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DISCIPLINES OF ENDURING LEADERSHIP

DEVELOPING THE POTENTIAL
OF YOUR DIVINE DESIGN

KENT INGLE

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THE DISCIPLINE OF SELF-AWARENESS

“DON’T COMPROMISE YOURSELF.
YOU’RE ALL YOU’VE GOT.”

—JANIS JOPLIN

Self-assessments are everywhere. In a few clicks online, you can discover all kinds of interesting things about yourself. Some of those “discoveries” are restatements of obvious traits. Others are a little more surprising.

Whether using an assessment tool or other means, the discipline of self-awareness is possible. We often understand who we are by evaluating our experiences. The old adage says, “Experience is the best teacher.” Some people attribute the saying to Benjamin Franklin, others to Thomas Taylor. It most likely originated as a Latin proverb, but regardless of its origin, it seems incomplete. We don’t learn simply by going through an experience; we learn when we reflect on that experience. *Reflection produces self-awareness.*

At any moment, you are going through several experiences simultaneously. In addition to your professional responsibilities,

you are engaged in other activities both physical and mental. Have you ever stopped and asked what it's like to encounter you in each of these settings? This is a great way to become more self-aware.

At the end of each day, I like to reflect on that day's experiences. What individuals did I meet? What did I learn? How did I respond? Whom did I lead, and how effective was my leadership influence? You might have other questions to add. The key to beneficial reflection is to look back from a neutral perspective and replay the experiences as if watching them on television.

As I look back on my experiences, I gain a new appreciation or awareness of my gifts and abilities and how effectively I used them. At times, I see myself letting my divine design influence the way I use my gifts. At other times, I allow my gifts and my design to get disconnected. Yet I would never know that if I didn't reflect on my experiences.

AWARENESS OF YOUR GIFTS

Everyone has natural talents and abilities, but spiritual gifts are a byproduct of a relationship with Christ. Living up to your full potential can't be accomplished by relying on talents alone. Because God designed and created you, His design includes a need to rely on His presence. The Holy Spirit's presence in your life takes you far beyond your talent and skill. It forces you to acknowledge the favor of God.

Although there are a number of tools available to help you discern your talents, you probably are already aware of your natural abilities. What do you know you do well? What do others

say you do well? The answers to these questions will give you a clue about your talents.

But how can you know your gifts? Gifts are what you can do as a result of God's Spirit living inside and through you. There usually is no explanation for your gifting. Some people say gifts are supernatural, and they are right. Your spiritual gifts are the avenues through which God works to bring honor and glory to Himself. While your natural talents and abilities can help make *you* famous, your gifts make *God* famous.

We sometimes struggle to acknowledge our gifts because we don't want to appear arrogant or boastful. That's certainly noble. However, our Creator gave each of us a unique set of gifts that

He wants us to use. You should be able to distinguish between your talents and abilities and your gifts. You had your talents and abilities before you had a relationship with God. He can also re-purpose your talents for His purposes.

Being aware of what you are gifted to do will help you identify those aspects of your work that should be delegated. As a leader, you have the responsibility to use your gifts efficiently and to provide opportunities for the people you lead to use their gifts as well. When you work outside your area of giftedness, at least two people suffer: you and the person who really should be doing that task. You suffer because it takes you longer to do things you aren't gifted to do. Sure, you might be able to do

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the task, but is there someone better equipped to do it? Other people suffer because they are denied the chance to express their giftedness in the best way.

When you are aware of how you employ your gifts, you will be aware of how you allow others to employ their gifts. When people are allowed to put their gifts to work, they will be more satisfied in their roles within our organizations. Satisfied people are more productive, creative, and positive. Dissatisfied people demonstrate the opposite.

God's will is always found in your DNA. You find it as you look within and unlock your divine design. When you understand your design, you will have a better understanding of how God wants to use you. It is vital that leaders set aside time to inventory and reflect on their gifts in light of their current situations.

SELF-ASSESSMENT TESTS

You've probably taken one or more self-assessments such as the DiSC® Profile, StrengthsFinder, or the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator®. These assessments are industry standards that have been and continue to be helpful in almost every aspect of life. They are intended to increase self-awareness and help us better interact with others.

Every assessment, however, should be viewed subjectively in light of the conditions present when you complete the assessment. Stress, fatigue, and current events all have the potential to affect your responses. Assessments like the ones mentioned above are designed to compensate for variances in

your responses, but if you took an assessment ten years ago, your responses might have changed.

Many leaders find it beneficial to encourage their team members to take self-assessments in order to identify the best strategies for communication, interaction, and functionality. Self-assessment tools offer the objective evaluation we need for our teams and our leadership.

DiSC can help you be more productive and improve communication and collaboration. It can help you and your team address personality differences so you can function more efficiently and effectively. The DiSC Profile will help you recognize how you respond to conflict, what causes you stress, your problem-solving strategies, and the things that motivate you. The more you understand about yourself, the better you'll be able to lead your team and maximize its effectiveness by minimizing interpersonal conflict.

StrengthsFinder by Tom Rath is an online assessment and printed resource that helps people discover and utilize their personal strengths. It is built on the understanding that many people spend a great portion of their lives trying to improve their weaknesses rather than capitalizing on their strengths. StrengthsFinder distinguishes your strengths and weaknesses and provides practical steps to maximize your personal strengths in your leadership role.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator measures your psychological type and how you view life. The sixteen personality types are based on the work of psychologist Carl Jung and have been used in personal, academic, and professional settings to

help better understand how an individual might function in any given environment.

Some people argue that self-awareness is a New Age philosophy and, therefore, should be avoided, but that's not true. As a believer, your self-image is a reflection of Christ, and your personality, giftedness, and contribution to the world are expressions of the Holy Spirit's presence in your life. When you pursue self-awareness, you are simply tapping into God's divine design.

Self-awareness isn't about elevating yourself or seeking personal gain. The better you understand how you are put together, the better equipped you'll be to lead. When you are self-aware, you are poised to step into the role God has for you. Your design and your task will fit together nicely.

In Acts 17:16–33, we see an example of what happens when people reconcile their lives with their divine design. As

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he traveled around Athens, Paul noticed the religious bent of its citizens. He saw idols representing a number of gods and even found an idol dedicated to an unknown god.

Though acclaimed for their knowledge, the Greeks were afraid they might have left out a god, so they created a spare.

Paul was aware of his giftedness and God's Spirit in his life. He was confident that he could help the Greek philosophers understand their search for significance and their need for a relationship with the only true God. Because Paul understood himself, he was able to help others.

Self-awareness positions us to help other people. Until we understand who we are, we will never be able to help others know who they are. Self-awareness will help you know what you should and should not be doing. For example, when a job opportunity comes your way, being self-aware will help you make the right decision as to your gift mix for that position. When you aren't self-aware, you will waste a lot of time doing things that should be done by others.

We all want to be good at what we do. No one sets out to be mediocre. Self-awareness tunes your life to your strengths, and as you cultivate and utilize your strengths, you'll experience authentic peace and joy. You will come alive in ways you never dreamed possible.

There is no way you can live in the center of God's will without cultivating the discipline of self-awareness. You'll learn more about who God is as you learn more about how He designed you. The discipline of self-awareness is one of the most important steps in the process of becoming the leader you were designed to be.

KEY IDEAS

- We don't learn simply by going through an experience; we learn when we reflect on it.
Reflection produces self-awareness.
- The key to beneficial reflection is to be willing to look back from a neutral perspective and replay the experiences as if you were watching them on television.
- As a leader, you have the responsibility to use your gifts efficiently and to provide opportunities for those you lead to use their gifts as well.
- When you understand your design, you will have a better understanding of how God wants to use you.
- Until we understand who we are, we will never be able to help others know who they are.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are two or three things you have learned from recent experiences?
2. Think about a situation in which you were involved. Replay it in your mind as if you were outside of the situation, watching it happen. What conclusions would you draw by observing yourself?

3. Consider your daily activities. Which of your gifts do you use most efficiently? Which do you use inefficiently? Why do you use some gifts more efficiently than others?
4. What are some things God has accomplished through you? What did you learn about yourself and God in those experiences?
5. How are you helping others discover who they are? What is your strategy for encouraging or mentoring those entrusted to you?

YOUR NEXT STEP

1. If you haven't already done so, identify and complete one of the self-assessments mentioned in this chapter.
2. Arrange to spend time with someone who shares a good relationship with you. Ask that person to help you identify ways you can better use your gifts.
3. Use the journal at the end of the book to record your thoughts as you allow God to work through your life.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

On February 1, 2011, Dr. Kent Ingle began serving as Southeastern University's fifteenth president. Before becoming SEU's president, Dr. Ingle served as the dean of the College of Ministry at Northwest University in Kirkland, Washington.

Dr. Ingle's professional ministry experience included eight years as a college professor and fifteen years of pastoral leadership to two congregations—one in Los Angeles and the other in Chicago.

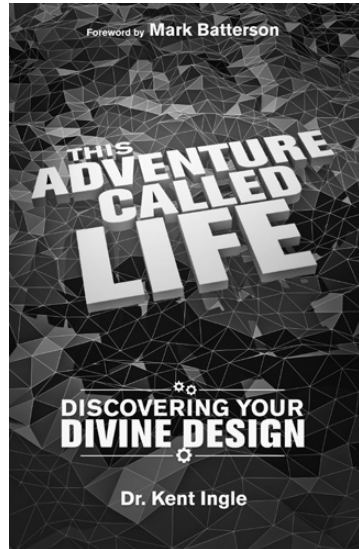
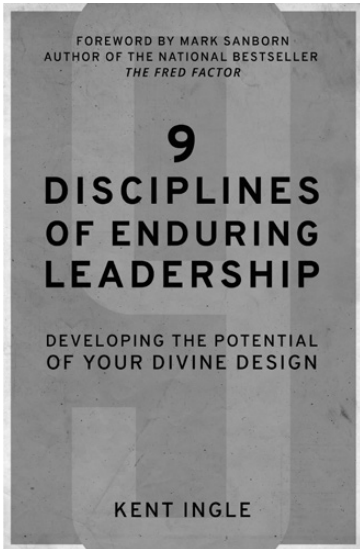
Prior to entering professional ministry, Dr. Ingle spent ten years as a television sports anchor for NBC and CBS. He started as an anchor at the age of eighteen in Bakersfield, California, and finished his career in Los Angeles. He covered many professional sports teams and interviewed hundreds of notable people in the professional sports world, including Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Pete Rose, Muhammad Ali, and Carl Lewis.

An ordained Assemblies of God minister since 1988, Dr. Ingle earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in broadcast journalism from Vanguard University of Southern California and later completed his Master of Theological Studies at Vanguard. He received his Doctor of Ministry degree from the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary in Springfield, Missouri.

Dr. Ingle has served as Presbyter of the Central Coast Section of the Southern California Assemblies of God, as well as on the boards of several Assemblies of God and para-church organizations. He is a church coach/consultant and a conference speaker.

A California native, Dr. Ingle and his wife, Karen, reside in Lakeland, Florida, and have three teenage children: Davis, Kaila, and Paxton. The family also has two dogs, Lexi and Zoe. Dr. Ingle loves to cycle, run, lift weights, play basketball, and stay as active as possible. When he has down time, you can find him reading books on leadership or watching NBA League Pass.

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