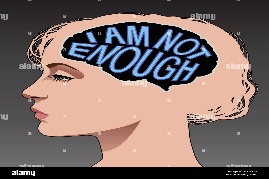
 "If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there," Similarly, if you are ignorant of who you are, any voice can determine your destiny. Anybody can lead you.  As a result, self-concept is an important guiding principle that helps us navigate the world and understand our role in it, and it is essential for promoting self-improvement and personal development which leads to wholesome decision-making. Furthermore, it plays a critical role in the sets of ethical and moral values and behaviors one adopts.

Notwithstanding the essentiality of knowing self, many people are oblivious to self; those who are aware are ignorant of its usefulness. A lack of knowledge of oneself or a failure to understand the significance of such information is a leading cause of demotivation, lack of productivity, sadness, violence, and sin—violation of God's laws. Individuals and society as a whole suffer when they lack self-awareness.

The development of a child's self-concept begins at birth. It all starts with how adults interact to the child. My childhood was one in which both of my parents taught- primary school (mom) and secondary level (dad). We were raised to work hard and appreciate the gift of education. "I am preparing you for the world," one of my mother’s mantras to my siblings and me. In other words, we can function effectively wherever life takes us. My parents had good intentions for us. However, as time passed, my household environment became marked by frequent quarrels, physical abuse, lack of affection, and affirmation.

My mother, in particular, was so emotionally scarred by my father's constant adultery that she paid little heed to how she treated me, particularly when she remarked I looked like my father. Because of this apparent likeness, she revealed on the eve of my departure for seminary that she hates me because I look like him. The agony of hearing those words, as well as the corporal punishment meted out at home and in class (despite only getting one wrong answer), and being continually compared to my older siblings, culminated. It was devastating.

I felt unloved and unappreciated. I had the feeling that there was something wrong with me. My self-esteem plummeted, and I lived in fear and shame, which influenced my behaviour. The "real self" and the "ideal self" were constantly at odds. I knew who I was, but I lived in the shame of not revealing my true self in order to prevent being wounded or hated. Fitting into domains of ideal self where I could win the approval of others seemed to be less harmful.

OASIS Self-Concept course could not have been experienced at a better time. As I was pushed to take a critical look at myself to rediscover self and unearth where I was lacking in crucial areas of my life’s development. Unequivocally I can attest to the fact that education is vitally important in self-concept, because it provides us with information, attitudes, habits, and skill sets of which are critical aspects of our self-concept. As a result, the opportunities at OASIS learn has had a beneficial impact on my self-concept.

I now have significant insights about what defines a healthy self-image. Consequently, as I evaluate my personal identity which is a composite of my personality traits, beliefs, values, physical attributes, abilities, aspirations, and other identifiers such as the organizations with which I am affiliated. I conclude that I am valuable to my society and my family- I am not who or what my mother says I am. I am not what the society or my siblings have characterized me to be.

Whereas I sought approval from others and was subject to what others said to and about me, my cognitive and affective representation of my identity and, by extension, the "self" I played changed on a regular basis. On the other hand, now that I have accepted the real me, I'm developing a critical mind. I now evaluate my actions, thoughts, or lack thereof, and what is said to or about me to determine whether they validate the real or ideal self. That is to say whether they are consistent with Biblical realities about myself, as my mental image of myself is strongly influenced by what the Lord says in His word about me.

As my mental image of myself changed, so did my self-esteem, which contributed to emotions of worth and security. My interactions with others, including my siblings, have improved. Self-confidence and a healthy self-esteem enabled me to speak with my mother without attempting to seek her approval and to maintain a positive attitude even when I did not meet expectations. My acceptance of myself has liberated me from the pressure to conform in order to be accepted by others.

Self-knowledge is essential for “giving a meaningful narrative to our past, present, and future actions, a sense of continuity over time, a sense of being both unique and similar to others” Our self-concept acts like a filter that lets some information in and keeps other information out especially when the information is at variance with the word of God.

Our attitudes, habits, and behavior are influenced by our self-awareness. These, in turn, influence how we treat ourselves, others, and carry out our responsibilities. As a pastor, I interact with people on a daily basis. My vocation demands that I have a positive self-image based on who God says I am. As a result, I use my knowledge and experience of self to empower the congregation I pastor. Also, those who seek my help in their own struggles in life. It is extremely interesting that quite a number of these persons have similar stories to mine. This course has given me the courage to help them achieve a healthy sense of self-acceptance.

Because all progress begins with self-awareness, it is vital that individuals grasp what it is and how to become more self-aware. As a result, I've began to actively provide opportunities for education within particular age cohorts (for the time being) in the congregation to address self-awareness and how they could use it in their life in order to have a strong sense of self.