding Chevy crunching into the driver side of his car.. The little Fiat turned four or five complete flips before it wrapped around a solid oak tree. The impact was so great that it actually moved the entire tree a couple of feet over, leaving a huge hole in its former position. It should have killed him.

Miraculously, George survived. Get this: during the Fiat's third flip, his regulation racing seat belt snapped, throwing him out of the open top and onto the ground. He was close to death, but recovered slowly through two weeks in the hospital and months of physical therapy. (His Fiat wasn't so lucky, ending up in the junkyard.)

After the accident, George was a changed person. He decided there must be some reason that God allowed him to survive, so he set his mind to get his act together and make something out of his life. He left his racing dreams behind and decided to go to college. There, he developed an interest in literature and writing. And instead of driving racecars, he began filming them. Today, I'm sure that he's glad that his accident made him take a new look at who he was and what he was here on earth for. Because he began to see himself differently, he found his niche in the film industry and I get to enjoy "Star Wars." (Facts from Skywalking: The Life And Times Of George Lucas, by Dale Pollock, Harmony Books, 1983, pp. xiii-39. Wording by Steve Miller)

Just like Lucas, it's incredibly important that we each learn who we are. Today we begin a six week study in which we will explore what we look like; not what we look like on the outside and not even what we can do, but the essence of the identity of each one of us. The influential Christian leader John Calvin says that true wisdom consists of two parts: knowledge of God and knowledge of ourselves, and that we cannot know God without knowing ourselves and we cannot know ourselves without knowing God.

Interactive Learning

Before class recruit volunteers to prepare the skit "What do you see." Before presenting the skit explain to the students that the exact same skit will be presented two different times. The first time, whenever the characters learn something about how he/she looks physically the class should shout out the word "Mirror." The second time through the skit whenever he/she learns something from those around them about him or herself as a person, for example about their personality or their importance to others, the students should shout out "Mirror." Then a student should explain what the character perceived about him or herself. The second time through,

the actors should freeze after each moment of perception just in case the class doesn't pick it up.

Bible Application

Before you read the following paraphrase of Luke 18: 9-14 ask the students to pay close attention to the two characters in the parable:

Two people went into church to pray, one was a leader in the church and the other was a prostitute.

Stop reading and ask for several students on one half of the classroom to comment on what comes to mind when they think about these two people. [In general, unless they are already thinking ahead to the parable, their answers should be something like that the leader is respectable, dedicated to God, and a good person while the prostitute is sinful.]

The church leader lifted up his hands and prayed, "God thank you that I am not like everyone else—greedy, dishonest, and contaminated by sin, or even like that prostitute over there. I am so dedicated to you that I fast twice every week and always give you an exact tithe of all I earn." But the prostitute stayed in the back of the church, not even daring to lift her head, and with a groan of despair, said, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

Now ask students from the other half of the class to comment on their perception of each of the two people and if it has changed, why.

Jesus told this parable to some who were confident of their own virtue and looked down on other people. Upon finishing the parable he said, "I assure you that the second, not the first, was the person who went home justified in God's sight."

- **How is God’s perception of people different than ours and why? [He sees their heart and their motives while we only see what they look like and what they do when they are in our presence.]**
- **Do you think God’s perception of who you are is different than yours? Why or why not?**
- **Have someone read Jer. 17: 9. Does this agree or disagree with your answer to the last question?**

As difficult as it is to accurately judge what someone else is truly like, it is difficult, if not impossible to be objective about who we are and what we are like. The world focuses on self-esteem with a goal of making us feel good about ourselves. But God doesn’t deal with us in such a superficial way. David tells us that what God wants is for us to have an accurate perception of ourselves and others, Psalm 51:6 “Surely you desire truth in the inner parts.”

The identity of God himself is defined in relationships: a father by definition has a child; every son has a father, and a spirit does not exist without being the spirit of someone. Part of what it means that we humans are made in the image of God is that we too get our identity from relationships. Part of who we are is determined by who our parents, siblings, teachers, friends and God are. Just like we need to look in a mirror to see clearly what we look like on the outside, we need to see ourselves in the *mirror of God’s word and the mirrors of those around us, with the interpretation of the Holy Spirit to help us know who we really are on the inside.*

Commitment

Hand out worksheet, “Mirror, Mirror” and pencils to each student. Ask them to fill in each “mirror” describing what they see reflected about themselves in each of the mentioned situations. After they have finished they should fold the paper in half, staple it shut, and write their name on the outside. Explain that you will collect the papers to hand back to them during the last lesson in the series but that in the meantime no one will read what they have written.

Closing

ILLUSTRATION:

Chart-topping singer Janet Jackson, recipient of the coveted Life-Time Achievement Award, recently (October, 2001) brought in a whopping \$1,998,752.00 in two days of her concert tour. I'd call that success! And you'd think that if anyone felt secure and successful, it would be Janet. Yet in an interview she admitted that she struggles intensely with insecurity. So I'm thinking, "YOU! Insecure! You're an incredible success! Tons of people love you! Why in the world would you feel insecure?"

Her answer? She traces the problem to a teacher in elementary school who ridiculed her in front of her friends. In her own words, "I felt so stupid, so small. It affected me so badly, it is something I'll never forget." My point? Negative comments can impact people for the rest of their lives. And many of your friends may only hear negative comments. But there's a way to undo that negative impact: encourage people with positive comments. Let's end this lesson by practicing the power of encouragement.

ACTIVITY:

[The goal of this activity is for each student to end up with a piece of paper on which their classmates have written compliments or positive statements about him or her.] Give each student a copy of the handout "Mirror of Affirmation" (with the single mirror frame) and ask them to write their name on the top, then collect the papers, shuffle them, and hand them out, making sure that no one has his or her own sheet. Tell the students to write a compliment or something positive about the person whose name is on the top of the paper. Ask them to be specific and to write either an internal characteristic ("you reflect peace") or an external action ("you are always kind to other people".) When they finish, have them pass that sheet to the left and write a compliment on the sheet they receive from the person next to them until everyone has had a chance to write something positive about everyone else in the group. [If you have more than 15 to 20 in your group, for the sake of time you could have ten to fifteen students write on each sheet instead of everyone in the whole group.] Then collect them and give each person the sheet with his or her name on it.

Close with a prayer asking God to help us be humble enough to learn who we are from Him and from those around us. And ask Him to help you to become an encourager of others.

What Do You See In Me?

Note: *The drama will be performed twice with this difference:* the first time through at symbol ✖ the students should call out “Mirror”; the second time through at the symbol ✓ the actors should pause until the students call out “Mirror” and someone explains what Tatiana has perceived about herself.

Tatiana looks at herself in the mirror as she is fixing her hair into a unique hairstyle✖, looks down at a magazine, then back in the mirror.

Tatiana: Aarrgg. [*she drops her arms in frustration with her hair and sighs*] Even if I could get my hair to look like that, I’d have to get a whole new body and wardrobe to put on it to look like Brittany Spears [*or insert the name of any popular model or star.*]

✓ She perceives that she is not as attractive as she would like to be.

Tatiana walks from her bedroom to the kitchen and sits down at the table with her father and brother.

Tatiana: Good Morning, Dad.

Dad: [*grunts but doesn’t put down the newspaper even to look at her*]

✓She perceives she is less important than the newspaper

Mother enters carrying a plate with her breakfast.

Mother: Good morning dear. Oh, your hair looks a little funny on top. You might smooth it down before you go to school.✖ This afternoon I need you to come home from school as quickly as possible. I need to go out so you have to stay home with your brother.

Tatiana: Mom [*whines*] everybody was going to go to the mall this afternoon.

Mother: I’m sorry; you can go some other time. Your brother is more important than your friends.

Tatiana makes a face at her brother when her mother turns around.

Brother: MOM, Tatiana’s making faces at me.

Mother: [*looks disapprovingly at her*] Tatiana, please grow up. If you cause trouble this afternoon I will cancel your birthday party this weekend.

✓ She perceives she is immature

All leave.

Tatiana walks down hallway at school with her backpack and greets Carol.

Carol: Good morning. Hey, I love you hair. It looks so cool.* Someday you'll have to show me how to do that. You are always doing such neat stuff with your hair. I wish I could do half the stuff with my hair that you do with yours.

✓ She perceives that she has valuable talents

Tatiana: Thanks. Hey I can't go to the mall this afternoon, I have to stay home and baby-sit my brother.

Carol: Aw, that's too bad. It won't be half as fun without you.

✓ She perceives that she is fun to be with.

Melissa and Mary walk by and Tatiana speaks to Melissa.

Tatiana: Hi Melissa. I was just telling Carol that I can't go to the mall this afternoon, but I hope you can still come over for my birthday party on Saturday.

Andrew walks up

Melissa: *[stares disapprovingly at Tatiana's hair*]* Um... well... *[looks at Mary and rolls her eyes then looks back to Tatiana and says snobbily]* uh, we'll see. Mary invited me to go with her to the beach *[or insert the name of a famous resort nearby]* this weekend, so if my parents give me permission I won't be in town.

✓ She perceives that she isn't as popular or desirable a friend as some people

Tatiana: *[crestfallen]* Oh, well, ok. Maybe some other time then.

Melissa and Mary walk away.

Andrew: Hey, Tatina, don't worry about her. She's turned into such a snob lately.

Your parties are always great. We'll have more fun without her right, Carol?

✓ She perceives that she is fun and a desirable friend to some people.

Carol: Right.

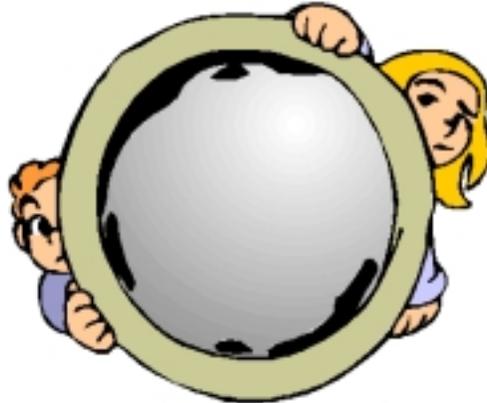
She puts her arm around Tatiana and the three of them walk off.

✓ She perceives that she is cared about.

Mirror, Mirror



Your Parents



Your Siblings



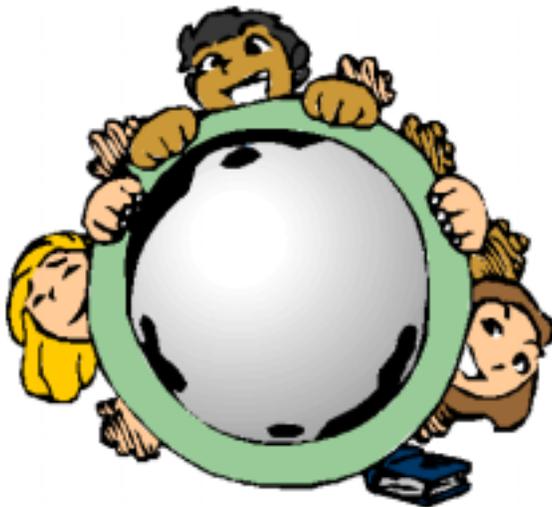
Your Classmates



Your Teachers



God



The Youth Group

What Do You See In Me?

Name _____

