ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 2 Issue 23

Authentic Worship (Keep it real)



"It's a pleasure meeting you." Yeah, I said it, but I didn't really mean it.

We've all been there. We offer a platitude rather than say what's really on our minds. After all, didn't mother tell us more

Listen (God hears you)



For the most part, I believe around half of what people tell me. But, after you gasp at my confession, hear me out.

Even when someone I trust tells me something, I presume that one or more of their facts are off, some are opinions, and all are contextual. For those who frequently

than once, "if you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all?"

I'm not going to tell you any different. I've tried it both ways, offering brutal honesty and stretching the truth. And honestly, I think it's okay to be kind even when the voice in your head is telling you that you don't really mean it. And besides, beauty and truth are often found in the eyes of the beholder. So who's to say whether our vision is simply blurred regarding a particular person or matter?

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stretch the truth, my confession sounds like grace. Perhaps even misplaced grace. But my confession may appear accusatory for those closest to me who try to be truthful.

I argue that my approach is motivated by grace in all cases. For the truthteller, I take the pressure off of getting all of their facts straight. And for the liar, I realize that most lies have an element of truth at their core. This element of truth is what makes lies believable.

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October 23, 2022



EVERYONE HAVE A
WONDERFUL AND-

SAFE WEEK!



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Listen (God hears you)

And in all cases, my assessment helps me to be a better listener. Discerning which is truth and which is fiction requires paying careful attention. Admittedly, fact-checking takes time, and I'm sure I sometimes get it wrong, so I try to spend my efforts wrestling only with the essential points.

I wonder if God uses a similar filter when listening to my prayers? Probably not, since God already knows truth from fiction and doesn't need to use averages or guess which parts are true.

Last week, we looked at a prayer of praise that Jesus said out loud for a crowd to listen in on His conversation. These prayers are helpful to study since they offer insights into the mind of God. This week's example is found in John's Gospel.

Jesus hears that His friend, Lazarus, is sick. But instead of dropping everything and heading towards Bethany, Jesus goes on about the work at hand. Which is understandable from several angles.

First, the last time Jesus was in Judea, where the town of Bethany was located, the community leaders wanted to stone Him. And when Jesus announced to His followers a couple days later that He needed to go see His friend, they discouraged Him from going back to Judea.

With Jesus knowing what was unfolding in Bethany, He and His followers headed that way a couple of days later. As they approach, word travels ahead, and Martha, a sister of Lazarus, goes out to meet Jesus on the road leading into the village.

Seeing Jesus, Martha said to Him, "If you had been here, Lord, my brother would not have died!"

We don't know for sure the tone that accompanied Martha's words. Nor do we know for sure how her body language punctuated her accusation. But we can imagine how we feel when we lose someone close to us. And we have an idea of the disappointment and frustration we feel when someone we believe could prevent a tragedy doesn't show up in time.

But Martha adds a foreshadowing comment. "But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask for."

Scripture is a living text that ebbs and flows according to our situations and moods. One day we read a story like this, and Martha is shouting with angry tears. At another time we envision Martha as full of anticipation and gratitude. And these mood swings seem to occur regardless of how often we've read the same story.

God's Spirit plays a role in our timing and the impact the words have on our demeanor and what we take away. Provided that we're listening.

Martha runs home to tell her sister, Mary, who rushes to meet Jesus with a crowd of mourners following. As soon as Mary saw Jesus, she fell at his feet and said through tears, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died!"

The Good News Translation adds an exclamation to the end of Mary's words that don't appear in any manuscript, revealing the hand of the translators. When we read this story, an exclamation point feels right as

someone who experienced loss and disappointment. I can imagine a blubbering Mary, barely able to get out her words.

I can also imagine how I would feel if I arrived too late to help. Scripture tells us that Jesus felt a special affection for Lazarus and his sisters. And it appeared that He let them down by waiting too long to arrive. After all, it is likely that Jesus healed a few other people during the two days before He left for Bethany. Couldn't He have left sooner after He learned HIs friend was ill? It appears that Mary thought so.

We read that Jesus felt great compassion for His friends. And as Jesus arrived at the tomb where Lazarus was buried, we read the shortest verse found in scripture. Jesus wept.

I'm not sure I've ever read these two words without tearing up. There is something about God weeping at the sight of grief. I can't put my finger on it, but as I try to put down my thoughts this morning, I can feel tears streaming down my face.

We each deal with grief and disappointment in our own way. These emotions are contextual. In other words, we respond out of a plethora of past experiences. Many who watched this scene unfold were surely weeping along with Jesus and the sisters of Lazarus.

But we read that others responded with indignation. "He gave sight to the blind man, didn't he? Could he not have kept Lazarus from dying?"

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In Our Prayers

Kevin Croom Sylvia Pittman Shirley Craiq

Richard Oram Chris Freeman



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Nancy Elston

Elaine Lamoreaux

Norma Buzzard

CHARGE CONFERENCE REPORTS

Please I need your reports NOW ...

Thank you! Connie

PASTOR BOOK CLUB NEWS

Pastor Book Club is still meeting via Zoom, but we are also gathering in the Asbury Library Conference Room at 12Noon every Wednesday, unless otherwise noted.

Please call the Church Office for more information, as things could change (810-235-0016).

October's book series is



called, *Pray like Jesus*, written by
Robert L. Morris, Jr. *What We Can Learn From the Six Recorded Prayers of Jesus*.

Thank you and everyone continue to stay safe!



COMING UP THIS WEEK OCTOBER 24 —OCTOBER 30

Oct 24 Mon 6:00pm Worship Team Meeting

Oct 25 Tues 10:00qm-12:30pm

Food/Water Distribution

3:00pm CDC Board Meeting

Oct 26 Wed Angel Closet at South Flint Soup Kitchen (appointments only 810-239-3427)

12 Noon Pastor Book Club

Oct 27 Thu

Oct 28 Fri

Oct 29 Sat

Oct 30 Sun 10:30am

New Beginnings

Contemporary Worship

(We are live on <u>Facebook</u> and our newly launched <u>YouTube channel</u>. You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at <u>FlintAsbury.org</u>.)

Upcoming Worship Series



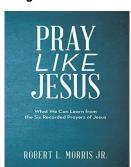
"Will you pray for me," the man asked his friend. "Of course," came the response. What else could his friend say? Prayer is so easy. It doesn't even have to be verbal. And prayer is so personal that no one knows if it even takes place.

But to whom will his friend pray and how will his friend go about praying? After all, nationally, we are a diverse group demographically and politically, and our religious beliefs vary.

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Book Club News

Our worship series beginning in October focuses on



prayer and our book club selection that accompanies our series is titled *Pray* Like Jesus. This book.

written by Robert L. Morris, Jr., examines six prayers of Jesus, found in the Gospels, to help us

Asbury Staff

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel Pastor & Exec Dir Connie Portillo Office Manager Sulvia Pittman Empowerment Arts Jim Craig Board & Leadership Chair Kevin Croom Exec Chef & Dir Opers Matt DePalma Farms Manager Chris Freeman South Campus Bldg Mgr Israel Unger Finance Director Kim Sims Connections Supry Terrance Williams Arts Center Mgr Katelin Maylum Sr Prog Mgr Local Foods South Flint Soup Kitchen become more consistent prayers.

Prayer is probably the most talked-about subject in churches. However, not enough of us actually pray regularly. Rev. Morris believes that this is because we don't know enough about how to pray. The six prayers of Jesus can teach us how to grow our prayer life deeper and wider than ever before.

According to Amazon's description of our book selection:

> Pray like Jesus is intended to be a simple

Leadership in Worship & Service

Tony, Mirium Anthony, Jim Jonathon, Terrance Mirium Cyndi Christine & Norma

Welcome Team Ushers Production Team Children Worship Leader Cafe spiritual how-tomanual for those who do not have a vital prayer life but seek one. It is one intended to be an academic book as much as it is an epistle from a fellow believer who may have learned a few things in forty-one years of ministry. Author Robert L. Morris Jr. invites you to join him and look at six prayers of Jesus, but vou will intentionally not examine the Lord's Prayer in depth. The reason is simple: the Lord's Prayer contains valuable information on how disciples should pray, but this book is about how **Jesus** personally prayed.

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Upcoming Worship Series - "Pray" ...cont from pg 4

As Christians, we believe that there is one God and we're likely to presume that praying means taking our petitions there. Yet we also believe that God lived among humanity and that we know God through Jesus Christ. And that God is ever-present through the Holy Spirit.

But according to a 2021 Pew Research Study, just under one-third of the U.S. population do not claim an affiliation with a particular religious group. Instead, they identify as atheist, agnostic, or simply respond "nothing in particular" when asked about their religious identify. And while the majority of U.S. resident self-identify as Christian, this percentage dropped 11 points over the past decade from 3/4 to less than a third.

Does this mean that prayer is a dying trend? The news is disturbing.

According to an article published in the *Christian Post based on the Pew Study, less than half of Americans pray daily. This is quite a contrast to the prayer habits of Jesus. As a Jew it's likely that Jesus prayed at least three times each day.*

Doesn't it make sense that, as Christians, our prayer life would resemble that of our Savior, Jesus Christ? Of course.

Our new series, *Pray, examines the prayer life of Jesus by looking at each of the six actual prayers that we find in the Gospels. While there are numerous references of Jesus praying there are only six actual prayers preserved for our benefit.*

Come learn how Eat, Pray, Love gets lived out when we try to emulate the prayer habits of Jesus.

Our series is based on a book written by the Reverend Dr. Robert L. Morris, Jr., a Presbyterian pastor for over 45 years. Our series will utilize his book titled *Pray Like Jesus as a guide. Be sure to get your copy before or after Sunday worship, or find a copy at your local library or favorite source for books. And join us at Book Club each Wednesday at Noon for further discussions on each Sunday's message.*

Everyone is invited to submit prayer requests for each worship. Each prayer request will be dedicated during worship and be included in our prayers. Prayers requests can be submitted through the homepage of our website or filling out a prayer request form.

I pray that you will join us each Sunday morning at 10:30 am. We share our weekly episodes on our *YouTube channel*. We go live at 10:30 am. You can find these links along with more information about us, or join our live broadcast on our *website* at *FlintAsbury.org*.

Pastor Tommy

Robert L. Morris, Jr.. Pray Like Jesus: What We Can Learn From the Six Recorded Prayers of Jesus.. Bloomington, IL: Westbow Press, 2019.

On the other hand, what if inauthenticity becomes a habit or, worse, an addiction? What if we discover that we crave the positive response we get when we tell someone how great they are, even when we know we don't believe it? Where does it all end when we ride a makebelieve train as far as it takes us?

Have you ever noticed that when someone is telling you how wonderful it is to be with you, their body language is often more honest than their words? Experts in communication remind us we communicate with more than words. The inflections we use as we speak, the phrases accompanying our gestures, body positions, and facial expressions add to our listener's understanding of what we're saying.

Does this mean that we better pay attention to our body language when we compliment someone? While this is one approach, it isn't very effective. The better approach is to be honest with yourself and others and be authentic. The more you believe what you're saying, the more your body language supports your statements.

Frequent liars learn to convince themselves that their lies are true by repeating them. Of course, repeating a lie doesn't make it true, no matter how many times it gets repeated. So I'm not talking about how to get gullible persons to believe you. That's more of a skill for someone with a life-time pass on the makebelieve train.

Michael Formica writes in a 2014 article in Psychology Today that "One of our more enduring social fallacies is the idea that what others think of us actually matters." There is something quite profound about this statement. While one voice in my head tells me it's true, another voice tells me that what others think about me matters a lot.

Formica spells out why this other voice is so loud by explaining that a primal survival instinct evolved into a social imperative. And how this shift is now an obstacle to selfacceptance. Too often, "our thoughts and behavior become means for eliciting a response, rather than an expression of self-value." This happens when our external self, molded by social context, overshadows our internal self. formed by subjective experience.

Let's break this down and look at how this idea connects to the third prayer said by Jesus.

First, when we care too much about what others think about us, we carry this handicap into worship. When this happens, our attention is divided between God and the people who may be watching us. And too often, our attention is primarily on what others think about us.

This can be particularly challenging when we're leading worship. Cyndi, our worship leader, bristles when one of us uses words like performance or show. She knows that our role is to lead worship, not perform worship. The difference is subtle but powerful.

Cyndi and I are big fans of a show called The Voice. The coaches on the show begin each season with blind auditions followed by the battle round. The show's central theme is competition, and the winner of a battle continues while the other singer goes home. And the battle rounds are rightfully described as competitions.

However, a recurring piece of advice from every coach is for the singers to feel the song's emotion, which invites the onlookers to experience their feelings. A breakthrough happens when a singer makes the song their own, and their authentic emotions are felt by the audience. Their song no longer feels like a performance as their authentic inner-self emerges.

When I hear the coach's instructions, I think about Cyndi's guidance to our worship team members. "Worship God with everything you have," she says, "and others will join vou. Worship is never a performance."

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Life Group Questions & Notes:
Now my heart is troubled—and what shall I say? Shall I say, 'Father, do not let this hour come upon me'? But that is why I came—so that I might go through this hour of suffering. 28 Father, bring glory to your name!
John 12:20-36 (GNT
NOTES FROM WORSHIP
QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS
1. Read John 12:20-36. What thoughts came to you as you read this story? What makes verses 27 and 28 a prayer? In what ways is Jesus worshiping God by His obedience? In what ways do you worship God through your obedience? What does this look like during Sunday worship?
2. Pood this wook's article titled Authortic warehin. How much do you care what others think

2. Read this week's article titled *Authentic worship*. How much do you care what others think about you? Do you tend to tell people what they want to hear when the truth may hurt their feelings? Why or why not? Would you prefer that people are honest with you about how they feel? How often are you self-conscious about what others might be thinking about you? What helps

you be an authentic worshiper?

3. How can the members of your group help you this week and on-going to help you to be more receptive to hearing and understanding the Word of God? Pray for each other to have the Holy Spirit bless you with more courage.





Feed Flint includes takeout meals, produce boxes with recipes, and home deliveries as part of our work to guide and support families in moving to sustainable abundance. The reality is that Michigan's food insecurity levels got worse during the COVID-19 pandemic, and this summer's recovery is leaving behind those at the most risk of having to miss meals.

hoping that you can help us provide 10,000 meals this summer.

Flint families continue to struggle with the ongoing effects of the water crisis.

We're bringing together the resources of the Asbury Community Development Corporation. This includes Asbury Farms, the South Flint Soup Kitchen, the Asbury Community Help Center, multiple food pantries, and our Sizzling Culture Mobile Food Trailer. Our plan is to care for our neighbors when they need it most. We accept all people as they are, and our doors are always open to anyone.

Asbury Farms provides locally grown produce used to create fabulous and nutritious meals. Our seed-to-table approach is community-based. This not only helps families make it through emergencies and crises. We help move families towards sustainable abundance.

Our Sizzling Culture program provides jobs and new skills to our city's youth. This includes year-round employment. Our staff and most of our volunteers come from the neighborhoods we support. We call this sustainable abundance because families move from need-based on scarcity to enough based on community-generated abundance.

Our work is also about food and justice. Our vision is a revitalized community where every resident can use their talents and passions for the common good, where children grow into active citizens. And all residents can enjoy safety, good health, and a culture that fosters life-long learning and satisfying lives. This summer, help us address food insecurity and strengthen Flint's budding local food system by supporting the Feed Flint campaign. Thank you for taking the time to see what we're doing and considering how you can help.

Donate to our Feed Flint Campaign by visiting: flintasbury.org/feed-flint-donate



Food Giveaways - October 5th & 19th 11am-Noon

Angel Closet (appointment only) October 12th & 26th

3410 Fenton Road (3 blocks north of Atherton) Flint, MI 48507

810-239-3427









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Choose Veggie Box Subscription and we will fill your order with a variety of each week's harvest. Pay when you pick up your box. A \$15 VALUE FOR \$10.

* CONVENIENT PICKUP AT ASBURY OR AT THE SOUTH FLINT SOUP KITCHEN *

The Reverend Dr. Robert L. Morris Jr. has served in various ministerial positions for more than forty-five years. This includes serving as senior minister at First Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville, Florida, for over seventeen years. Rev. Morris has since returned to Young Life staff, where his ministry began.

He is on the board of the Salvation Army and an organizing board member of First Ministries, a nonprofit serving the poor and homeless in Jacksonville. Rev. Morris is also a former board member of Habitat for Humanity in both Jacksonville and North Carolina.

I invite you to join us each Sunday for worship as we explore the six prayers of Jesus and consider how to improve our prayer life. Each Wednesday, we'll dig deeper into the wisdom offered by our book selection. You can pickup a copy of the book when you attend worship.

If you prefer to avoid groups or live too far away, I encourage you to join us via Zoom for our Wednesday gatherings. Alternatively, you can call in by phone, be heard, and hear what others say by calling (929) 436-2866 -- enter the meeting ID, 282 039 5568#.

We are a diverse group, delighted when new people join us. I hope that you will join in on our discussion.

You can contact our office with questions, by phone or simply type your question on our website's homepage — <u>FlintAsbury.org</u>.

Pastor Tommy

Robert L. Morris, Jr.. Pray Like Jesus: What We Can Learn From the Six Recorded Prayers of Jesus.. Bloomington, IL: Westbow Press, 2019.

Listen (God hears you) ... cont from page 2

We don't know if Jesus heard these comments or if they came from someone who overheard them. But can't you imagine the hurt and feelings of helplessness behind these words?

And then, it happens. They took the stone away as Jesus requested. The crowd gasps in anticipation of ripping the bandage off an open wound. Martha warned Jesus about the smell of death.

I thank you Father, that you listen to me. I know that you always listen to me...

John 11:42

Undeterred, Jesus looks up and prays, "I thank you, Father, that you listen to me. I know you always listen to me, but I say this for the sake of the people here, so they will believe you sent me."

God listens and acts out of love, compassion, empathy, and grace. But Jesus realizes that not everyone intimately knows God in the same way He knows God. But there is more.

Jesus accentuates the connection between Himself and God. "You sent me," says Jesus. The arrival of Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus was not a matter of coincidence. And what comes next is also a part of God's plan for humanity.

As the story continues, we read that after Jesus says a prayer out loud He called out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"

Scripture should have more explicit warning labels like "Don't try this at home." I suspect that thousands of well'-intended, faithful followers of Jesus have

prayed and shouted similar words. And cried out to God in anticipation that they also can bring a person back from death. And perhaps this has happened a time or two.

And some may argue that it's all about faith. If our faith is strong and we believe that God will do our bidding, the argument goes, miracles happen. And miracles do happen. God listens and acts. But in my experience, God does as God chooses based on the knowledge that is far beyond any of us.

Be wary of side shows that may have more to do with personal problems than divine intent.

But on that day, under those circumstances, Lazarus walked out at the beckoning of God, living among humanity. According to the writer, Lazarus walked out of the tomb with his hands and feet still wrapped in grave cloths. And with a cloth around his face.

Seeing Lazarus coming out of the tomb, Jesus asks that the attenders "Untie him, and let him go." Lazarus was free.

I mentioned earlier that we read scripture from a very personal perspective. Our experiences affect how we interpret the stories, along with how the translators choose and arrange words that they believe reflect the intentions of the original manuscript.

But suppose for a moment that the story is not about physical death. Instead, imagine Jesus standing in front of your tomb. However, not a physical cave but a circumstance that keeps you bound. What is tying you up and keeping you from a life of abundance?

Imagine Jesus praying out loud for you to remind you, not someone else, that God sent Jesus save you. To save you from whatever obstacles, addictions, worries, shortcomings, or failures that hold you down.

At some point, Jesus will save you from death. But the afterlife is beyond anything we can grasp. So let's stay focused on the here and now.

God listens and responds to you and me. God's response may not be what we asked for, but it will be what we need. Even if we don't know what that is. And likely, we can't imagine or don't think we deserve that which God has in mind for us.

Each Sunday during our series, *Pray*, we're collecting prayer requests. You can submit a request online from our website **home page**. In addition, prayer request forms are located around the church and during water and food giveaways.

You can join us each Sunday in person or online by clicking the button on our *website's* homepage - *Click here to watch*. This button takes you to our *YouTube channel*. You can find more information about us on our website at *FlintAsbury.org*.

A reminder that we publish this newsletter that we call the Circuit Rider each week. You can request this publication by email. Send a request to connect@FlintAsbury.org or let us know when you send a message through our website. We post an archive of past editions on our website under the tab, Connect - choose Newsletters.

Pastor Tommy

Content for this series is based in part on: Robert L. Morris, Jr.. *Pray Like Jesus: What We Can Learn From the Six Recorded Prayers of Jesus. Bloomington, IL: Westbow Press, 2019.*

Summer is getting into full swing at the farm!!!

Coming soon, the farm's new twist on a CSA Food Box!!!!

Bring home only the veggies you love!

First Pick-Up Date: Saturday, July 16th, 11am-1pm and until further notice. We will post if anything changes.



Want more information?? Email: kelly.jewett@outlook.com



We were stoked to be kicking off our very first Asbury Farms Sliding Scale Food Box Program last week! Get the most local, organic, delicious produce!! Grown on the East Side!

Pick what veggies you want, how much you want and pay what you can between \$12.00 — \$24.00.

Every Saturday from 11:00am to 1:00pm 1601 Jane Ave Flint MI

ASBURY FARMS

Look for the big banner that says "SALE" ...

Authentic Worship (Keep it real) ...cont from pg 6

I sincerely believe that the best musicians, artists, crafters, builders, and all of us, move from okay to outstanding when we forget what people think. When, instead of performing, we express our inner selves through our divine gifts. And God is glorified in our doing that which God created us to do.

Therefore, worship should never be a performance, and neither should prayer. Jesus amplifies the importance of authentic prayer, warning followers, "When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites! This group loves to stand up and pray in the houses of worship and on the street corners so that everyone will see them" (Matthew 6:5).

I've noticed that when I use polite platitudes in prayer, rather than telling it like I see it, I'm left feeling empty and unsatisfied. Of course, none of us would be the first to lie to God about our real feelings. However, God knows the truth, so our attempts at fake flattery won't land any points, even if God does keep score.

In the third prayer of Jesus, we gain insight into what it means to be authentically in awe of God. We find His prayer in the 12th chapter of John's Gospel. Jesus is facing certain death if He continues doing what God sent Him to accomplish. Meanwhile, Jesus knows that the people misunderstand the role of the Messiah.

Jesus prays, "Now my heart is troubled—and what shall I say? Shall I say, 'Father, do not let this hour come upon me? But that is why I came—so that I might go through this hour of suffering. Father, bring glory to Your name!" (John 12:27-28).

Father, bring glory to your name! I have brought glory to it, and I will do so again.

John 12:27-28

After praying so that He could be heard, Jesus told the crowd that His prayer was for their benefit. And His prayer helps you and me to better understand why His death was necessary. Salvation is never the result of performing. Instead, salvation comes when God is glorified through our faithfully following Jesus Christ. And when we authentically pray and worship, we glorify God.

We read that after Jesus said His prayer, a voice spoke from heaven was heard by the crowd saying, "I have brought glory to it, and I will do so again" (John 12:28).

I suspect that it's rare when God's voice is heard audibly. More often, the voice of God is a whisper felt within the interior of ourselves. We feel God's voice within our inner authentic selves when we're not distracted by worrying if anyone is watching.

Each Sunday during our series, *Pray*, we're collecting prayer requests. You can submit a request online from our website **home page**. In addition, prayer request forms are located around the church and during water and food giveaways.

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Pastor Tommy

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Michael J. Formica. Reviewed by Ekua Hagan. "Why We Care About What Other People Think of Us." Psychology Today, Posted December 31, 2014. © 2014 Michael J. Formica, All Rights Reserved. Retrieved from: link



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