

*The Self-Aware Leader:
 Discovering Your Blind Spots to
 Reach Your Ministry Potential*
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What Are Your Ministry Blind Spots?

The phrase *blind spots* is regularly used in leadership circles to describe problems or patterns that lurk unseen and pose potential danger. For the last two decades I have been developing and equipping young adults to serve as ministry leaders, pastors, youth workers, missionaries, and managers. That process includes helping them reflect on what they may not notice – the areas of their life too personal or hidden to see easily – that may pose potential problems. The truth is that we all have such areas, even if we’re not that young.

Over the years I’ve also noticed that few Christian organizations or churches help young leaders systematically and intentionally with their personal development. Most have an initial training program, but after that there is little ongoing support. As leadership presents increasing challenges and presses us, personal development is left up to each person, and supervisors are sometimes at a loss how to step in and help. To their credit, it is difficult to bring up touchy matters when the issues are personal. It’s easy to hope that time will fix areas where we’re struggling, but it usually doesn’t. If the problems persist, even with no help, sometimes a decision is made to make a change and try again with someone else. This inability to know what to do and how to help is contributing to some of the problems.

Recent national headlines have featured the departures of two well-known leaders of Christian organizations due to personal and moral issues. They were once seen as models of how to lead in ministries. In the last few months three friends of mine were released from their positions for difficult personal reasons. Despite the books, seminars, and articles about Christian leadership and the reminders to “lead ourselves first,” problems persist. National ministry consultant Mark DeVries says that despite the glut of books and seminars, Christian leaders are still experiencing the same personal problems that previous generations of Christian workers have.

The good news is that God is in the mending business. We weren’t meant to be fragmented and disordered; we were meant to be whole – healed from our wounds by the saving power of Jesus Christ and open to the leading of the Holy Spirit. God can use cracked pots to carry valuable treasure (2 Cor 4:7). But unless we’re intentional, *no one will talk to us about these blind spots*, these areas where we are inconsistent with the Spirit of Christ and his ministry. They’re difficult to discuss. It might be difficult to talk to us about them too. Most of us think we’re doing fairly well, but it’s likely that the people we lead and work with would like us to grow in helpful directions. That’s the reason I wrote this book.

One more thought before we move on: some may not be sure if being *self-aware* is a Christian practice, that it elevates self over Jesus. John Calvin wrote, “Nearly all wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.” We should be vigilant toward areas where our actions are incongruent with our message and faith. Otherwise we live a hypocritical life, uninterested in connecting with the

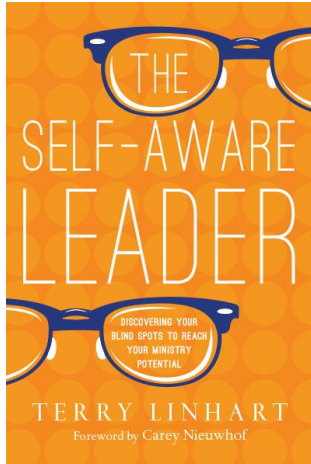


Spirit of Christ (Jn 15) or unity with one another (Jn 16). Worse, we may even let areas of disobedience persist while being engaged in ministry. Timothy Keller commented, “If I am in denial about my own weaknesses and sin, there will be a concomitant blindness to the greatness and glory of God.”

Perhaps, then, it’s more self-centered to *not* engage in self-awareness. Perhaps self-protection drives our aversion to this practice. Or maybe it’s fear of what we may discover. We need to hear again the voice of love and grace from Jesus as he invites us to trust him and let him shepherd us as our Lord.

It’s my desire that we grow in our intimacy with and knowledge of Jesus Christ, that our character increasingly reflects his, and that we engage in our ministerial work with greater effectiveness for God’s glory. The goal is not to elevate self, but to engage in biblical practices to discover places where we need God to forgive us, to infuse us with holiness and power, and to propel us forward in greater faithfulness and effectiveness in Christlike ministry with others.

– *Taken from the introduction*



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Learn more about Terry Linhart and read his blog at terrylinhart.com.

Listen to Terry's podcast at 37thepodcast.com.

Follow him on Twitter: @TerryLinhart.

“A Deep Dive into the Inner Life of a Leader”

“A few ministry leadership tours of duty convinced me that too many otherwise gifted people hit ineffectiveness walls because they were unable (or unwilling) to carefully consider the cracks in their foundations. As Terry Linhart points out, we’ve all got them. But when we’re deluded into thinking that it’s more important to give others what we think they want than to give them what we know we can offer, the temptation to ‘act the part’ gains a foothold in our hearts. This book is written by a friend who has become comfortable in his own skin and wonderfully fruitful as a leader, in part because he is fully committed to staying on the same journey he so carefully describes as necessary for the authentic, self-aware leader.”

— **Dave Rahn**, senior ministry advisor, Youth for Christ USA

“Terry takes us on a deep dive into the inner life of a leader, which truly guides all of life and leadership. He is gentle and gracious, yet direct and relentless, to go after the critical areas of a leader’s life. If you allow it, this book will be a deep dive into your soul and character that will utterly transform your whole life.”

— **April L. Diaz**, author and speaker, Slingshot Group associate, director of coaching, the Youth Cartel

“Terry Linhart has delivered a winning exploration of what you need to know about your past, present, and future leadership journey. Those you lead will thank you for reading this book.”

— **Kara Powell**, executive director of the Fuller Youth Institute, coauthor of *Growing Young*

“Grounded in years of experience in leadership development and a passion for seeing leaders flourish, Linhart brings much-needed attention to common blind spots that often hinder young leaders and provides biblical practices to address them. A must-read practical guide for leadership teams or anyone hoping to grow their effectiveness in leadership!”

— **Tom Lin**, president/CEO of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship

“Terry Linhart is a youth ministry legend! For years, he has helped equip young leaders like myself to serve the church well as pastors, ministry directors, missionaries, and more. The idea of learning to see in community what you cannot see on your own has been a constant thread in Terry’s work. The church is better because of leaders like Terry. In this project, *The Self-Aware Leader*, Terry stays true to form and offers piercing yet practical insight for rookie and seasoned leaders alike. While many leadership books can devolve into the realm of self-help, this work challenges us to overcome our blind spots by engaging in the critical, Spirit-led process of self-examination and communal reflection that moves a leader toward a place of confession, forgiveness, and growth. If you can only read one book on leadership this

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ENDORSEMENTS



Terry Linhart, author of *The Self-Aware Leader*, is an author, speaker, consultant, and professor of Christian ministries at Bethel College in South Bend, Indiana. For over twenty-five years, Terry has led and taught about topics related to Christian ministry and organizational oversight. His youth ministry experience includes eight years in parachurch ministry with Youth for Christ and seven years as youth pastor at Hope Missionary Church in Bluffton, Indiana. He has taught at Asbury Theological Seminary, North Park University, Huntington College, Taylor University, and Alliance Graduate School in Quezon City, Philippines.

year, you should make it *The Self-Aware Leader!*"

– **Edrin C. Williams**, pastor of equipping and formation, the Sanctuary Covenant Church

"Terry Linhart has given a gift to those of us who care about developing faithful leadership for the decades ahead. *The Self-Aware Leader* provides wonderful content and profound questions for reflection that can help leaders do the important inner work that is absolutely vital for long-term effectiveness in ministry. This is a wonderful resource, both for leaders and their mentors!"

– **Ken Knipp**, VP of training, Young Life

"In a society where people remain silent from having the conversations needed for healthy settings, ministries have relaxed and adopted the normalcy of allowing gaps among leaders. The young adult leader occupies the past and the present but is unable to lead well without addressing the day-to-day issues. My friend Terry provides practical exercises that will help organizations learn how to gather together, address issues, and adopt best practices to keep the lines of communication open and ongoing."

– **Fred Oduyoye**, director of networking, Youth Specialties

"I've been waiting for Terry to write this book ever since I first heard him talk about it. It's overdue! It's a must-read for every leader. I will highly recommend it to anyone who desires to be a healthy leader."

– **Doug Fields**, veteran youth pastor, bestselling author, cofounder, Downloadyouthministry.com

"Fresh and relevant! This book brilliantly offers great insights and will challenge you to take a deeper look at how ministry has been done in the past. It is a game-changer for Christian youth workers desperately trying to stay in step with our rapidly shifting culture, providing real-life strategies for success! Bravo!"

– **Joan McClendon**, associate project director, Women Entrepreneurship Initiative, Saint Mary's College, adjunct instructor, Bethel College

"When I went into full-time ministry at twenty years old, I wish I'd had this book at my disposal. *The Self-Aware Leader* is an incredible tool for both individuals and teams, but it's especially helpful for young leaders learning to navigate ministry, leadership, and their own limitations for the first time. In this book, Terry helps leaders have the tough conversations necessary for growing in both self-awareness and Christlikeness."

– **Elle Campbell**, author, speaker, cofounder of Stuff You Can Use

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