

One
--Looking Inward--
Discovering Me

You and I have an unhealthy attraction to the leaves of the fig tree. We hold out the hope they will effectively hide our imperfections and issues. According to scripture's big story, this started with our distant ancestors in a garden called Eden. Fig-leafing has been humanity's default ever since.

This practice manifests itself in the various personas we present to others. We maintain closets full of them. Only a select few get to see the private version of who we truly are. In time, changing personas becomes so seamless we hardly notice the Jekyll and Hydeness of it all. We come to buy our own artificiality.

Imagine life in Egypt: in-laws to navigate, kids to raise, mouths to feed. Now weigh this down with slavery. What's the safest version to pull out of the closet on your way out the door? Which persona will keep your master from beating you? How do you get on their good side? You try to control outcomes. You can't.

Life weighs heavy these days, pressing down with mandates, conflicting information, and an impossible future. It's like you're a sponge being squeezed. This pandemic is mashing your true persona out in the open for all to see.

In this uncharted emotional and relational territory, typical coping mechanisms no longer work: shopping, social gatherings, movies, sporting events. This creates toxic strains of fear, anger, and grief, triggered by (you name it) and obsessed with (you name it). Pile on distancing, and you're all alone.

Keeping your fig leaves arranged is impossible. Words blurt out. Tears flow. Stoicism loses its grip. Tone slips from bravado to quivering. I'm not the steadfast, even-tempered, generous person I've always portrayed. I'm miles from who I thought I was or want to be. It's not COVID's fault. The pandemic is simply revealing what has long been hiding right below my surface.

There is an essential you God originally had in mind. It's not so much about a job or calling. He just wanted to explore a relationship with you, the likes of which he'd never had. But trauma in your formative years triggered survival instincts that went into hyper drive; self-protect, self-provide, self-prove, self-promote. With all diligence, you created a galvanized, presentable version of yourself. You didn't set out to be a hypocrite. You were just in search of safety and comfort.

So here we are worn out from the ruse. Time to get real with the hard questions. Why am I so fearful, angry, depressed, and confused? Why do I do what I do? How come I feel so strongly about (fill in blank)? When did I get so (fill in blank)?

I can't relate in a healthy way to God or others until I know who I am. So we start these sessions by exploring the difference between the real me and the fake me.

Things to consider:

1. What personal tendencies have surprised or puzzled you during this crisis?

2. Dig into the difference between the private and public versions of you.