

The Gathering Church
Richard Lord's message 8/16/26
My Story Matters - Overview

Know Your Self
To Know God
God Loves Me
Embrace Life's Hardships
Life is Hard
God is Good

"My Story Matters" Journey - Road - Story

Discover Who I Am
Deepen My Journey
Seeing God is Every Step

Richard's Messenger - **4 Transformative Truths:**

Remember: **Listening is just as important as storytelling.**
Ask questions, not just about facts, but evaluating what God is doing.

1. "At My Very Core I am made in God's Image"

- **Gensis 1:26: "let Us make man in our image, after Our likeness"**

The Image of God is deeper than my sinfulness.

Implication: Intrinsically, I have worth and value in God's eyes and I must recognize and live out of that reality

- **Journeying Reality:** (Richard's Testimony – it is vulnerable and powerful!)

The PHONE CALL – the journey begins - God is forgiveness, mercy, love –
Asking myself, "am I living out of my view or God's view"

Romans 8:1 "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

At the core of my being I am good not bad, not evil -

My goodness is deeper than my badness
I am made in the image of God
After creation He said it is good
After the creation of man He said *"It is very good"*

Robert Magee sums it up like this: (Robert McGee's *The Search for Significance*.)

I am an Awesome spirit being,
Of magnificent worth as a person.
I am deeply loved by God, Fulling pleasing to God,
I am totally accepted by God and Absolutely complete in Christ.
And when my person is expressed through my performance,
the reflection is dynamically unique.
There has never been another like me in the history of mankind.
Nor will there EVER be.
I am an original! One of a kind! Really somebody! And so are you!

2. "You can't know God without knowing Self"

Primary work of God in our lives is:

A. TO KNOW GOD: He will reveal who He really is and what He is like: **He corrects our misconceptions**

I was afraid to trust God. I thought, God was going to give me an ugly wife and send me to deepest darkest Africa- LOOK HOW WRONG I WAS – see my beautiful family

B. TO KNOW OURSELVES: He Reveals THE IMAGE OF GOD IN US

- Calvin Institutes: “All wisdom consists of two parts: knowledge of God and Knowledge of ourselves.”
- St Augustine: “May I know you that I may know myself.”
- Meister Eckert: “No one can know God who doesn’t first know themselves.”

God is after Heart change not just Behavior Modification

Implication: We must continually allow God to search our hearts

(We have new life in Christ however there are remnants of our old self-centered life: **we come to life withy grave clothes on!**)

Iceberg model: (90% of an iceberg is under the water)

We become more self-aware of what’s under the surface of our lives by letting God change us – change our motivations

Psalms 139:23-24 “Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me and lead me in the everlasting way.”

I’m not a worthless person at my core, trying to become worthy through what Christ has done for me. I am a diamond at my core; however I have covered myself in layers self-centeredness that obscure its beauty. Christian growth is simply cooperating with God and allowing God to remove those layers so that the diamond can increasingly reflect the image of God in and through me.

(Luke 2:52). “And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man” is from Bible Gateway

- **Wisdom:** He learned mental and spiritual truths as he got older.
- **Stature:** His body grew taller and stronger.
- **Favor with God:** He pleased God through his life and obedience.
- **Favor with Man:** He built good and kind relationships with other people

Our unique hand-crafted self

Psalm 139:14 “I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful; I know that full well”

I need to invest my time and money in knowing myself through whatever means it takes.

We sought counseling which is emotional discipleship for body, soul, and spirit

knowing our **body** can move us to be **healthier**

knowing our **soul** can move us to be more **whole** as a person...less fragmented mentally and emotionally

knowing our **spirit** can move us to be more aware of the spiritual resources we have in Christ

Journeying (Richard’s Testimony) “OUR WAKE” - learning how I was struggling with depression

Debbie and I were struggling in marriage

- Debbie said, "I'm going to counseling whether you go or not."
 - We went to the counselor!
 - Counselor sent me to a psychiatrist
- I remember walking into the psychiatrist office
- I still can remember how I was feeling, ashamed, worthless
 - I was put on medication
- But I was a Pastor, a spiritual leader
- I felt like a failure
 - I needed to be honest with self

Debbie and I see counseling as emotional discipleship
You can't know God without knowing Self"
God uses people, life events, to show us our hearts.

Restoration of our broken pieces:
I had to know myself, feel my emotions and find grace to change.

3. "Spiritual Health and growth is a direction not a destination"

- We are on a Spiritual Journey that will continue until the day God calls us home.
- **Implication: We Become as we Go**

Philippians 3:12 "Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus."

Philippians 1:6 "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."

- **Journeying Reality:** (Richard Testimony) - 2 events

The COUCH

- Will you trust and follow when you don't understand

The DREAM of God holding me and will guide me in life

- Deepening of God's love for me
- **The core foundational principle of all spiritual growth is experiencing the love by Father God.**

My experiences: Vision at a maternity ward – Jesus holding me- My times are in His hands

4. "Life is Hard, but God is Good"

Circumstances may cause us to QUESTION GOD'S GOODNESS AND LOVE

God can seem cruel from our vantage point

Trials and Tribulations should be expected as normal in the life of the Christian.

We learn our deepest truths through the hardest things we experience.

- **Journeying Reality:** (Richard Testimony) **REJECTION BY CHURCH AND HEP-C**

Confusion about gods plans for my life, his love for me

Misconceptions of God and of my self

God comes through-

ENDED up at PABC as pastor for 17 years - I had the correct vision but wrong timing!

2 Corinthians 4:8 "we are afflicted in every way but not crushed; perplexed but not despairing; 9 persecuted but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. 11 For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 12 So death works in us, but life in you."

Conclusion:

List of transformational truths God has used to reveal who He is and who we are

1. The image of God and his love for me is deeper than my sinfulness
2. You can't know God without knowing self
3. Spiritual health and growth is a journey not a destination
4. Embrace hardship; Life is Hard, but God is Good

Ending: I'm persuaded....

*2 Timothy 3:14 "You, however, continue in the things you have learned and **become convinced of**, knowing from whom you have learned them,"*

2 Timothy 1:14 "Protect this good thing that has been placed in your trust through the Holy Spirit who lives in us."

(Truth #1) **(Question):** "Richard, can you think of a time when God used something in your journey to reveal something about yourself that you didn't really want to see?"

Possible follow-up: "What happens when we become willing to let God search the parts of our lives we'd rather keep hidden?"

(Truth #2) **(Question):** "When you look back over your journey, where can you see that God has changed you—even in ways you didn't recognize while it was happening?"

Possible follow-up: "What would you say to someone who looks at their life and thinks, 'I should be further along spiritually than I am'?"

(Truth #3) **(Questions):** "Richard, can you tell us about a season when you couldn't understand what God was doing—but you had to learn to trust who He was?"

Possible follow-up: "What would you say to someone who is walking through something painful right now and is asking, 'Where is God in my story?'"

- Ask God - be honest with Him.
- Ask others who you trust and know you well, what do they see.
- Have Patience
- When you can't understand, trust.

Prov 3:5-6 "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight"