Apostolic Christian Counseling And Family Services

877-370-9988
www.accounting.org
info@accounting.org

1. Problems with low self-worth, self-esteem, identity (negative self-evaluation), and feelings of inferiority (feeling less than others)
2. Loneliness and lack of companionship
3. Feelings of not “fitting in” in the church
4. Worry about being single in the future

In order to deal with these issues we need:
• An accurate, truth-based identity
• A well-ordered, Christ-centered heart
• Healthy Relationships

Your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are directly related.

Events + Thoughts and Beliefs = Emotions and Behavior
(Feelings that you are worthless, putting too much stock in your works, etc.)

In forming an accurate identity, we often have to “put off” the thoughts and feelings that lead to an inaccurate perception of ourselves and “put on” what is true.

- **Hebrews 12:1.** “Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”
- **Ephesians 4:21-22.** “If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts”
What To Put On

- Ephesians 4:23-24, “And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”
- Colossians 3:10, “And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.”
- Isaiah 61:10, “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.”

Aligning Thoughts With TRUTH

- Often, our thinking patterns hinder our ability to accept the truth and to act on it.
- We need to understand how various events can trigger unhealthy thought patterns and lead to unhealthy behaviors or feelings.
- It is important to monitor our thoughts and replace what is unhealthy or distorted with the truth.
- Proverbs 23:7 “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he…”

Steps Toward Forming Your Identity: Faith In Scriptural Truths

- Your self-image, esteem and value are not based on “self” but rather on God.
- His image in you and your place in his family define you.
- Psalm 139:14 “I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.”

You Are Created In The Image of God

- Genesis 1:26-27 “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”

This truth connects us with one another and with God.

It takes both masculinity and femininity to fully express God’s image.

Who Are You?

- Many people define their identity by what they do. Therefore, their work equals their worth.
- Many people also define their identity by their marital status.
- Our ability to do changes drastically over time.
- Marital status is equally insufficient to define one’s identity.
- Who we are in Christ is steady and constant.
Steps Towards Forming Your Identity: Identifying Your Gifts

- You can reflect the light of God through your:
  - Gifts, personality, behavior, abilities, and desires.
  - “We are marvelously unique, created to reflect the character of Christ through our individual personalities and behavior. In a different and special way, each believer has the capability to shine forth the light of God. No two will reflect light in exactly the same way.”

- 2 Timothy 1:6-7. “Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”

- Being equipped is about God’s spirit; not our abilities.
- Being equipped is about God’s worthiness; not about us earning or deserving His favor.

The Danger Of Comparison

- 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.”

- 1 Peter 4:10, “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”
- God’s grace comes in many forms including the special gifts he has given you to use in the Body of Christ.

- 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.

Christ-Centered Identity

- “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.

You Are Equipped By God’s Spirit

Using Your Gifts

Insecurity in your Christian Identity:

Leaves you striving for the love and approval of others.

Security in your Christian Identity:

Allows you to accept Christ’s love and approval.

****You can find a spiritual gifts inventory on our website, www.accounseling.org/spiritualgifts.
**A Well-Ordered, Christ-Centered Heart**

- “Loving the right thing, to the right degree, in the right way, with the right kind of love.”  
  (Mark 12:30).
- Allowing the Holy Spirit to transform you from the inside out.  
  (Romans 12:2)
- A deeper, clearer perception of God’s presence in the routine of daily living.  
  (Colossians 3:17)

**Loneliness And Lack Of Companionship**

- Paul’s desire to be with the Lord and to be with companions
  - 2 Timothy 4:9-18
- Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane
  - Mark 14:32-37
- Jesus had a need for connection with both God and people.
- His solution: seeking God and securing companionship

**Dealing With Loneliness**

- Loneliness can be experienced in various ways.
  - Physical separation from others; separated by distance
  - Emotional: Feeling alone and lonely even when around other people
  - Relational: Not having close relationships; only having surface interactions
  - Spiritual loneliness: Not having a relationship with Christ or not feeling close to Christ.

**Biblical Examples of Loneliness Experiences**
“Head Knowledge” About Loneliness

- “Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee”
  - St. Augustine
- Only God truly knows us, for he made us. He understands us better than we understand ourselves.
- Whenever we experience spiritual loneliness, the change needs to occur in us, for God is constant and always available. We just don’t always acknowledge his presence or utilize it.
- Psalm 139: 5-7 “Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?”

Importance Of Relationships

- Relationships shape and sustain us.
- Our relationship with Christ shapes and sustains us for relationships with others.
- Christ offers a secure sense of belonging and ultimate acceptance out of which to interact with others.
- Ephesians 1:6 “To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”
- Colossians 1:16-17 “All things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.”

Members One Of Another

- Romans 12:5 “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”
- Are people closer to God because of their relationship with you?
- How many of your relationships are characterized by authenticity, accountability, prayer, and encouragement?

Moving “Head Knowledge” To “Heart Knowledge”

- So often, we can know something logically and even be able to conceptualize it in our minds, but we don’t “feel” it is true.
- Some ways to counteract this tendency is to:
  - Read, listen, and meditate on the Word
  - Grow in our Christian walk and in our relationship with the Lord.
  - Be mentored and discipled by more mature brothers and sisters in Christ.
- There’s not an easy or quick answer. It will look differently for everyone. However, the one commonality is that this process involves relationship.

Relationship With Christ

- In our relationship with Christ, we can find our self-worth and identity.
- We don’t have to strive for others’ approval but can focus on who we are in Christ and his unchanging favor towards us.
- It also allows us to live for and focus on something larger than ourselves. It guides us towards a meaningful mission and purpose for our life.

Healing For Loneliness

- Healthy self-worth & healthy relationships with others
- Your self-worth and your identity help determine your priorities, your values, and impact how you relate with others.
- An unhealthy self-worth can lead to:
  - Excessive dependence on others
  - Pushing others away if you think you’re too good for them/they’re not good enough for you.
Managing Loneliness Over Time

- Like many issues in our life, battling loneliness is a process rather than an issue that can be dealt with at one point in time.
- Our current sense of loneliness may be impacted by a variety of variables:
  - Your stage of life
  - Transitions
  - Moving to a new location
  - Transitions occurring in your friends or family

Use Your Voice

- Living out your truth-based identity = expressing the true you.
- You are a whole person made in God’s image with unique thoughts, feelings, and ideas.
- Strive to be an authentic person and share these unique thoughts, feelings, and ideas with others.
  - “By using our true voices, we give who we are to those around us.”

True Intimacy

- By sharing our authentic self with others, we create the environment for true intimacy.
- True intimacy is not confined to or guaranteed in marriage.
- True intimacy “is found in a community of genuineness and honesty.”

Feelings Of Not “Fitting In” In The Church

- Many things challenge our desire and need to feel like we have a place.
  - Others’ comments
  - Our own thoughts and feelings about being in a group of mixed marrieds/singles/males/females
  - Not being included (intentionally or unintentionally) for certain activities
  - Age (I’m too old for…; I’m too young for…; That activity is only for people of that age)

“I Don’t Fit In Because…”

- How do you handle it when you’re in a situation where the conversation is centered on the experiences of motherhood or wifehood?
  a. Silently stew; growing bitter
  b. Add your perspective to the conversation (experiences with kids, dealing with the opposite sex, etc.)
  c. Try shifting the conversation subject to one more compatible to the audience.
- Another option: address the situation with a close friend.

Bridging Commonalities

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• **Triggering event**: A major or minor event that causes some disruption; you interpret the event and the thoughts and feelings result.

• **Reckless thinking**: Your self-talk and how you think about the trigger event.

• **Unhealthy behavior/feelings**: Your reaction to the trigger event. Your reactions may include physical reactions in your body (fatigue, headaches, stomach problems), emotional reactions (anxiety, depression, anger, guilt, resentment, sadness), or behavioral reactions (withdrawing, yelling, emotional eating)

• **Truthful thinking**: Thoughts based on truth. The result of identifying reckless thinking, taking it captive, restructuring it, and facing the truth.

• **Healthy behavior/feelings**: The positive and appropriate result of truthful thinking.

• It can be difficult to understand how to function when your life has taken unexpected turns or hasn’t turned out how you once pictured it.

• Mourn the losses you have and are experiencing, allowing yourself to feel the difficult emotions.

• As you experience the grief, acknowledge the losses, and work through it with the Lord and with other people, you can experience the hope of the “resurrection”: God redeeming your pain.

• **An Unexpected Journey**

• **Focus On Today**

  • Take charge of your life now.
  • Don’t wait for marriage to come before you “really” start living.
  • You are a complete person in Christ now.
  • Be careful not to view marriage as the next necessary step or a higher level (even though others may imply that).

• **You Can Do It**

  • Having to manage your own finances, home and vehicle maintenance, long-term decisions, etc. can be very difficult.
  • Be proactive and ask questions about your benefits package at work, what type of insurance you need, etc.
  • Identify qualified individuals you can turn to for help in specific areas (accountants, mechanics, etc.).
  • Remember...be proactive and attempt to focus on the opportunities and not the deficits.