

HABIT SEVEN

Know Who You Are and Are Not

“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them — yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.”

1 Corinthians 15:10

In reading about this habit, you will begin at a new level to discover who God made you to be and what you do well. Such a discovery can introduce you to new levels of confidence, strength, self-satisfaction, and joy. At the same time, it can free you from covetousness, jealousy, and envy of others’ successes.

After serving since 1965 in my chosen career, I have learned the importance of recognizing both who I am and who I am not. Coming to terms with this has introduced me to levels of peace and a freedom from covetousness that I could never have experienced under the old paradigm. Career decisions are easier. I judge others less. I am less jealous of others’ successes and less proud of my own. I am freer to enjoy and appreciate who God made me to be. I am also freer to enjoy others and who God made them to be.

The Five Selves

Years ago, a friend loaned me an old textbook on behavior and advised me to read it. In it, I learned some ideas about how to evaluate who we really are. I learned that it is simplistic to think there is only one perception of our self. There are multiple perceptions in even our own minds and the minds of those who “know” us. Let’s look at these perceptions — the five selves.

Table 7-1. The Five Perceptions of Self.

SELF	PERCEPTION
First Self	The self I want to be
Second Self	The self I think I am
Third Self	The self I think others believe I am
Fourth Self	The self others believe I am
Fifth Self	The real self no one but God knows

The first self is the self I want to be (Figure 7-1). I imagine what I would like to be, do, or am becoming. Before long, I have adopted those imagined images as my own impression of who I am — my hoped-for self. However, as you know, what is imagined is not necessarily real. It often is not. We could call it the “dreamed self.” With careful thought, we can separate our true self from our imagined, successful self. However, it usually requires a dose of honesty and self-criticism.



Figure 7-1. The first self — the self I want to be.

The second self is the one I think I am (Figure 7-2) — especially in moments of honest reflection. The self we honestly believe we are may, of course, vary with moods. Usually, we all admit that we are not as bad as we think we are when we are down on ourselves. Likewise, we are not as good as we think we are when we are especially happy with ourselves. This second self is neither of those, but somewhere in the middle. The person that I acknowledge in my inner heart is the self I perceive myself to be. We could refer to this as the “admitted self.”

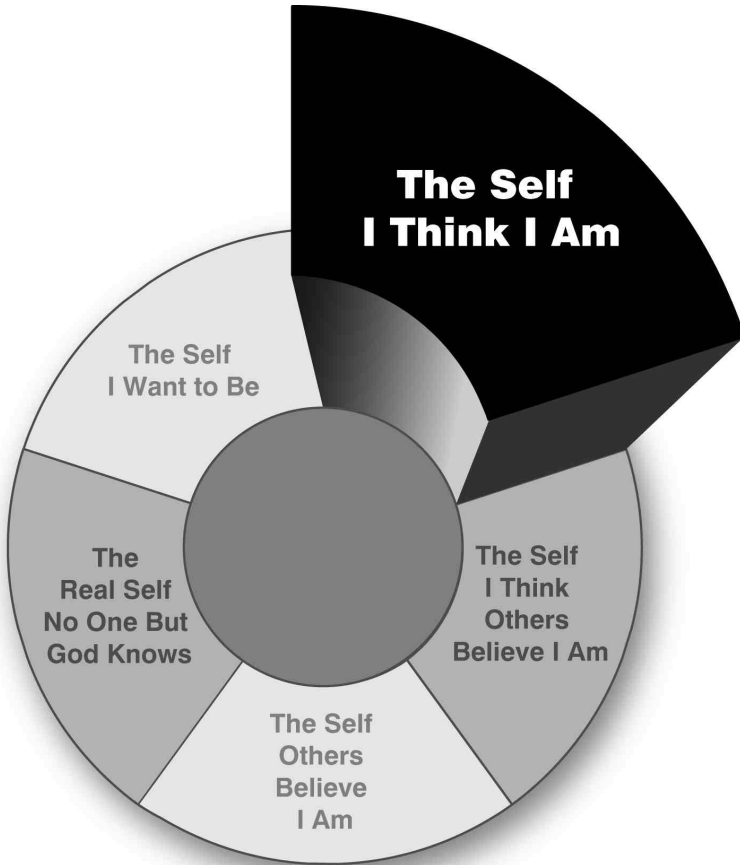


Figure 7-2. The second self — the self I think I am.