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**By the Man in the Mirror Team**

“Every morning in Africa when the sun comes up, a gazelle wakes up. It knows it must run faster than the fastest lion or it will be killed. Every morning, a lion wakes up. It knows it must outrun the slowest gazelle or it will starve to death. It doesn’t matter whether you are a lion or a gazelle. When the sun comes up, you’d better be running.” – African Proverb

## **Why Self-Reflection Is So Hard**

Are you on the run? If you are like most men, the answer is, “Yes.” We have a culture that requires more energy than we have to give.

We are constantly feeling pressure from every side, and the problem is that men under pressure make mistakes. You see that in sports, and no doubt you’ve seen it in your own life. We can miss something important or run off course.

And when we're running, it becomes harder and harder to stop and take stock of our lives. Even when we do stop running—when we have finally taken a break and collapsed onto the couch at night to relax or on the bed to sleep—our *minds* are still running.

We find ourselves just a mouse click, TV commercial, or social-media scroll away from a dozen breaking news stories, cultural arguments, marketing ads, and distractions. We rarely, if at all, escape these messages long enough for any serious self-examination and reflection.

However, our busyness isn't the only obstacle to self-examination; we are also often deceived. To see a clearer reflection of ourselves, we must experience God's truth.

As Martin Luther said, "We love nothing more ardently than our own feelings, judgment, purpose, and will, especially when they seem to be good."

Or as stated by Demosthenes, "Nothing is easier than self-deceit. For what each man wishes, that he also believes to be true."

We see the same sentiment in [Jeremiah 17:9](#): "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"

We will never, then, be able to hold a completely accurate picture of ourselves on our own.

## **The Goal of Self-Reflection**

What we *can* do—and must—is [invite the Holy Spirit](#) to bring conviction and clarity during regular times of self-reflection.

In the book of Matthew, Chapter 7, Jesus talks about the importance of reflection. He says, "You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

The goal of setting aside this time is to see ourselves as God sees us and to ask for His wisdom and direction in our lives.

The self-deceit that plagues every one of us is laid bare in those quiet, prayerful moments, as the word of God “judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” ([Hebrews 4:12](#)).

**THE BIG IDEA:** *The goal of self-reflection is to see ourselves as God sees us.*

When did you last set aside time to silence the noise around and within you? When did you last take an audit of your life? If not, what keeps you from practicing self-reflection?

## An Opportunity for Personal Reflection

This is your invitation. Choose a day, time, and place you can set aside this week for self-reflection. Write it down, put a note in your calendar, set an alarm on your phone, or do whatever else you need to do to secure it.

During this time, you may feel God prompting you to slow down, call a time out, or make a big change in how you’re living your life. Decide now that you will invite Him to “search you” and lead you, as you meditate on these scriptures:

- Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting! [Psalm 139:23-24](#)
- May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer. [Psalm 19:14](#)
- Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. [Psalm 139:23-24](#)
- If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, for each one should carry their own load. [Galatians 6:3-5](#)

We’ve provided some questions to help guide you as you get started:

1. What area of your life is your greatest source of frustration, fear, or distress (grief, relationship with spouse, dealing with singleness, recovering from divorce, dissatisfaction with job, etc.)? Say a short prayer to God expressing how you feel about what is happening in your life.
2. What area of your life is most in need of some attention?
3. Think about this area. If the next ten years were like your last week, how would this area of your life turn out?
4. What is one practical step you could take to make needed changes in this area? Ask God to help you implement it.
5. If you are facing a lot of pressure right now, where is it coming from?
6. Ask God to reveal any idols that may be hindering your relationship with Him, such as control, work success, independence, etc.
7. How have your key relationships been recently? Are there any conflicts that you need to resolve? What are some practical steps you can take to repair or improve any relationships that need it?
8. How can you experience more of God's truth on a day-to-day basis?
9. When can you set aside a regular time for prayerful self-reflection?

## What Will You Do With Your Dash?

In obituaries and on tombstones, we see something like this after a person's name: "1946-2020." We will all get our own dates after our name eventually, and there's a lot of truth that we can draw from them as we consider the different situations and circumstances that God brings into each one of our lives.

The first thing to notice is the birth year. You were born; there is a Creator, and you were created.

Second, the dates show that you live at a certain point in history. You didn't live a hundred years ago, and you won't live a hundred years from now. Your Creator has chosen this unique time in history for you to live.

Third, there is a death date that reminds us life is short. One day, you are going to die, and there is a finite amount of time left before that happens. That date also provokes us to think about *after* death—eternity—and settle the matter in our hearts with God.

And in between those two numbers, there is one small dash. That inch represents your life. It begs the question, what will you do with your dash? What will it have stood for?

As we go about our lives, there is much to reflect on. Slow down to let God help you make the most of it.

\*This article is adapted from “The Season of Reflection” from *The Playbook: A Game Plan for Every Season*, a [men’s event](#) and corresponding [workbook](#) for small groups from Man in the Mirror.

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