

Self-Esteem

- I. The following definitions are relevant to this study.
- A. self-esteem: Favourable appreciation or opinion of oneself.
 - B. esteem: (v) To estimate the value of, assign (a value) to; to value, assess, appraise. In favourable sense: To regard as valuable; to think highly of; to feel regard for, respect.
 - C. esteem: (n) Estimate, valuation, in phr. **to make an esteem**. b. Estimated value, valuation. c. **to put, set (an) esteem, a high, low esteem upon**: to set a value upon, cause to be esteemed (highly, etc.). In favourable sense: Favourable opinion; regard, respect.
 - D. value: Worth or worthiness (of persons) in respect of rank or personal qualities.
 - E. worthy: Of sufficient merit, excellence, or desert to be or have something.
 - F. self-conceit: One's opinion or estimate of oneself; esp. high or exaggerated opinion of oneself, one's talents, attainments, etc.
 - G. narcissism: Self-love and admiration that find emotional satisfaction in self-contemplation.
 - H. self-love: Love of oneself;...regard for one's interests or well-being; chiefly with definitely opprobrious implication, self-centredness; selfishness.
 - I. contemplate: To behold at with continued attention, gaze upon, view, observe.
 - J. pride: The quality of being proud. A high or overweening opinion of one's own qualities, attainments, or estate, which gives rise to a feeling and attitude of superiority over and contempt for others; inordinate self-esteem.
- II. This study is meant to counter a false sense of personal value, identity and security (self-esteem) which is a substitute for and a rival to the true sense of personal value, identity and security that comes from Jesus Christ.
- A. The Biblical route to personal fullness is by assigning value to Christ. **REV 5:12**.
 - B. The Biblical route to personal fullness is by deeming Christ to be the fullest man and thus having a high opinion of Him and striving to be more like Him. **COL 1:18-19; EPH 4:13**.
 - C. The Biblical route to personal fullness is by self-denial, not self-esteem. **MAT 16:24-25**.
 - 1. Jesus Christ is the great model of self-denial.
 - 2. He made Himself of *no reputation*. **PHIL 2:7**.
 - 3. He came to serve, not be served. **MAT 20:28**.
 - 4. He denied His own will in favor of the Father's. **JOH 6:38; MAT 26:39**.
 - 5. He denied Himself the sensual pleasure of marriage.
 - 6. He denied Himself the royal dignity that a King should expect. **MAT 21:5**.
 - 7. He, the Sinless One, washed the feet of His sin-riddled disciples. **JOH 13:12-14**.
 - 8. He denied Himself the intervention of mighty angels. **MAT 26:53**.
 - 9. He denied Himself more than half of the days appointed to sinners. **PSA 90:10**.
 - 10. If the one sinless Man Who had every claim to every right and privilege should so deny Himself, how much more should we do so who are full of sin and "...did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" (**ISA 53:4**)!
- III. One can have a favorable sense of value about himself from:
- A. modifying or eliminating internal values that hinder one's self-image. Redefine good and bad. Move the goalposts. Lower the bar. Dispense with notions of sin and guilt.
 - B. deeming others to be inferior. This is how the Pharisee operated. **LUK 18:9**.
 - C. marginalizing or eliminating those whom he deems superior. This was Cain. **1JO 3:12**.
 - D. clamoring for and achieving success in those things that others deem important. This is the love of men's praise. **JOH 12:43**.

- E. seeing himself as God sees him: corrupt and condemned by nature but redeemed and renewed by grace unto works which please God (**EPH 2:1-10**), and the approval which accordingly comes from Him. **1SAM 2:30; COL 1:9-12.**
1. This is a vital point of identity.
 2. To see oneself as nothing but a worthless worm loved by nobody is the stuff of self-destructive behavior, whether it be by negative thoughts and actions or by compensating by false positives such as seen above.
 3. To see oneself as forgiven and loved by God, fitted with a new nature filled with good potential to please Him is the stuff of hope, joy, peace and satisfaction from being and doing good. **PRO 14:14.**
 4. We are not told to think nothing of ourselves but every man is told, "...not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think..." (**ROM 12:3**).
- IV. For at least a generation, poor self-esteem has been touted as the basis of all of man's problems individually and societally.
- A. Modern psychology has played up self-esteem.
1. Psychologist Abraham Maslow believed that self-esteem was a universal need and that, if met, would produce desirable civic and social consequences.
 2. The notion is that if people had a better self-image, they would not be struggling with self-conflicts and would be less likely in conflict with others or be handicapped by long-held norms of behavior or performance.
 3. Associated with this thinking are such social and educational experiments as "outcome-based education" which essentially makes non-achievers feel better about themselves, and makes achievers feel that diligence and effort are futile.
 4. Even some in the Christian community have been on the self-esteem bandwagon, such as Dr. James Dobson.
 5. The gossamer optimism of New Age thinking (the "all is one" and "upward reach of mankind" philosophy) not only accords with the self-esteem dynamic, it can be traced to it: "Perhaps the most influential ideas to shape contemporary new age thinking were those that grew out of humanistic psychology and the human potential movement of the 60's and 70's."
(Adolf, Jonathan; The 1988 Guide to New Age Living)
- B. Self-esteem psychology basically holds that the individual has within himself all the resources needed to solve his problems. The individual must believe in himself, ignore hindering voices that limit his potential and tap into his own hidden potential.
1. The assumption is that man is basically good.
 2. Instead of sinners being called to repentance, men are merely called to awaken their potential.
 3. Mind that the hidden potential in man is "...the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (**EPH 2:3**).
 - a. "...the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth..." (**GEN 8:21**).
 - b. It was because of this potential that God separated mankind at Babel. **GEN 11:6-7.**
 4. When man looks within himself to find solutions to his problems instead of looking up to God, he is playing into the hands of the devil.
- V. Remember that Lucifer's fall was owing to his pride, his *inordinate self-esteem*. **1TI 3:6.**
- A. He was made the perfection of beauty. **EZE 28:12.**

- B. He was the music minister of heaven. **EZE 28:13.**
- C. He was "...the anointed cherub that covereth..." (**EZE 28:14**), the highest angel.
- D. Yet he had a higher opinion of himself than was warranted: he esteemed himself suited to be God (**ISA 14:12-14**). He obviously was not lacking in self-esteem!
- E. Advancing oneself by self-esteem is following a poor model.

VI. Mind how atheistic "goo-to-you" evolution has actually contributed to the declared lack of a sense of personal value.

- A. If we are all simply the objects of random chemistry and physics that have no direction or defined purpose, and a very short lifespan in the overall scheme of things, then what is the point of life?
- B. If man is nothing more than a lucky higher form of algae, then he has no special place in nature, no uniqueness. He has no more inherent value than a maggot.
- C. The denial of God, an eternal soul, an afterlife, and the equating of all life as being nothing more than a constant struggle of the strong feeding on the weak is the stuff of futility and purposeless existence. Is it any wonder that some people resort to complete hedonism, drugs, alcohol, self-mutilation or suicide?
- D. Take away from man a sense of eternity, of hope, of purpose and convince him that he is only an animal, is it any wonder that he has no sense of personal value?
- E. Mind that Scripture teaches that:
 - 1. there is an eternal God to Whom all the creation is indebted.
 - 2. man was uniquely made in the image of God and invested with dominion over the earth. **GEN 1:27-31.**
 - a. He has more value than plants. **JON 4:10-11.**
 - b. Jesus said, "...ye are of more value than many sparrows" (**MAT 10:31**).
 - 3. man has an eternal soul which continues after death and it is that destination for which he should prepare. **LUK 16:22-23.**
 - 4. man has a defined purpose: pleasing God. **REV 4:11.**

VII. If low self-esteem is as important as the world says it is, where is the emphasis on it in Scripture?

- A. Scripture is void of commanding or recommending self-esteem.
- B. Scripture does, however, teach that we should esteem:
 - 1. God highly. **DEU 32:15.**
 - 2. God's word. **JOB 23:12; PSA 119:128; 138:2.**
 - 3. others better than ourselves. **PHIL 2:3.**
 - 4. pastors. **1TH 5:13.**
 - 5. the reproach of Christ. **HEB 11:26; ACT 5:41.**
- C. Consider **LUK 16:15.**
 - 1. This was spoken to the Pharisees. **LUK 16:14.**
 - 2. They had all the resources for self-esteem.
 - a. They were achievers. **MAT 23:15.**
 - b. They thought well of themselves. **LUK 18:9.**
 - c. They were esteemed by others. **MAT 23:7; ACT 26:5.**
 - 3. They were not lacking in self-esteem.
 - 4. But they were abomination to God!
 - 5. Paul, the former Pharisee, came to God's conclusion about himself. **PHIL 3:5-8.**
- D. Consider the lack of attitude of self-worth in:
 - 1. Jacob. **GEN 32:10.**

2. Gideon. **JDG 6:15.**
 3. Job. **JOB 42:6.**
 4. Isaiah. **ISA 6:5.**
 5. John the Baptist. **LUK 3:16.**
 6. the centurion. **LUK 7:6-7.**
 7. the prodigal son. **LUK 15:21.**
 8. Paul. **ROM 7:18, 24; 1CO 15:9-10.**
- E. Jesus Christ did not cater to self-esteem. **MAT 7:11; 15:25-28; 19:17.**
- F. Whereas we are told to not think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think (**ROM 12:3**), where are we told to not think of ourselves more lowly than we ought to think?
- G. Scripture rather calls us to *lowliness of mind* and *humbleness of mind*.
PHIL 2:3; COL 3:12.
1. It is with lowliness and meekness that we endeavor to "...keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (**EPH 4:1-3**).
 2. A sure-fire way of not having this unity is by being *puffed up*, as was Corinth. **1CO 4:6, 18-19 c/w 1CO 1:10; 11:19.**
- H. Jesus Christ is the model of meekness and lowliness (**MAT 11:29**) Whose mind we are to imitate. **PHIL 2:3-7.**
- I. The Scriptural path to greatness is through humility. **PRO 15:33; 18:12; 22:4; 29:23.**
1. Who was justified, the Pharisee or the publican? **LUK 18:9-14.**
 2. Remember that Lucifer and his ilk are big on self-exaltation. **2TH 2:4.**
 3. God gives grace to the humble. **1PE 5:5-6.**

VIII. Consider other warnings against the importance of self.

- A. We are to not be wise in our own *conceit* (personal opinion, judgment or estimation).
PRO 26:12, 16; 28:11; ROM 11:25; 12:16.
- B. We are to avoid *vainglory* (glory that is vain, empty, or worthless; inordinate or unwarranted pride in one's accomplishments or qualities; disposition or tendency to exalt oneself unduly; idle boasting or vaunting). **GAL 5:26; PHIL 2:3.**
1. Consider **JER 9:23-24.**
 2. How much of our culture is defined by perceived superiority in academics, finance and sports?
 - a. The foolishness and weakness of God is wiser and stronger than men. **1CO 1:25.**
 - b. God owns everything, distributes it at His pleasure, and takes it away at His pleasure. **1CH 29:11-12; JOB 1:21.**
 - c. He gives or deprives His creatures of wisdom. **PRO 2:6; JOB 12:20; 39:17.**
 - d. He "...taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man" (**PSA 147:10**).
 - e. Consider how quickly proud Nebuchadnezzar fell. **DAN 4:30-33.**
 - f. We are fools to glory in what we have received as if we had not received it. **1CO 4:7.**
 - g. (**GAL 6:3**) For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.
 3. We ought rather to glory in our God and His ways. **JER 9:24; 1CO 1:30-31.**
 4. Paul would only glory in the cross of Christ which was the ultimate example of the superior wisdom of God and exaltation through humility. **GAL 6:14; 1CO 2:7-8; PHIL 2:8-9.**

- C. We are not to commend ourselves. **2CO 10:17-18.**
1. (**PRO 27:2**) Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.
 2. (**ROM 15:18**) For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,
 3. We are warned against commending ourselves by measuring ourselves against others' opinions and works. **2CO 10:12.**
 4. (**PRO 20:6**) Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?
- D. We are to avoid vanity. **EPH 4:17; COL 2:18; PSA 119:37, 113; PRO 30:8.**
1. vanity: That which is vain, futile, or worthless; that which is of no value or profit.
 - 3.a. The quality of being personally vain; high opinion of oneself; self-conceit and desire for admiration.
 2. vain: Devoid of real value, worth or significance; idle, unprofitable, useless, worthless; of no effect, force, or power; fruitless, futile, unavailing.
 3. Contrast these definitions with the definition of *esteem*.
 4. Now consider the words of **PSA 39:5-6; 144:3-4**. Did the Psalmist derive self-esteem from the fact that God took knowledge of him?
- E. We are also warned about undue emphasis on the outward appearance, which is a form of vanity. **PRO 31:30; 1PE 3:3-4.**
1. In Isaiah's day, the daughters of Zion were judged for defining themselves by their appearance. **ISA 3:16-24.**
 - a. haughty: High in one's own estimation; lofty and disdainful in feeling or demeanour; proud, arrogant, supercilious. (Of persons, their action, speech, etc.).
 - b. mince: intr. To walk with short steps or with affected preciseness or nicety; to walk in an affected manner; to show affectation or affected delicacy in manner of gait.
 - c. The WAY one looks or acts is sending a message: it is a form of communication! **ISA 3:9; PRO 6:13.**
 - d. The message these gals were sending was not that they lacked self-esteem, but rather *self-denial* and *self-examination* (examination of oneself with regard to one's conduct, motives, etc., esp. as a religious duty).
 - e. Having discretion is more important than outward beauty. **PRO 11:22.**
 2. This is not a problem that is unique to women. Absalom was praised for his beauty but his beauty was only skin deep. **2SAM 14:25.**
 - a. Absalom was noted for his luxuriant hair. **2SAM 14:26.**
 - b. Absalom wanted to let everyone know that he was the cream of the crop. **2SAM 15:1.**
 - (1) Good looks ran in David's family. **1SAM 16:12.**
 - (2) But so did David's poor parenting skills. **1KI 1:5-6.**
 - (3) "Those parents know not what they do who indulge a proud humour in their children; for I have seen more young people ruined by pride than by any one lust whatsoever." (Matthew Henry)
 - c. Absalom's self-esteem was his problem, not his solution. He was a narcissistic, egotistical sociopath that rode to political power on looks, charisma and eloquence.
 - d. "It was probably his personal beauty that caused the people to interest

themselves so much in his behalf; for the great mass of the public is ever caught and led by outward appearances.” (Adam Clarke)

3. Scripture also condemns effeminacy in men. **1CO 6:9.**
 - a. effeminate: Of persons: That has become like a woman. a. Womanish, unmanly, enervated, feeble; self-indulgent, voluptuous; unbecomingly delicate or over-refined.
 - b. It is utterly inappropriate for a man to primp, preen, or prance as a delicate woman might do.
4. If we overvalue our outward appearance to the neglect of our inner character, where will we be if God *turns our comeliness into corruption*?
DAN 10:8; PSA 39:11; JOB 17:1.

- IX. The first characteristic of the perilous times of the last days is *love of self*. **2TI 3:1-5.**
- A. The love of self is the basis of the other sins listed here.
 - B. People who are driven by self-love will trample on whatever gets in the way of their own desires.
 - C. The end (satisfaction of one's own desires) will justify the means.
 - D. Consider how self-love relates to the other sins.
 1. *Covetousness* is when you can't stand not having the possessions, looks or attainments that another has because you measure fullness of being by such things.
 2. You *boast* to appear superior to others and gratify your desire for attention and fame.
 3. Your *pride* is the stuff of self-love and self-esteem. Chances are that perceived low self-esteem is simply the product of the tension between what we or others think about ourselves and what our pride will not accept.
 4. Men will *blaspheme* God because they deem Him less important than themselves and because He denies them their desires somehow.
 5. *Disobedience to parents* is along the same lines: authority that gets in the way of personal interests
 6. *Unthankfulness* is because you will not give credit to anyone but yourself for the things you deem valuable.
 7. *Unholiness* is nothing less than the satisfying of oneself by sin.
 8. Being *without natural affection* is because you value the satisfying of your own desires to the exclusion of any perceived obstacle to the same.
 9. *Trucebreakers* deem that their current peace is worth less than getting what they want.
 10. *False accusers* destroy others whom they perceive to be superior to themselves or who are getting in the way of their own desires.
 11. *Incontinence* (lack of self-restraint, chiefly with reference to sexual appetite) needs no explanation.
 12. The *fierce* man may react thus to the frustration of his will or desire, or use fierceness to obtain his will or desire.
 13. *Despising those who are good* is owing to the fact that they make you look bad and you cannot stand it.
 14. *Traitors* betray others when maintaining trust with them gets in the way of one's own desires or ideals.
 15. The *heady* man (the man who is impetuous, headstrong, etc.) has no time for decorum or another's well being in the pursuit of his own goals.

16. The *highminded* man (one having or characterized by a haughty, proud, or arrogant spirit) loves his own perceived superiority over others and shows it.
17. *Loving pleasures more than God* needs no comment. It is the antithesis of the character of Jesus Christ. **ROM 15:3.**

E. Self-love is NOT commanded in **MAT 22:37-40.**

1. This passage sets forth TWO commandments, not THREE.
2. Love originates with God not with self. **1JO 4:19.**
3. The intensity with which God is to be loved is with the entire being.
 - a. To love one's neighbor with this intensity would be idolatry.
 - b. God must be loved MORE than oneself or one's neighbor. **LUK 14:26.**
4. Self-love is not the subject of the second commandment; it is the qualifier.
 - a. The commandment assumes that men love themselves.
 - b. Scripture in general assumes this. **EPH 5:29; PRO 21:2.**
 - c. The love of self is as built-in to man as the involuntary acts of heartbeat and breathing.
 - d. The second commandment is teaching us to direct the innate love we have for ourselves outward to others.
5. This passage actually condemns a love of self that exceeds love of God and disregards one's neighbor.
6. Loving my neighbor as myself means treating him as I would want him to treat me. **LUK 6:31.**
7. The love that Jesus commands looks beyond ourselves and is not limited by the personal benefit we may derive from it. **LUK 6:32-34; JOH 15:12-13.**

X. A major current cultural example of the love of self and the bad psychology of self-esteem is the media-driven Hydra of the *cult of celebrity*.

A. Consider some of the current benchmarks for entertainment like American Idol, Dancing With The Stars, reality shows, etc., etc., etc. What is the driving force behind the desire for *celebrity* (the condition of being much extolled or talked about; famousness, notoriety)?

1. "The short answer is ego. Insatiable ego....The desire to become a star requires an incredible appetite for attention and approval."
(Breitbart and Ebner, Hollywood Interrupted)
2. Biblically, this is the *pride of life* (**1JO 2:16**) which expresses itself through *vanity* (self-conceit and desire for admiration), against which we must fight. **EPH 4:17-18.**
3. This inordinate desire for drawing attention to oneself in competition with others of the same mindset is a factor in the increasing display of flesh and of outrageous behavior.
4. But for all of the glory of celebrity, the celebrity world is commonly characterized by a dissatisfied existence and emotional distress unto self-destruction.
5. "The problem is, living off approval and applause, and deriving your sense of self-worth from the praise of others, may feel great, but it also produces great problems. When it comes to being worshipped, human beings just don't make very good gods, something the Good Book warns about repeatedly. Worship is meant for God alone. But when humans are idolized and worshipped – and when they lower themselves to accept that homage and bask in its glory – major conflict mysteriously appears within the idolized 'star.'" (David Kupelian, The Secret Curse of Hollywood Stars)

B. The internet has made the cult of celebrity the stuff of the everyday person.

1. Virtually anyone can have their own website or YouTube channel.
 - a. Everyone can be a star and be the center of attention and admiration!
 - b. But if everyone is a star, the distinction of stardom vanishes.
 - c. As one de-motivational poster puts it, “Just remember, you are unique---just like everyone else.”
 - d. And this harsh reality is the stuff of increased self-promotion to stay ahead of the crowd and/or a feeling of desperation, insignificance and depression.
2. Social networking sites are driven by approval ratings: how many “likes” can you garner? This is especially an area of concern in young people, though not limited to them.
 - a. Too much of what goes on with things like Facebook is little more than the auctioning of oneself for the praise and admiration of others caught up in the same helium.
 - b. What is promoted as an incredible tool for bringing people closer together and making them happier through connections has turned out to have a backlash effect.
 - c. “Scientists have confirmed that Facebook can make you miserable. A study comparing how young adults felt at different times of the day with their Facebook use showed that the more they logged onto the social networking site, the less happy they were. The more the participants had other forms of contact with people, such as face to face or over the phone, they tended to feel better over time....'On the surface, Facebook provides an invaluable resource for fulfilling the basic human need for social connection,' said Ethan Kross, a social psychologist who led the work at the University of Michigan. 'But rather than enhance well-being, we found that Facebook use predicts the opposite result—it undermines it.’” (Richard Gray, Science Correspondent for The Telegraph, art. [Facebook Can Make You Miserable](#))
 - d. What has been discovered is that young people in particular (who are yearning for attention, approval and admiration of peers) get caught up in a micro-celebrity game and are crushed emotionally if their lives aren't as beautiful as somebody else's life who gets all the “likes.”
3. Similar observations apply to the trend of “selfies” (taking photos of oneself for personal and public admiration).
 - a. This is narcissism and vanity at work! And the hoped-for glories of celebrity and specialness come with various negative effects.
 - b. “Dr. Jessemy Hibbard, a chartered clinical psychologist, said, 'Images are a way for young people to seek approval and attention from their peers. However they can also lead to cyber bullying and issues with self confidence. The majority of teens post the photos in search of assurance and compliments, but they are making themselves vulnerable to negative comments and abuse. It's all about comparison and young people are using social media to measure themselves against others. If a teenager posts a picture and it doesn't get any 'likes' or if it is their birthday and they don't receive a certain number of posts, they see that as an embarrassment. It is seen as an indication that they are not popular. There is an expectation now amongst young people that they should get comments on all of their posts and images....Social media sites have come under scrutiny recently following the the suicide of 14 year-old Hannah Smith after she was targeted

- by trolls on the social networking site Ask.fm.” (Rosa Silverman et. al., The Telegraph, art. [Selfie Photographs Trend Puts Children at Risk of Abuse](#))
4. Mind how the aforementioned researchers simply confirm what the Scripture teaches about the error of undue emphasis on oneself, as this study has already amply shown!
 5. Remember what Scripture teaches against seeking the praise of men, especially when you are measuring your worth by others' opinions.
 - a. First, it is not good to have a heavy dietary need for other's praise. **PRO 25:27.**
 - b. It is unwise to measure ourselves amongst and by ourselves. **2CO 10:12.**
 - c. Paul deemed the opinion of men about himself to be of much less importance than God's opinion of him. **1CO 4:3-4.**
 - d. If your works are good works, who cares if nobody but God takes notice of them? His “likes” are the best and bring the only true satisfaction and peace to the soul. **ISA 49:4; 1JO 3:21.**
 - e. We are to love the praise of God more than the praise of men. **JOH 12:43; 5:44; ROM 2:29.**
 - f. We are particularly warned against being liked by an unbelieving world that we should rather hope would “unfriend” us. **LUK 6:26; JOH 15:19; JAM 4:4.**
 - g. People that live for the recognition and praise of other men set themselves up for traps. **PRO 29:5.**
- C. The publishing of detail after detail of oneself (pictures, personal information, desires, plans, gripes, rages, etc.) has other negative implications.
1. The more your life is an open book, the more you are scrutinized. Mind that many employers now scrutinize the online admissions of job-seekers and employees.
 2. The more your life is an open book, the more you set yourself up for exploitation by people who build a fairly accurate profile of you.
 3. Information is power! Excess information about yourself does not empower you but others who can use that information to their advantage over you.
 - a. The tech-age has virtually undressed us all!
 - b. It is a little inconsistent to gripe about the seizure of 4th Amendment rights to privacy by the government when we voluntarily advertise everything about ourselves online for public consumption!
 4. Remember what the Scripture says about excessive speech (and digital publishing is a form of speech).
 - a. **(PRO 10:8)** The wise in heart will receive commandments: but a prating fool shall fall.
 - (1) prate: To talk, to chatter: usually dyslogistic, implying speaking much or long to little purpose.
 - (2) One of the reasons a fool doesn't receive commandments is because he spends all his time talking, not listening.
 - (3) One social networking service is appropriately named *Twitter*.
 - AA. twitter: Of a person:...to talk or chatter rapidly in a small or tremulous voice.
 - BB. tremulous: Characterized or affected by trembling or quivering from nervous agitation or weakness, of mental or physical origin; hence, fearful, timorous.

- CC. Mark it well: the chatterer is telling others by their chattering that they have weaknesses, fears and insecurities. And this the subtle will exploit to bring the chatterer down.
- b. **(PRO 10:19)** In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.
- c. **(ECC 5:3)** For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words.
- d. **(PRO 29:11)** A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.
- e. **(PRO 17:28)** Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips **is esteemed** a man of understanding.
- f. **(JAM 1:19)** Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:
- g. "They never taste who always drink; They always talk who never think."
(Matthew Prior)

XI. Another manifestation of the self-esteem, self-love dynamic is the *inferiority complex*. This is the notion that one's sense of personal value is measured against the natural looks, natural talents and the attainments of others. Mind that this again is a demonstration of measuring oneself by comparison with others, not by one's conformity to eternal values.

- A. First, as harsh as it sounds, one may just be inferior. But inferiority is a subjective value assessment when the yardstick is merely comparison and competition amongst men.
 - 1. Moses was "...exceeding fair..." **(ACT 7:20)**, a "...goodly child..." **(EXO 2:2)**, whereas Jesus Christ had "...no form or comeliness...no beauty that we should desire him" **(ISA 53:2)**. But which of these was the most precious to God?
 - 2. As seen earlier, it is God's province to give earthly blessings to one but not another. Some are endowed with natural wisdom, beauty, strength, etc. which may be withheld from another that God may be glorified in their weakness. **JOH 9:1-3; 1CO 1:27-29; 2CO 12:9.**
 - 3. There are some facets of inferiority that can be offset by effort.
 - a. Muscular weakness can be offset by conditioning.
 - b. Ignorance can be offset by education.
 - c. Lack of comeliness can be offset by good cosmetic care but most of all by beauty of character.
 - d. Sinful, rebellious human nature, though, tends to prefer *envy* to *effort*, and so does nothing about its circumstance and ultimately holds God accountable for a perceived inequity. It is easier to have a pity party, play the "blame game" and be a murmuring complainer with a sense of entitlement.
- B. If one didn't love himself so much, he would not be so disturbed over his deficiencies.
 - 1. The cure for this love of self is a grasp of the greatness of God and the sinfulness of self. **ISA 6:5.**
 - 2. Every man ought to be thankful that he is as well off as he is! **JOB 35:15.**
 - 3. We are to learn to be content with what we have. **PHIL 4:11-13; HEB 13:5; 1TI 6:6.**
 - a. Contentment contrasts *covetousness* (inordinate and culpable desire of possessing that which belongs to another or to which one has no right).

- b. The covetous man has such a high opinion of himself (self-esteem) that he deems it unjust to be as he is and unjust that he should have to make any effort to improve himself where he could do so. Mind that God does not cater to the “I was given less, therefore I did nothing” mindset. **MAT 25:24-27.**
- c. The covetous man is an idolater (**EPH 5:5**), a belly-olater (**PHIL 3:19**); he is playing God---the self is sovereign.
- d. What is interpreted as a lack of self-acceptance may really be covetousness.
- e. What is interpreted as self-hatred may really be hatred of one's circumstances and of the effort required to compensate for those circumstances.

- XII. As seen earlier, Scripture assumes that men have an inherent love of self and thus a favorable or superior opinion of themselves. **EPH 5:28-29; PRO 20:6; 21:2.**
- A. However, one's opinion of oneself can be a complete delusion. **PRO 30:12; GAL 6:3.**
 - B. A good man may even by score-keeping himself for his own goodness come to this conclusion. **JOB 33:9.**
 - C. Remember that the Pharisees were big on self-esteem / self-righteousness. **LUK 18:9.**
 - 1. But they were blind to the fact of their own corruption and hypocrisy. **MAT 23:25-28.**
 - 2. Under such delusion, they were blind men leading blind men. **MAT 15:14.**
 - 3. Suffice it to say that the humble will receive leaders and teachers that feed them with God's opinions of themselves (**JER 3:12-15**) but fools will desire teachers after their own self-centered hearts. **PRO 17:4; 2TI 4:3.**
 - D. Mind that the self-centered Pharisee despised others. **LUK 18:9; JOH 7:47-49.**
 - 1. His high self-esteem did not make him into a better person!
 - 2. “People with high self-regard, the evidence says, possess low regard for others. Instead of seeking opportunities to serve others, they seek to manipulate others. Furthermore, people with high self-regard tend to anti-social behavior. People incarcerated in maximum security prisons have very high self-regard, for example....So, to the question, 'Isn't it possible for a child to have high self-esteem and a high level of respect for others?' The answer is an unequivocal no.” (Dr. John Rosemond, Family Psychologist, [The Washington Times, April 12, 2009](#))
 - 3. Remember that the first-ever manifestation of inordinate self-esteem was Lucifer, who became Satan/the Devil who is a destroyer. **REV 9:11.**
 - 4. Those who build upon a foundation of high self-esteem are therefore under the maximum delusion: they are doing the lusts of the Devil, the Destroyer who is not the least bit interested in the well-being of the individual or the society and they are promoting a destructive trait as a positive, constructive solution to problems.
 - 5. Mind how this is actualized in the thinking of elitists who think themselves the necessary lords of the masses and who affirm, “Ordo Ab Chao” (order from chaos) is the model of human government. Talk about *anti-social behavior*!
- XIII. Another problem with the psychology of self-esteem is that it weakens people's resolves to perform well *before* reward, thus promoting an entitlement mentality that doesn't square with the real world, setting the individual up for disappointment, disillusionment and depression.
- A. Mind that Scripture abundantly affirms that good performance should precede reward. **GAL 6:4-5, 9; 2TH 3:10.**

- B. “Today's typical parent seems to think that his/her child is the only fish in the pond worth noticing, which is really too bad for his/her child. It's bad for all of us, actually, because the research also finds that the higher a person's self-regard, the lower his regard for others. (It is also noteworthy that high self-esteem puts the individual at high risk for bouts of severe depression.) People with high self-esteem want to be paid attention to and served. They believe in their entitlement....today's young college graduates, by and large, are not looking for work; rather, they are looking for benefits packages (i.e., entitlements). They can't handle criticism, I'm told.....Researchers have discovered that people with high self-esteem tend to overestimate their abilities. If anything, they are over-confident. As a result, they don't cope well when life deals them a bad hand or their performance doesn't live up to their self-expectation. For those reasons, they are highly prone to depression. Because they believe that anything they do is deserving of reward, they also tend to underperform.” (Dr. John Rosemond)
- C. Israel as a nation fell into this false sense of over-confidence and entitlement under a delusion that they were nationally and racially a chosen people guaranteed prominence and blessing regardless of their performance.
- D. An example of someone whose self-esteem could not endure a setback is Ahithophel.
1. Ahithophel was a noted counsellor in Israel. **2SAM 16:23.**
 2. But Ahithophel was intoxicated with his own ability. He could not handle it when his counsel was not followed. **2SAM 17:23.**
 3. His high opinion of himself was his undoing.
- E. Jonah was told to preach impending destruction to wicked Nineveh. **JON 1:2.**
1. Jonah's reluctance was at least partially owing to the fact that he knew God would probably show mercy to Nineveh. **JON 4:2.**
 2. To declare that Nineveh would be overthrown in forty days (**JON 3:4**) and it not happen would detract from Jonah's credibility as a prophet.
 3. So he went into a deep blue funk. **JON 4:1.**
- XIV. High self-esteem may also be behind blame-shifting: “Something outside of me made me err.”
- A. Saul was thrust into prominence as Israel's first king.
1. He had natural endowments above his peers. **1SAM 9:2.**
 2. But he blamed circumstances and the people for his mistakes. **1SAM 13:11-12; 15:24.**
 3. Saul was also prone to depression. **1SAM 16:14-16.**
- B. Israel in Ezekiel's day couldn't come to terms with their difficulties so they blamed it all on their ancestors. **EZE 18:1-3.**
- C. “Time and again, experiments have revealed that people tend to attribute positive behaviours to themselves and negative behaviours to external factors, enabling them to take credit for their good acts and to deny responsibility for their bad acts.”
(Dr. David Meyers, The Inflated Self)
- XV. Self-esteem can factor into the corruption of religion.
- A. Mind how the Arminian scheme of salvation is counterpart to the self-esteem problem.
1. It is assumed that God loves all mankind equally and that Christ's blood was shed for all mankind equally.
 2. However, the only ones who are eternally saved are those who positively decide for God. They only are deemed *worthy* of salvation.
 3. Therefore, God saves on the basis of an obligation according to this scheme.

4. But salvation is by grace, which is “favour or goodwill, in contradistinction to right or obligation, as the ground of a concession.”
 5. Salvation is according to mercy, which is “forbearance and compassion shown by one person to another who is in his power and who has no claim to receive kindness.” **TIT 3:5; 1PE 1:3.**
 6. God does not save sinners because of any worth in them but rather because of what is in Himself, because of His own purpose. **2TI 1:9.**
 7. God saves in such a manner that no man can boast. **ROM 3:27.**
- B. Self-esteem can also corrupt religion by turning into a means of personal fulfillment rather than submitting to God's will.
1. How many seek a church which satisfies their needs rather than glorifies God?
 2. How many seek spiritual teaching that strokes their egos or does not push them out of their delusions and comfort zones? **ISA 30:10; 2TI 4:3.**
 3. How many see faith, prayer and obedience as means to get God to bless their will rather than means for doing God's will?
- XVI. God does attach value to His people. **PSA 135:4; LAM 4:2; PSA 116:15.**
- A. Their value is according to His comeliness upon them. **EZE 16:14.**
 - B. Their worth arises from His grace towards them, not upon any inherent worth they have in themselves. **1CO 1:30-31.**
 - C. They should so live by grace as to be *accounted worthy* of Him and His mercies. **LUK 20:35; 21:36; ACT 5:41; 2TH 1:11-12.**
- XVII. “Well, pastor, this whole series of messages sounds like you are saying that it is wrong to strive for excellence in anything in this world, or to compete for a reward.” *Ans.* No.
- A. Competition can be a positive force to improve one's personal or business performance. It helps to pare away unnecessary burdens and inefficiency, which lowers both personal and business costs. If just being “in business” is all that matters, why are we commanded to be “Not slothful in business...” (**ROM 12:11**)?
 - B. Scripture teaches that Christian living is warfare, which is strife to obtain victory. **EPH 6:11-13.**
 - C. Scripture even likens Christian living to competitive games. **1CO 9:24; HEB 12:1.**
 - D. What we do should be done with zeal and might. **ECC 9:10.**
 - E. What we must guard against is *vainglory*; all should be done to the glory of God with thanksgiving. **COL 3:23-24; 1CO 10:31.**
 - F. Our true prize is the “...high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (**PHIL 3:14**).
- XVIII. We had earlier noted that believers must come to grips with both their worthlessness by nature but also their redeemed and regenerated condition and position in Christ.
- A. Grace has fitted us with a new nature to do good works (**EPH 2:10**) and “good” is a value assessment.
 - B. We are no longer totally depraved sinners; we are redeemed by Christ's blood and are saints who sometimes sin. **ROM 7:21.**
 - C. We can please God. **HEB 13:21.**
 - D. We therefore do not need to wallow in hopelessness and futility. We are not condemned to be viewed by God or by our own consciences as the hapless products of our old man, our past sins, our weak spots or our present failures.
 - E. We “can do” through Christ by faith, and this is the victory. **PHIL 4:13; 1JO 5:4.**