

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. 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.**
 2. 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.