

YOU MEAN I CAN CHANGE?

DEVELOPING AN ACCURATE SELF-IMAGE (PART 2)

The way to have an acceptable self-image is by selflessly serving God and neighbor.

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There are some lessons that when they're learned, they're learned for good. Remember when you learned how to ride a bike? Undoubtedly someone took your training wheels off and then let you go. You might have fallen the first few times you did it by yourself. However, you could get on a bike today and ride it because that lesson was learned for good.

The Pythagorean Theorem is different. You may recognize that term, but you probably don't remember what it is. And if you did happen to remember that it is a formula for figuring out the length of the hypotenuse of a right triangle, you probably don't remember the actual formula.

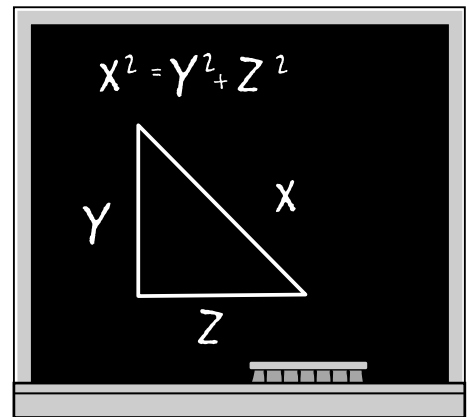
This lesson will review what we have learned about self-esteem. Unfortunately most biblical truth is more like the Pythagorean Theorem than riding a bike—it needs to be re-taught, relearned, and remembered. Your teens really need to understand what the Bible has to say about this important subject, and this lesson will emphasize it once more.

To help teens evaluate themselves accurately.

Teens will:

- **demonstrate their understanding through role-play**
- **be reminded of their value in God's sight**
- **be encouraged to serve others**
- **see how God encouraged those with a poor self-concept**

Ephesians 5:29



LESSON AIM

OBJECTIVES

TEXT

What You Need:

- a copy of the transparency
- an overhead projector
- copies of Case Study #1 and #2

The Lesson

WARM-UP

What you need: copies of Case Study #1 and #2

Have each teen get a partner with whom they will be role-playing. Give them the following instructions:

- **Counselors:** Do not look at the case study sheet. Ask questions to determine the problem, and provide a solution for this teen. *Use your Bible!*
- **Counselees:** You are acting the part. You can say anything that you think this person would say. You must answer questions according to the background on the sheet, or if it's not there, as you think the character would answer. Try to say all the statements listed at some point during the conversation.

The first teen plays the part of Mary and the other teen counsels her. After they are done, ask them for the counsel they gave. Then have them reverse roles with the counselor now playing the part of Sullivan and Mary now playing the part of the counselor. Once again discuss the situation. Use this to determine whether the teens have made the jump from hearing the truth to understanding the truth. Finally teach this lesson emphasizing the issues that are misunderstood by your class.

BRIDGE

Say "It is much easier for you to listen to me talk about self-esteem than it is for you to use it in your own lives or in the lives of your friends. However, that is how we know if we've really learned something, if we can apply it in our own lives."

CONTENT

What you need: transparency, overhead projector

Today's lesson is a summary of the previous four. Hopefully by comparing the secular and biblical views of self-esteem, you will see the truth more clearly.

I. THE PROBLEM

The secular view says that I don't love myself enough; however, the biblical view says my main problem is that I love myself too much (Eph. 5:29).

Tell the teens that they are on a cruise ship when the captain announces that the ship is going down. Ask them what is the very *first* thing that they would do? Most will say something that indicates they are thinking of themselves. Point out how few of them said anything that showed concern for others.

II. THE CAUSE

The world would have us believe that we have low self-esteem because others don't treat us as we deserve to be treated. In fact, if you can just get to a psychiatrist, he will help you with your sickness.

The Bible takes a hardball approach. Your problem is you. You are stuck on yourself. You compare yourself to others and that leads to a wrong self-image (2 Cor. 10:12-13).

III. VIEW OF MAN

Why shouldn't man have a positive self-image if he is basically good as the world says? Unfortunately man continually proves this theory wrong by doing bad things. Some would say that man evolved and is just a more advanced animal. Some psychologists think that man is a machine, and if you press the right buttons, you will solve his problems.

The Bible comes to a different conclusion. We've seen that man is totally depraved and guilty before God (Eph. 2:1-3). And contrary to the evolutionist, man is higher than animals (Mt. 6:26; 12:12). And contrary to the behaviorist, man is not a machine—he has a free will (Ezek. 18:1-2, 20). And contrary to the philosopher, man is not absurd—he has a purpose (Is. 43:7).

IV. SOURCE OF VALUE

The very fact that you are human is what should give you good self-esteem according to the secularist. Unfortunately we have seen that human nature is sinful so the Christian cannot look at that as a reason to feel good about himself.

A legitimate source of value is the fact that you are made in God's image (Gen. 1:26) and Christ died for you (John 3:16). This is not value that you deserve, or that you earned, but that God has given you.

V. PRIORITY OF NEEDS

Write these words on the board: God, Me, Others. Ask your teens to place them in the order that the world does.

NOTES

Obviously you are given the message everyday that you should put yourself first. The Bible calls us to radical non-compliance with this order. Put God first, others second, and yourself last (Mt. 22:37-40). It is only when you quit seeking to fill your own needs and start meeting others' that you can gain a biblical self-image (Mk. 8:35).

VI. THE ANSWER

We covered these in the last lesson, but we need to be reminded that the answer to self-esteem problems is obedience (comparison to a true standard), gratitude, and self-denial. This is a more substantial answer than what the world gives. They say that you just need to believe in yourself. Put enough smiley faces and gold stars on a poor student's essay and she starts to believe she is a good writer. Unfortunately she is still a poor writer. Don't base your self-esteem on your abilities but on how well you obey God and think of others. Compare yourself to the biblical standard and then you can *feel good about being good* (Gal. 6:4).

VII. THE RESULTS

In one sense it appears that the world's self-esteem philosophy works. After all, have you ever heard of a pro athlete with poor self-esteem? The person who likes their appearance, abilities, and status has confidence. But many people don't like their appearance, abilities, and status so they are depressed. What is ironic is that whether confident or depressed, the end result is self-centeredness. So the world's system never gets a person to a point where they can think of others.

God's plan leads to humility and service to others. Humility because I understand that I was not worthy of the gift of salvation. Service to others because I love my God so much that I must love who He loves (Mt. 6:33).

Teacher, still got time? Cover this material. If not, jump to the closing.

Now that we've gone through the chart, it might be interesting to see how God dealt with two men who had a poor self-concept.

HOW DID GOD COUNSEL SELF-IMAGE PROBLEMS?

We see two examples in Scripture of men that God asked to serve him and they felt inadequate.

- Moses (Ex. 3:10-12) Here was a man who told God that he was a nobody. God didn't tell him to repeat 10 times, "I am a somebody."
- Gideon (Jud. 6:11-16) Gideon also felt that he was a nobody.

Both of these men suffered from a poor self-image. Did God use the world's method and encourage them to believe in themselves? How did God respond?

The Presence Of God—He told them both that He would be with them. He made them get their focus off of themselves and onto God. This is exactly what they needed.

The Promise Of God—To both Gideon and Moses He gave a promise. God told Moses that He would worship with Israel on this mountain and He told Gideon that they would defeat Midian. To you and I God has given a whole book of promises. God's Word gives us promises that we just need to claim. Even when God counsels those with self-image problems He doesn't encourage them to concentrate on themselves. And in the cases of Gideon and Moses, God's method worked.

There you have it. The biblical view of self-esteem. Like so many things we want, we only get it when we quit striving for it and start thinking of others. I pray that you will love God and love others.

CLOSING

CASE STUDY #1

You are Mary.

She is a girl that attends a big Christian school in Chicago. She's attended this school since she was a kid and she was saved in third grade. She has never had a date, and she believes it's because she is ugly.

When she was twelve, her and another boy became good friends. Unfortunately she became so clingy that she suffocated the relationship. When boys do talk to her, she will rehash what they said looking for any hidden meanings. She'll often say, "I wonder why he said that."

Her dad tells her "Mary, you're beautiful on the inside, where it counts." Yeah, right! As if anyone cares what her insides are like. Her parents have tried to encourage and affirm her, but she still feels ugly. She was offered the lead in the school play but she wouldn't take it because she was afraid to be up in front of everyone. She thought they would notice her ugliness.

She has always done very well in school.

Here are some statements to make to your counselor:

- "I hate the way I look!"
- "If God loves me, why did He make my nose so big?"
- "I'm not asking to be drop-dead beautiful. Just give me average looks so once in a while a boy will like me."
- "I would trade my brain for a decent body. My brains won't get me married."
- "I don't believe God loves me. If He did, He would have made me better looking."



CASE STUDY #2

You are Sullivan.

He is a teen who grew up in a small town in North Carolina. While his parents loved him, his dad only communicated that love by giving him things. He never told him that he loved him or was proud of him. His mom was dominating and controlling. By the time he was in junior high, he was a "momma's boy." He also feared that people would find out he was still wetting his bed at age fifteen.

He has gone through high school totally unnoticed. Nobody has befriended him, and he was always the quiet kid at the back of the class. He feels unloved, incompetent, and totally worthless. He got saved when he was a kid, but he still feels inferior.

Sullivan has even considered suicide in the past because he felt so insignificant.

Here are some statements to make to your counselor:

- "I would be friendly to other people if I didn't hate myself so much."
- "I don't understand why God even bothered to make me. I wish He hadn't because my life is so worthless."
- "I am angry at God for giving me such a worthless life!"
- "If my dad just told me he was proud of me once in a while, I wouldn't have this problem of self-esteem."
- "So what if Christ died for my sin so I can go to heaven when I die. What has He done to make living *now* worthwhile?"

Two Views of Self-Esteem

	Secular View	Biblical View
The Problem	I don't love myself enough.	I love myself too much (Eph. 5:29).
Cause Of Low Self-Esteem	The result of what others have done to me. I have a sickness.	Comparison (2 Cor. 10:12-13), Self-absorption
View Of Man	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Man is basically good. ◆ Man is an animal, machine, or absurdity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Man is totally depraved and guilty before God (Eph. 2:1-3). ◆ Man is higher than animals (Mt. 6:26), has a free will (Ezek. 18:1-20), and purpose (Is. 43:7)
Source Of Value	You are human (Intrinsic value).	You are made in God's image and Christ died for you (Imputed value).
Priority Of Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Love myself, so that ◆ I can love others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Love God, then ◆ Love others (Mt. 22:37-40)
The Answer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Believe in yourself. ◆ Others should accept you for who you are. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Obedience (Gal. 6:4) ◆ Gratitude (1 Cor. 4:7) ◆ Self-denial (Gal. 2:20)
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Confidence in those who like their appearance, abilities, talents, etc. ◆ Depression in those who don't ◆ Self-centeredness in both 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Humility that God would use me ◆ Service to others