

The Truth About You

Discussion Guide – Book

Review and discuss the “three truths” that create the superstructure for the book:

1. As you grow, you become more and more of who you already are.
2. You grow most in your areas of greatest strength.
3. A great team player volunteers his strengths to the team most of the time and deliberately partners with people who have different strengths.

What do you think of each of these “truths”? How have you seen these “truths” fleshed out in your own life? What has happened in your experience when you have disregarded these “truths”?

The rest of the book focuses on five pieces of advice that grow out of the preceding three “truths.” Let’s take a closer look at each one.

1. *Performance is always the point.*
 - What does it mean that, “performance is always the point”?
 - Why doesn’t your organization care primarily about you and your strengths?
 - Why shouldn’t you expect your organization to know you like you do?
 - How can you take your interests seriously? Why are they a good clue to your strengths?
 - What do your hobbies tell you about your interests (and perhaps suggest about your strengths)?
 - What does your reading tell you about your interests (and perhaps suggest about your strengths)?

- What do your friends and close colleagues reveal to you about your interests (and perhaps suggest about your strengths)?
- What would you say are your three top interests?
- How can you start pushing your life toward these interests?
- Take a Bible and read Psalm 37:4. What does this verse say about how seriously God takes your interests? What does this suggest about how you ought to think about your interests?

2. *Your strengths aren't what you're good at, and your weaknesses aren't what you're bad at.*

- If you're good at something, how can it not be a strength? What constitutes a strength?
- If you're bad at something, how can it not be a weakness? What constitutes a weakness?
- Why is it necessary to get *very* specific about the activities that are your strengths?
- How can the acronym SIGN (**S**uccess, **I**nstinct, **G**rowth, **N**eeds) help you to spot your strengths? (see page 43)
- Did you take a week, as suggested, to use the ReMemo pad to chronicle the activities you either loved or hated? (see pages 44-46)? If so, what did you discover? If not, why not?
- Why do the blue cards “hold the key to your strengths”? Why is this important?

- Review the importance of each of the following steps (when you use the blue cards) to discover your strengths:
 - *Pick a verb*
 - *Drill down to specifics*
 - *Feel it*
- What are your three “strength statements” (see pages 50-51, 55)? In what way can these “strength statements” function as a personal map for you?
- Get a Bible and read Colossians 3:23. How does it become easier to obey the instruction of this verse when you know your strengths and spend most of your time working in them?

3. *When it comes to your job, the “What” always trumps the “Why” and the “Who.”*

- Do you agree that most people join an organization because of the “why”? Explain.
- Do you agree that most people stay in an organization because of the “who”? Explain.
- Do you agree that most people quit an organization because of the “what”? Explain.
- Why is it so important to ask a prospective employer the question, “What will I be paid to do”?

- Can you see yourself doing the actual activities that the prospective employer details for you? If so, how do you envision doing them?
- How could you use your three identified strengths to do this job?
- Get a Bible and read Exodus 31:1-11. What is significant about whom God tabbed to work on the wilderness tabernacle? What does this suggest about finding and employing your own strengths?

4. *You'll never find the perfect job.*

- What's the difference between *finding* that "perfect job" and *building* it?
- What steps can you take today to go about building that "perfect job"?
- What does your "strong week" plan look like for this week (see pages 73-74)? What two things are you going to commit to this week that will put your strengths into play?
- When you commit to creating a following a "strong week" plan for the rest of your life, how do you think the following three things might happen?
 - Your job will change
 - You'll gain a reputation
 - People will say of you, "How did you find a job that fits you so well?"

- Get a Bible and read Romans 15:20. How did the apostle Paul get a “job” that fit him so well? How did his strengths play into creating that “job”?

5. *You’ll never turn your weaknesses into strengths.*

- Why can’t you simply ignore your weaknesses?
- Why is it important to “fess up” to your weaknesses?
- How can you “neutralize” your weaknesses?
- Did you spend another week with your ReMemo pad, filling out the black cards and identifying your weaknesses (see pages 82-86)? If so, what did you find? If not, why not?
- How can you “stop doing” the activities that make you feel weak?
- With whom can you “partner up” to do the jobs that make you feel weak?
- How can you use and sharpen your strengths to make your weaknesses irrelevant?
- How can you look at your weaknesses through a personal strength? Which of your strengths could be most valuable in this task?
- What would it take for you to “suck it up and do” the job that plays to your weakness? How does it help to remember that most successful people play to their strengths *most* of the time, not *all* of the time?
- How can you get your weaknesses down to 25 percent of your day?

- Get a Bible and read Acts 6:1-7. What problem did the apostles have to face? How did they deal with this weakness? What was the result? How might you be able to follow a similar plan to deal with your own weaknesses so you can concentrate on your strengths?

The book ends with five “warnings” about the well-meaning advice many people will want to give you—bad counsel that will hurt you in the end. Let’s briefly review each warning.

1. *Always treat people as you would like to be treated.*

The problem here is not “the Golden Rule” itself—after all, Jesus Himself gave us this counsel in Luke 6:31 when He said, “And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.” The problem comes in how some people try to *apply* this counsel.

Jesus doesn’t mean, “if you like to have your left ear scratched with a butter knife, then you should scratch other people’s left ears with a butter knife.” Others may not like that particular activity at all! He *does* mean, “if you like it when people treat you in the way you like to be treated, then you should treat other people in the way they like to be treated.” This requires, of course, that you find out how each individual likes to be treated, and then treat him or her like that—just as you would like him or her to do with you. In “the Golden Rule,” Jesus is *not* giving some “one size fits all” advice—and we know this because although He treated all people with grace, the grace He gave “looked” different with each individual who received it.

- What can you do to discover how your close associates like to be treated?

- What can you do to treat your close associates as they like to be treated?

2. *There is no “I” in team.*

Again, the truth or falsity of this bit of advice depends entirely on how the advice gets “parsed.” If someone uses it to mean, “as a member of this team, you need to put aside your strengths and do whatever it takes to help the team,” then it’s *really* bad advice. If, on the other hand, it’s parsed to mean, “what we do as a team is more important than what we do individually, so we must work together to accomplish our team objectives,” then it’s right on target. You *should* work together with your teammates to accomplish team goals—and you do that best by playing to your strengths most of the time, as does every other member of your team.

Consider the counsel of Philippians 2:4: “Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” The apostle Paul *doesn’t* write, “Forget about yourself and your strengths and do whatever someone else wants you to do.” Most of the time, you best look out for the interests of others—your team members—by also taking into account what is in your own best interest. And that generally means playing to your strengths most of the time, for your own benefit and for the benefit of your team.

- How can playing to your strengths most of the time benefit your team?
- Why does playing to your weaknesses most of the time hurt your team?

3. *Work on your weaknesses.*

Remember that your weaknesses are *not* areas of opportunity, but areas of *least* opportunity. Since they sap your strengths—your areas of largest, most productive

growth—it makes no sense to spend large amounts of time trying to morph them into something highly productive. It'll never happen, and meanwhile, your strengths will go undeveloped.

If you live on a farm and you have a cat that's a great mouser, you don't win by trying to train that cat to walk on a leash and play "fetch." And if you have a dog who's great at helping you care for a flock of sheep, you don't win by trying to train him to play with catnip and purr like a kitten. Don't ignore your weaknesses, but don't play to them, either.

- What has God called you to be and do?
- What does Ephesians 2:10 imply about what God has called you to be and do?

4. *Push yourself beyond your comfort zone.*

Again, parsing is everything. If this one means, "focus on trying to move away from your strengths to areas where you feel least competent," it's terrible advice. If it means, "explore your strengths by trying some new (and maybe initially uncomfortable) things that take advantage of those strengths," then it can be really good advice.

Risk can be a good, helpful thing—so long as it's wise risk. Risking your career on a weakness makes no sense, but taking some risks in an area of strength can open up whole new panoramas of opportunity, even if at first they give you pause.

- How does Philippians 2:25-30 illustrate taking a wise risk? How does it illustrate operating out of a personal strength?

- How does 2 Chronicles 35:20-24 illustrate taking an unwise risk? How does it illustrate operating out of a personal weakness?

6. *Your greatest strength is also your greatest weakness.*

While you can use a personal strength in an unproductive way, strengths never turn into weaknesses, or vice versa. A weightlifter could use his muscles to win an Olympic competition, or he could use them to rob a bank—but his muscles don't magically turn into jello when he demands money from the teller.

The question is, how can you name, own, and channel your strengths so that the rest of the world can benefit from them?

- How does 2 Samuel 11 illustrate someone using a personal strength in an unproductive way?
- How does 2 Chronicles 15:1-8 illustrate someone using a personal strength in a very productive way?