Christ-Centered Self-Worth

Apostolic Christian Counseling and Family Services
877-370-9988
www.accounseling.org
info@accounseling.org

Is it being proud if you feel good about your accomplishments (or when you get compliments)?

Does being humble mean you should put yourself down in front of others?

Does giving people compliments (especially children) encourage them to be proud?

If you recognize you have a spiritual gift or talent, are you being proud?

If Christians have self-esteem, are they relying on “self” rather than God’s spirit? Aren’t we trying to “get rid” of the self?

Questions About Self-Worth

Why Secular Approaches to Self-Esteem Don’t Work

They are based on the assumption that human beings are basically good at the core.

Jeremiah 17:9 “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”

They lead people to try to “get” self-esteem. This treats self-worth as if it is something that can be obtained. Unfortunately, billions are searching for it and few are finding it.

Why Secular Approaches Don’t Work Cont’d

They are based on the assumption that uniqueness equals worth.

They are based on the assumption our “works” (good things we do) defines what we have to feel good about.

Romans 4:4-5 “Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”

Christ-Centered Self-Worth: Clarifying the Confusion

We prefer to use the words “self-worth” rather than self-esteem because it points to the heart of the matter:

- “Who (or what) defines your worth?”
- “What is the value of a soul?”

Ultimately, self-worth is a relational concept and comes from two sources:

#1: Being created in God’s image
#2: Our position in Christ
Pride = Self-Exaltation

- Pride elevates the self over others (Proverbs 16:18 “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.”)
- Finds fault with others
- Denies faults in self
- View of self is inflated

Inferiority: Devaluing What God Values

- Can range from mild levels of inferiority to strong feelings of self-hatred.
- Difficulty believing God completely loves them.
- Overly negative view of oneself.
- Has difficulty recognizing and using their spiritual gifts.

Humility: A Balanced View

- Sees others as having equal worth.
- Does not exalt self. (Romans 12:3 “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.”)
- Does not put oneself down – Jesus never did!

Pride Cont’d

- Treats others condescendingly.
- Respect of persons and partiality toward others is common.
  - 1 Timothy 5:21 “I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.”
  - James 2:9 “But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.”

Inferiority Cont’d

- Often live in fear of rejection & failure and forget it is the Lord that is working in and through us.
  - Exodus 4:10-11 “And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?”

Humility Cont’d

- Can choose to prefer others and show them Christ’s love. (Romans 12:10 “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another”)
- Has a realistic assessment of one’s strengths (Philippians 4:13) and weaknesses (2 Corinthians 12:10).
- Recognizes our sufficiency is in God:
  - 2 Corinthians 3:5 “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.”
The formula below leads us to the performance treadmill—we are held captive by fear of failure, trying to earn the approval of others, shame, and blame:

\[
\text{My Performance Self-Esteem} = \text{Other's Opinions of me}
\]


1. Avoidance
2. Not trying
3. Missed opportunities
4. Worry
5. Procrastination

It is normal and natural for us to want others to accept us. This is especially true of our desire to have the approval of our parents.

Unfortunately, many people eventually learn to place their self-worth in other people's opinions. This leads to excessive attempts to please others in order to win their approval and avoid criticism (a.k.a. “people pleasing”).

Rather Romans 15:2 tells us “Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification.”

Approval Seeking / People Pleasing

Self-Worth and Abuse

• Trauma and abuse can shatter an individual’s sense-of-self (identity) and significantly hinder the development of healthy self-worth.
• Emotional, sexual, and/or physical abuse should not be tolerated. Get Help!
• Shame often occurs very intensely in individuals who have experienced abuse and/or addictions. In fact, it can lead them to stay silent about their issues instead of seeking help.
Shame

- Shame is an emotion that leads us to feel isolated from others, flawed, and not worthy of love and acceptance.
- Satan often takes advantage of shame. He wants to keep individuals isolated and from opening up to others.
- Some people feel their past “marks” them and makes them unworthy of love or forgiveness.

Shame Cont’d

- Christ's unmerited love and favor: His Grace – is the antidote for shame.
- Remember God doesn’t just start loving you after the shame is removed.
- Rather, because He loves you, you don’t have to live in shame.

Painful Experiences & Memories

- In life, we learn a lot about ourselves by hearing what other people tell us about ourselves. This can leave us with either a:
  1. Blessing – “I am loved no matter what.”
  2. “Curse” – “I’ll never amount to anything” “I must be perfect in order to be worthy of love.”
- Are your words and actions leaving those around you with a blessing or a “curse?”

Do You Agree With This Statement?

- “Working through our past hurts gives us the opportunity to be drawn closer to God and helps us to see God’s grace working through and redeeming the difficult circumstances in our lives.”
- Is the opposite true?

Dealing with Issues from the Past

- Dealing with issues from the past for the purpose of blaming others, “living in the past,” and/or looking for ways to escape personal responsibility isn’t helpful or consistent with Scripture.
- When issues from the past negatively affect your present day decisions, actions, and relationships, the past really isn’t in the past... it is getting replayed again and again in the present.

It is Important to Deal With Issues from Your Past When:

1. They hinder your relationship with God.
2. They hinder your relationships with others (e.g., friends, spouse, children).
3. They hinder your ability to live out God’s plan for your life.
Get First Things First

“If you try to find intimacy with another person before achieving a sense of identity on your own, all your relationships become an attempt to complete yourself.”

(From Parrott & Parrott, 1998)

Emotions and Self-Worth

- Your emotions provide you with a moment-to-moment reading of how you feel in the environment where you are.
- You get feedback as to how comfortable, in-control, valued, worthy, and/or respected you feel at that time.

Feelings Are Not Facts

- Your feelings and your true worth are not the same things.
- Feelings fluctuate up and down -- sometimes very quickly -- in a short time.
- These fluctuations are due to changes in how you feel about your performance, who you are with at the time, and how well you think you rate in the eyes of others, etc.

TRUE GUILT

1. OCCURS WHEN: We sin (“miss the mark”)
2. WE FEEL: True guilt called conviction
3. SENT BY: The Holy Spirit because God is Holy and He chastens those He loves
5. OUR RESPONSE: Repentance, Confession, Restitution
6. LEADS TO: Forgiveness, restoration and a deepening of relationship with God and others
7. WE FEEL: Hope

FALSE GUILT

1. OCCURS WHEN: Our emotions and/or confused about God
2. WE FEEL: False guilt called “shame”
3. SENT BY: Satan, Hurt Emotions, Some Relationships, Theological Misunderstandings, Emotional Disorders
4. MESSAGE TO US: “You’ve messed up again. There is no hope. You’re washed up. What if you’ve gone one step too far to be forgiven?”
5. OUR RESPONSE: Hiding, Internal Turmoil, Fear
6. LEADS TO: Isolation and fear of openness with God and others
7. WE FEEL: Hopelessness, Despair, Shame

When TRUE GUILT Morphs into FALSE GUILT

1. OCCURS WHEN: We recognize our actions as sinful, feel true guilt as conviction from the Holy Spirit, repent for the sin, and try to make things right.
2. WE MAY FEEL: That while we are truly sorry and want to be forgiven by God, that for some reason(s), we still aren’t forgiven.
3. CAUSED BY: The misbelief that feeling forgiven is true indicator of being forgiven.
4. MESSAGE TO US: “If you still feel guilty, you must be guilty. You must not have repented correctly or thoroughly enough. Try again.”
5. OUR RESPONSE: Repeated confessions to God and others, continual searching for emotional confirmation of forgiveness.
6. LEADS TO: The False Guilt Cycle of shame, discouragement, and despair.
Two Ways to Approach Uncertainty, Trials, and Low Self-Worth

#1 “Magic” Faith
- “Dear God, If (When) ____., then I will ____.”
- “Magic Faith” is trying to get God to conform to our will. It is really bargaining.
- After living this way, many people end up feeling betrayed by God because He didn’t come through the way He was “supposed to.”
- However, He didn’t agree to the conditions in the first place!

#2 “Biblical Faith”
- “Dear God, Even though _____ I will/choose to _____."
- “Biblical Faith” is conforming our will to God’s will even when our feelings don’t match and/or we don’t understand why certain things occur.
- It is not contingent on circumstances.
- Is surrendering our will to God.
- Sometimes it can be very difficult to do!

Living “As If”
- When your feelings and your Christian beliefs don’t match, live “as if” your beliefs are true…. they are!
- Example: “I don’t feel lovable, but the Bible says that God loves me. Because God’s Word is true, today I choose to live my life trusting that He loves me -- even when my feelings say otherwise.”
- Faith is not a feeling.
- Faith is what you believe, not what you feel.

Living “As If” Cont’d
- True faith is not the complete absence of doubt or struggle; rather, it is trusting in God even when the evidence to do so is limited or is apparently absent altogether.
- Mark 9:24 “… Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”

Don’t Confuse Your Feelings with God’s Love
- Unfortunately, many people don’t just gauge their self-worth based on their feelings; they also base their peace with God and their salvation on their feelings.
- Your true value, based on God’s love and grace, is steady and constant.
- Peace with God is a “state of relationship” not simply a feeling.

Our Emotions vs. God’s Love
- Our Emotions
- God’s Love
**Isaiah 32:17**, "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever."

**Colossians 1:19-22**, "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled. In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight."

**Romans 8:33-39**

33 “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.
34 “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.
35 “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?”
36 “As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”
37 “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.”
38 “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?”
39 “Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

**What’s Wrong With This Picture?**

**Spiritual Gifts & Your Role In The Body Of Christ**

**What is Your Purpose in Life?**

1. You were planned for God’s pleasure.
2. You were formed for God’s family.
3. You were created to become like Christ.
4. You were shaped for serving God.
5. You were made for a mission.

**Many People, One Body**

Romans 12:4-8
4 “For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office.”
5 “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”
6 “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us; whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;”
7 “Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching;”
8 “Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.”

**Romans 8:33-39**

33 “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.
34 “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.
35 “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?”
36 “As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”
37 “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.”
38 “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?”
39 “Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

**What’s Wrong With This Picture?**

**Spiritual Gifts & Your Role In The Body Of Christ**

**What is Your Purpose in Life?**

1. You were planned for God’s pleasure.
2. You were formed for God’s family.
3. You were created to become like Christ.
4. You were shaped for serving God.
5. You were made for a mission.

**Many People, One Body**

Romans 12:4-8
4 “For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office.”
5 “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”
6 “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us; whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;”
7 “Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching;”
8 “Or he that exhorteoth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.”
God has provided each Believer with spiritual gifts for the purpose of strengthening the Body of Believers and glorifying God. (1 Cor. 12:1-31; Eph. 4:7-13; Rom. 12:3-8)

Ephesians 4:7-8 “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.”

Ephesians 4:11-12 “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers: for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”

1 Peter 4:10-11
10 “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”
11 “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

You are a Steward

Exodus 4:10-14
10 “And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.”
11 “And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man’s mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or the deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?”
12 “Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.”
13 “And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send.”
14 “And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart.”

You are S.H.A.P.E.D for Serving God

- You have been uniquely created, gifted, shaped, and molded by God. You have:
  S – Spiritual Gifts – given to you by God
  H – Heart – things you feel strongly about
  A – Abilities – natural talents you can use
  P – Personality – uniqueness in relating to others
  E – Experiences – give you perspective on life

Four Tasks for Identifying and Developing Spiritual Gifts

1. Desiring
2. Determining*
3. Developing
4. Doing
### Use Your Spiritual Gifts

- Use what you have been given for God’s glory.
- We are responsible for using our talents to the fullest (see the parable of the talents in **Matt. 25:14-30**).
- Watch out for the tendency to point out what other people should be doing.
  - **John 21:21-22** “Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.”

### One of Satan’s Biggest Lies: Comparison of Spiritual Gifts

- Comparison keeps many Believers from using their spiritual gifts.
- “She does that so much better than me.”
- “I can’t do much; so why try?”
  - **2 Corinthians 10:12** “…but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.”

### Comparison Cont’d

- God *never intended* for us to have to be “the best” at something in order for us to use our gifts!
- There will always be someone better than you (looks, intelligence, money, strength, social skills, humor, etc.). The sooner you accept this, the sooner you can stop trying to perform up to impossible standards and start serving God the way He created you to be.

### Satisfaction and Joy

- It is a God-given blessing to experience satisfaction and joy when we do God’s will.
- By doing good for others, we feel more positive about our relationship with God, relationships with others, and ourselves.
  - **Matthew 25:21** “Well done, thou good and faithful servant”

### Satisfaction and Joy Cont’d

- When we bless others, we also receive a blessing.
  - **Luke 6:38** “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.”

### Results of Christ-Centered Self-Worth

- “An accurate, biblical self-concept contains both strength and humility, both sorrow over sin and joy about forgiveness, a deep sense of our need for God’s grace and a deep sense of the reality of God’s grace.”
- Instead of making us proud or self-reliant, a Christ-centered self-worth leads us to feel such gratitude for God that we desire to serve Him more fully and faithfully.