

Overcoming Low Self-Esteem

INTRODUCTION:

- A. **Genesis 1:26-27, 31** – “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness’. . . . So God created man in His own image; He created him in the image of God; He created them male and female . . . God saw all that He had made, and it was very good.”
- B. Illustrations & Examples:
1. Wayne had not attended church services for several weeks. In His words, here is his reason for quitting: “The church doesn’t need me. I just don’t fit in down there . . . I’m not important.”
 2. When fourteen-year-old Harold was being talked to about his conduct problem in school, he replied, “I guess you could say I am a born loser.”
 3. George was asked to deliver a brief lesson/short talk to a group of men in the congregation. In rejecting the invitation, he said, “I can’t talk before the group because I don’t have anything worth listening to.
 4. Suzy was invited to serve as a hostess in a wedding reception. She declined because, to quote her words, “I have two left hands and would make a mess of things.”
 5. Little Timmy was asked by his father to join a group of children in a game of baseball. Timmy struck out his first time at bat, and refused to play anymore. In spite of his dad’s encouragement, he refuses to play. In an upset tone, he shouted at his father, “There is no use for me to try. I can’t hit the ball. I know I will strike out again!”
- C. It is hard to imagine that 95 percent of all people in our society have a problem with low self-esteem, which is manifested in feelings of inferiority.
1. Dr. Maxwell Maltz in his book *Psycho-Cybernetics*, wrote. “At least 95% of the people have their lives blighted by feelings of inferiority to some extent, and to millions this same feeling of inferiority is a serious handicap to success and happiness.”
 2. Everyone has an opinion of himself. Many times it is expressed in such statements as:
 - a. “Oh, that’s just the way I am.”
 - b. “When I get mad you had better stay out of my way. I can’t control myself.”
 - c. “I can’t stand to see myself in a mirror. I’m so ugly.”
 - d. “Any body can do this better than I can.”
 - e. Etc.
- D. In this lesson we want to study about overcoming low self-esteem.

WHAT IS SELF-ESTEEM?

- A. Self-esteem relates to your self-identity.
1. It deals with these three questions:
 - a. **Who am I?**
 - b. **What am I?**
 - c. **Why am I?**
 2. Examples of each of the three questions.
 - a. You may refer to “**who am I**” by giving your name or some other mark of identification.
 - b. When you say “I am a Christian” you are referring to “**what am I.**”
 - c. When you state, “I work hard to provide a living for the family,” you give an answer to “**Why am I?**”
- B. There are two words that need to be clarified in order to gain a clear picture of self-esteem.
1. **Self-Image.**
 - a. Self-image is a term that describes how I see myself.
 - b. If I see myself as short and ugly, then this is my self-image.
 2. **Self-confidence.**
 - a. Self-confidence refers to my belief in my ability.
 - b. If you challenge me to fly an airplane, I have no self-confidence because I know I cannot pilot a plane. I have piloted a little bit, but not enough to set out on my own.
 - c. This doesn't mean that I have a problem with low self-esteem, only a problem with self-confidence.
- C. Real Self-esteem is the value you place upon yourself as a person.
1. This is why a person may have self-confidence and not have self-esteem at the same time.
 2. Self-esteem is how you feel about yourself in the chambers of your mind. It is how you feel when you are alone in a crowd.
 3. **Worth** is another word that defines self-esteem.
 - a. High self-esteem comes from feeling loveable and worthwhile. It evolves from many positive life experiences.
 - b. Conversely, low self-esteem comes from negative conclusions we draw about ourselves. Distortion is the thief that robs you of self-esteem.
- D. Dr. David D. Burns, in his book *Feeling Good*, Says on pages 229-230, Self-esteem is the capacity to experience maximal self-love and joy whether or not you are successful at any point in your life.”
- E. Many Christians have such low-esteem that they have adopted as their theme song a line from the hymn which says, “Would He devote that sacred head for such a worm as I?”

1. One brotherhood author wrote: “It’s a challenge for children of God to develop proper self-esteem when our songs remind us of how inferior we are.”
 2. People value themselves to the degree that they have been valued.
 - a. We let others provide the mirrors that determine our self-image and value.
 3. We go through life drawing conclusions about ourselves as we compare ourselves with others. No wonder the apostle Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 10:12** - “For we don’t dare classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. But in measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves to themselves, they lack understanding .”
 4. To raise your self-esteem you must not let others determine your worth . . . This is a job reserved by God .
- F. What is self-esteem? **Self-esteem is the value you place on yourself as a person.**

CONSEQUENCES OF LOW SELF-ESTEEM

- A. Please listen carefully: Because of the decision to treat yourself with low self-esteem, you have set yourself up to become the victim of many possible consequences that aren’t good. A list of the results of low self-esteem is almost endless. Some of the more serious ones are:
1. **A negative vocabulary.**
 - a. A negative vocabulary filled with such expressions as:
 - b. “I can’t do anything right.”
 - b. “I’m a dummy.”
 - c. Etc.
 - d. This kind of self-talk will never raise your self-esteem.
 2. **A lack of inner peace and comfort.**
 3. **Collecting all kinds of rewards to prove one’s worth.**
 4. **Failure to be involved with others . . . Being a loner.**
 5. **Constant self-criticism and rejection of self.**
 5. **Constantly trying to impress everyone.**
 7. **Always giving negative reaction to compliments.** Example: When told the jacket you are wearing is very pretty, you react by saying, “Oh, this old thing...”
 8. **Bragging and self-conceit.** He will let you know he is the greatest.
 9. **Always trying to outdo the other person.**
 10. **Constantly talking about something he has done.**
 11. **Self-indulgence.** Overeating as an example.
 12. **Too much emphasis on being confident.** Rough handshake . . . Loud laugh . . . etc.

13. **Afraid of anyone seeing him as he really is.** Wears a proverbial mask to hide his feelings of worthlessness.
 14. **Building of defenses around weaknesses.**
 15. **A drive for power, superiority, or control over others.**
 16. **Always complaining or arguing.**
 17. **Placing impossible demands upon self.** This is why he is never able to succeed, which in turn causes more low self-esteem.
 18. **A feeling of helplessness or inability to overcome faults.**
 19. **Anger, guilt, resentment and a host of other problems arise from low self-esteem.**
- B. When a person places a low value upon himself, virtually every emotion, thought, and attitude is affected.
1. Low self-esteem robs a person of his pride in being a member of the human family.
 2. A person who has lost his dignity is like a ship without a compass . . . His life goes in one direction and then another trying to reach the shores of happiness.

CAUSES OF LOW SELF-ESTEEM

- A. Like all other emotions, self-esteem occurs within the mind . . . It is an attitude we hold relative to our value as a person.
1. Self-esteem is the result of many experiences in life, especially in childhood.
 2. Feelings of inferiority begin early in life as parents program their children with all kinds of value labels.
 3. It is not the occasional rebuke or criticism that damages the child’s self-esteem . . . It is the constant criticism, rejection, scolding, shaming and insulting by parents that produce feelings of low self-esteem.
 4. When a child grows up without praise, encouragement, compliments, affectionate embraces, and emotional support, he arrives at adulthood with low self-esteem.
- B. When a child starts to school he is confronted with an additional list of challenges to his self-esteem.
1. His performance becomes his test of worth.
 2. How he runs, plays ball, jumps, and a host of other activities determine how others will think about him.
 3. Questions like . . .
 - a. “Do I perform well enough to be chosen?”
 - b. “I can play as well as so and so, so why don’t they choose me?”
 4. Add to this the fact that his clothes also determine his worth and you can easily see why he feels down on himself.

- C. As the child moves into adolescence he becomes even more aware of status labels.
1. He has learned that some people seem more important than others.
 2. Some are shy and withdrawn, others never seem to fit in.
 3. Labels like “dumb,” “four-eyes,” “clod,” “air-head,” and a host of others are given by peers as symbols of worth or rejection.
 4. His deep desire is to be accepted . . . He longs to be popular and admired . . . He desires to be the greatest.
 5. **Some never learn that neither appearance, performance, nor status determines their value as a person.**
- D. As we move through life we become more and more indoctrinated with the worldly philosophy that our worth is determined by what we have achieved in life.
1. Please do not misunderstand . . . There is nothing wrong with feeling good about accomplishments. The challenge is not to let them become the standards that determine our worth.
 2. If your achievements determine your value, what will you do when you lose your job, become ill, retire, have a business reversal, etc.? You will become depressed.
- E. Jesus died for human beings created in the image of God. John 3:16 is still in the Bible.
- F. Your self-esteem in the final analysis is the result of what you choose to think and believe about yourself.
1. You choose to feel inferior, or you choose to feel good about yourself . . . No other person has the power to control your feelings.
 2. **Never forget that just because you feel inferior, it doesn't mean that you are inferior.**

THE BIBLE AND SELF-ESTEEM

- A. It should be noted that God's Word presents life as life is. It doesn't try to cover up weaknesses of its heroes. There are many accounts of outstanding leaders wrestling with a low estimate of themselves and their abilities.
1. When God called Moses to become a leader of His people, he flinched and offered a number of excuses for not being ready to respond.
 - a. Exodus 3:8-11
 - b. Exodus 4:10-17
 - c. For some reason **MOSES** lacked confidence.
 2. **GIDEON** was viewed as a mighty man of valor (Judges 6:12)
 - a. When God called him for a mighty mission, he tried to get out of it by claiming he came from a poor family (Judges 6:15).
 - b. He felt inadequate for the job.

3. **JEREMIAH** one of the great prophets of God, replied to Jehovah’s call with these words, “Ah, Lord God! Behold I cannot speak: for I am a child” (**Jeremiah 1:6**). Jeremiah was expressing a low estimate of his worth as a servant of God.
 4. When Amaziah told **AMOS** to leave and flee to Judah, Amos responded by saying, “. . . I was not a prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son; but I was a herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit.” **Amos 7:14**
- B. Regardless of our interpretation of these four examples, two things are obvious . . . At least three of them reflected upon their stations and abilities in life . . . At least three of them tried to use them to justify their rejection of God’s call.
1. God doesn’t value His creation as men value it.
 2. He sees the worth of **every** person.
 3. You have worth . . . God gave it to you.
- C. God gives us a sound basis for proper self-esteem. Three reasons for such.
1. **The first reason is bound up in the truth that we are created in the very image of God.** Genesis 1:26-27
 - a. Poster in St. Louis Christian Child Care office: “**I am somebody, cause God don’t make no junk.**”
 - b. Man stands at the height of creation
 2. **Another reason for proper self-esteem is the fact that God loves us.**
 - a. This love motivated Him to give His Son for our salvation.
 - b. **John 3:16-17** – “For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world that He might condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. ”
 - c. **Romans 5:6-10** – “For while we were still helpless, at the appointed moment, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For rarely will someone die for a just person—though for a good person perhaps someone might even dare to die. ⁸ But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us! ⁹ Much more then, since we have now been declared righteous by His blood, we will be saved through Him from wrath. ¹⁰ For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, [then how] much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by His life!”
 3. **A third reason that should raise your self-esteem is the price Christ paid for our redemption.**
 - a. Everyone agrees that the value of a thing is determined by what it cost.
 - b. Peter reminds us | **1 Peter 1:18-19** – “For you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life inherited from the fathers, not with perishable things, like silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish.”

- c. **Revelation 1:5** – “And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and has set us free from our sins by His blood.”
- d. You are so valuable that nothing but the blood of Christ can atone for your soul . . . Blood that flowed for the very Son of God!
- D. James raises our self-esteem by reminding us that we are “heirs of the kingdom” (**James 2:5**). That makes us a joint heir with Christ. We will inherit together.
- E. Paul reminded the Corinthian brethren that every member of the church was very important.
 - 1. **1 Corinthians 12:27** – “Now you are the body of Christ, and individual members of it.”
 - 2. Every Christian is a VIP . . . You have something to contribute to the Church that no other member can contribute; this is why you are essential to the progress of the Church.
- F. Jesus tells us through the writing of John, that God so esteems His saints, that: “To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.” **Revelation 3:21**
- G. Do you feel good about yourself?
 - 1. God has placed a high value upon you as a person created in His image.
 - 2. He has invested the blood of His Son to secure your eternal redemption.
 - 3. These eternal truths should establish your worth in your own mind. Meditate on these great truths.

KEYS TO OVERCOMING LOW SELF-ESTEEM

Changing low self-esteem won't occur in a day or two. It will take time and effort. Perhaps the following will help you to overcome low self-esteem.

- A. Don't freely criticize yourself. Confront this negative attitude and habit when it pops into your mind.
- B. Take a sheet of paper and answer this question: What does it mean to be created in God's image?
- C. Try to discover why you have low self-esteem. Be honest with yourself.
- D. Feed your self-esteem. Think good thoughts about yourself.
- E. Don't try to be too analytical of everything that happens, or every remark a person makes about you.
- F. Don't worry about the past or future. Trust God. Matthew 6:25-35
- G. Dwell on Biblical truths about your worth. Accept God's estimate of your worth.
- H. Remember that your worth is not determined by your successes or approvals in life.
- I. Other than God, don't let anyone else take charge of your life. You are in control of your thoughts.

- J. Don't be impatient of too hard on yourself . . . God is not finished with you yet.
- K. Make a list of all your positive qualities. If you doubt having them, you have fallen victim to negative thinking, the major enemy to proper self-esteem.
- L. Eliminate or try to avoid those situations which contribute to your low self-esteem.
- M. Count your blessings and rejoice over all the good things God is doing in your life.
- N. Do positive things . . . Help a person in need . . . Try giving instead of getting.

CONCLUSION

- A. You are the product of your past and your present thinking.
 - 1. Try as you may, you cannot deny it or completely break away from it.
 - 2. The challenge, therefore, is to recognize this and invite God to help you develop proper self-esteem.
 - 3. Through Biblical direction you can win over negative self-esteem.
- B. A tough question for you . . . Are you contributing to another person's low self-esteem by your remarks and attitude toward that person. **Illustration:** Having to fire a 1st grade teacher at Halifax Christian Academy for shouting at students regularly. It was hurting their self-esteem.
- B. **God's Plan for Man's Salvation**