Our Goal

Our goal this weekend is to build understanding in the following areas:

- Recognize barriers that prevent us from seeing our value
- Christ-centered self-worth and identity
- Healthy Relationships
- Marriage by Faith

What is Your Purpose in Life?

- You were planned for God's pleasure.
- You were formed for God's family.
- You were created to become like Christ.
- You were shaped for serving God.
- You were made for a mission.

Point-in-Time Issues

- Difficult for a time, but once the situation is over, they don’t bother us anymore
- Can be solved in a linear manner:
  1. Identify the problem
  2. Figure out the solution
  3. Enact the solution

Examples:

- “Jumping” a dead car battery
- Taking a final exam in chemistry

Theme

Chapter

Psalm 139

v. 1-4 O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising. Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, And art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, But lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether…

v. 17-18 How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God: How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand:…

v. 23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart: Try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.
Process Issues
- Circular and repetitive
  - They come and go and come again.
  - Most process issues will never fully be resolved until we go to Heaven.
- Examples: prayer, self-worth, body image, humility, personal devotion, sexual temptation
- Dwelt with through repetition and growth - not through “fixing”
- A masterpiece isn’t made in a day… maturity is the goal, not perfection!

Pride = Self-Exaltation
- 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

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: 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

Inferiority Cont’d
- Often live in fear of rejection & failure and forget that 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: 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!
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 any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;”

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.

“I Don’t Fit In Because…”

- 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, etc.)

The Performance Trap

The formula below leads us to the performance treadmill -- we are held captive by fear of failure, trying to earn the approval of others, blame:

\[
\text{My Self-Esteem} = \frac{\text{My Performance}}{2} + \text{Other’s Opinions of me}
\]

Top Signs of People Pleasing

1. Being driven by guilt, fear or obligation instead of love
2. Quickly setting aside legitimate needs
3. Equating decisiveness with hurting others
4. Having difficulty living within limits
5. Being sensitive to judgments or perceived judgments of others
6. Having a need to keep life controlled
7. Being dishonest about who he or she really is
Don’t Confuse Your Feelings With God’s Love

• Your true value, based on God’s love and grace, is steady, faithful, and constant.
• Unfortunately, many people gauge both their self-worth and their peace with God by their feelings.
• It is based on a state of relationship, not simply a feeling.
  ◦ Isaiah 32:17 “And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.”
  ◦ Colossians 1:20 “And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself”

Increasing Christ-Centered Self-Worth

God doesn’t just start loving you when you are “perfect” or “good.” He’s your Creator and He knows every detail about you… even the hard things you experience like pain, hurt, guilt and shame… and He’s right beside you.

Overcoming the Obstacles

Recognize what hinders you from seeing yourself as God sees you.
Replace the deceitful messages with truth from the Word.
Release yourself from the grip it has on your life by believing and thinking on the truth.

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.
• To become fully who we were created to be, we must emulate Christ.

Adopted into God’s family...

“For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”

Romans 8:15-17
A Marvelous Work, Susceptible To Sin

- You are one of God’s marvelous works.
  - 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.”

- While we are “wonderfully made,” we still battle with our sinful flesh.
  - Psalm 139:23-24, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Our Identity: A Very Good Creation

- Our identity needs to be based on the truth: We have the image of God in us AND we have sinful flesh which we must submit to Christ.

- Rather than forming an identity based on others' opinions or on an ever-changing social standard, remember you are one of God’s children, created in Him and for Him.

- Your identity in Christ, based on God’s love and His grace, is steady, faithful, and constant.

Why We Need Christ...

- Romans 3:23 “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

- Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

- 2 Corinthians 5:21 “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

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

Body Image and Emotional Eating

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” - Ephesians 2:10

“I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.” Psalms 139:14
What is “Body Image?”

- Refers to your perception of, beliefs about, and attitudes toward your physical body.
- Body image (how you view your body) and reality (how your body really is) may be two very different things.
- Where did you learn what makes a girl beautiful?

How Does Body Image Develop?

- Listening to cultural messages (magazine covers, fashion trends, mass media) — these change over time!
- Observing and learning attitudes about weight, food, & dieting from family members
- Comparing our bodies with others who, we think, look better and worse than us
- A way to try to gain acceptance from others and to control fears about being rejected
- A way to deal with feelings of being out of control with regards to being seen as “desirable” to boys

Understanding the Causes

- Multiple factors (even church culture!) can come together to create problems with body image, weight, and eating.
- Individuals can develop similar symptoms or problems even though the factors that led to those problems are very different.
- While only a small percentage of women will develop a full-blown eating disorder, almost all women are struggling with the risk factors.

Emotional Eating

1. It occurs when food is used for reasons other than to nourish the body
2. It may happen occasionally or recurrently.
3. It can be used to soothe, comfort, punish, or hurt.
4. It may be seen as a way to relieve pain or to inflict pain.
5. It may be used to gain control, acceptance, or love.
6. Often expresses something that is difficult to put into words.
7. It may be triggered by loneliness, boredom, depression, fatigue, fear, anger, disappointment and many other situations and feelings.

Keeping Peace With Food

- Food is not the enemy!
- Eating is not a moral issue.
- Don’t label foods as “bad” or “good” or say things like, “I was bad yesterday so I have to be extra good this weekend.”
- “Fat” is not a feeling, replace it with the appropriate emotion.
- What you ate (or did not eat) and whether you exercised (or did not exercise) does not determine your self-worth.
### Real Beauty Sketches

**What keeps you from thinking you’re beautiful?**

Are there different types of beauty?

What type(s) are assigned the most value and worth?

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### What Is Beautiful?

*Psalm 90:17* “And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us; and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.”

*Isaiah 52:7* “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!”

*Psalm 29:2* “Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

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### Warning Signs: Body Issues

- Reading magazines that feature thin models and a narrow, skin-deep view of beauty
- Viewing other people’s bodies with a critical eye
- Constantly comparing your body to others
- Focusing on so-called “body flaws” when you look in the mirror
- Not liking the body you have; wishing you had a different one

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### Finding the Correct Standard

- **Flawed thinking**: Setting standards for body image and eating based on shape, youth, fads, culture, and the media
- **Correct thinking**: Setting standards for body image and eating based on health, your genetic makeup, and Scripture

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### Healthy Relationships

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

- “She does that so much better than me.”
- “Why can’t I do all the things that she can?”

"...but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.” *2 Corinthians 10:12*

- God never intended for us to have to do “the most” or be “the best” at things in order to serve Him!
Accept It and Move On!

- There will always be someone that can accomplish "more" than you or who is better than you in terms of 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.
- Your responsibility is to live up to God’s design for your life as you are empowered by Him.

Mirror, Mirror Challenge

- 2 Corinthians 10:12 “…but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.”
- We continually look to one another to see how we are doing.
- We can redeem this habit by looking for examples of Christ-likeness rather than looking for a comparison/contrast to ourselves.
- We should reflect Christ-likeness to one another.

Gossip and Drama

- Are you pure in your thoughts and actions toward others?
  "If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin…” James 2:8-9
- We like to "know stuff" about others. The tongue may be a small piece of us, but it can do a lot of damage!
  "A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends.” Prov. 17:28
  "Set a watch. O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.” Psalm 141:3

Social Media

- Creates a false sense of safety and security (“No one will see this text”)
- Easier to say things we wouldn’t say in person
- Inappropriate pictures
- Ask yourself: How are you using social media? To encourage? Tear down? Build your ego?

Watch for Key Warning Signs in Relationships

- Pride vs. Humility
  - Is it about you or God?
- Comparison
  - We are not called to be "the best" or do "the most"…we are called to be faithful.
- Infighting
  - Gossip destroys trust.
  - Don’t let Satan take advantage of the closeness of the Body.
- Respect of persons (cliques)

Watch your personal exclusivity

“For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? For sinners also love those that love them…do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again…” Luke 6:32, 35

Are we inviting others into our “family?”
"Red flags" indicating a relationship between a brother and sister is getting too close:
- Only going to events if he will be there
- Feeling possessive
- Loss of focus on others, constantly thinking about him
- Lack of accountability (texting…)
- Believing things like "Everyone else needs boundaries… but this situation’s different."

All these things could be one-sided, so you are responsible for your conduct and how you guard your heart.

It’s important to maintain accountability (either with an older sister or Bro. Kevin)

“That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;”

Philippians 2:15

We are responsible to be good stewards of our relationships.

Challenge: Are you relating to all boys in the way you would want another girl relating to your husband?

We are different from each other and this can lead to disagreements in relationships.

When there are differences:
1) Seek to maintain Mutual Respect
2) Understand the type of difference in question

Preferences
- Working Definition: Personal Opinions, Decisions, and Choices
- Examples: your favorite food, color, or way to relax are all preferences. Two individuals may agree or disagree about each other’s preferences, but neither is wrong.
- When Differences Occur: Agree to disagree

House Rules
- Working Definition: Rules of conduct established by families or groups of closely-related people
- Examples: How to educate children; curfew times for teens, family traditions.
- When Differences Occur: Live according to your conscience before God AND respect that others may choose differently
Organizational Norms

**Working Definition:** Standards of conduct, behavior, dress, and participation/non-participation in activities established by businesses, churches, and social/service organizations.

**Examples:** Policies, practices, and procedures put in place by an organization. This level is where many church traditions and practices are found.

**When Difference Occur:** Respect authority and be submissive

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Biblical/Moral Absolutes

**Working Definition:** God’s moral law that is explicitly stated in the Bible as either command or principle. True for all people, in all places, at all times.

**Example:** Exodus 20:14, “Thou shalt not commit adultery” is a biblical absolute. Adultery is sin in God’s eyes – period.

**When Differences Occur:** Don’t compromise

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To Summarize: When Differences Occur In...

- **Preferences:** Agree to disagree
- **House Rules:** Live according to your conscience before God AND respect that others may choose differently
- **Organizational Norms:** Respect authority and be submissive
- **Biblical Absolutes:** Don’t compromise
- **Always maintain mutual respect!**

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Recognize We Are Designed To Be Different from Each Other...

Romans 12:4-6 “For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us...”

1 Corinthians 12:18 “But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him...”
...Yet We Are To Be Unified by Christ

Philippians 1:27: “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ; that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”

Key Relationships

1. **Paul (Mentor)** – An older and wiser Christian person who can give you advice, perspective, direction, and corrective feedback.

2. **Barnabas (Accountability Partner)** – A peer who is in the same life-stage as you. Good for support, encouragement, and accountability.

3. **Timothy (Person that you Mentor)** – Someone who is younger than you that you can help learn and grow.

Be Authentic in your Relationships

I Corinthians 12:25, “That there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another.”

- **“Surface Community”** occurs when the members of a group all relate to each other in a superficial way.
  - Get Past the Surface - purpose within yourself to deepen your conversations with others.
  - Deepen your relationships so that when (not if) you are struggling, others are close enough to notice and help.
  - Satan loves for us to stay in the “shallow end.”

- Try to have the type of caring community & family atmosphere where church is a place people feel like they can safely share their struggles.

Learn to Ask for Help

- Satan desires to separate Believers and keep them isolated in their major and minor struggles.
- The “I have to do it on my own” mindset is not a biblical perspective.
- Realize feeling inferior and/or guilty for needing help from others is a lie from Satan.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 “Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.”

Are you Doing Your Part?

- Shift the focus off of yourself and onto serving others…
  - What are you doing to serve today?
  - Remember, our natural tendency is not to serve!
    - Ministry should stretch us into “deeper water.”
    - “Am I being part of the solution or am I simply pointing out what I think isn’t working right?” It is easy to criticize!
    - Think of this quote: “Denouncing evil is a far cry from doing good.”
  - Remember the balance between talk and action.
    - Ecclesiastes 5:2-3, “…therefore let thy words be few. For a dream cometh through the multitude of business;…”
  - Only talk can lead to Diffusion of Responsibility…
**Diffusion of Responsibility**

Assuming it is someone else’s job to get something done:
- Don’t assume visitors or those new to the church understand the order of events, where they should go, or why certain things happen.
- Don’t assume it is someone else’s job to go up to visitors to make them feel welcome.

**Differing Responsibilities and Ministries**

- Be careful trying to fit others’ actions into your “box”
  - We are designed differently to fill different needs within the Body.
  - Careful of the bandwagon…
  - 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.”

**Reaching Out**

Sometimes God will bring individuals into our lives that don’t have a faith in Christ- start with a heart check. Ask yourself the following questions:
1. Are my actions consistent to those around me? Is the person I am on Sunday, the same person on Thursday?
2. Do my actions point others to the Truth?
3. Does my spirit welcome questions about my beliefs?
4. Is this person actively seeking the Truth?
5. Am I trying to hide the hope that lies within me?
   - 1 Peter 3:15, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”

**Reaching Out**

- The Word says there will be a difference, don’t try to hide it!
  - John 14:17, “Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”
- Do not put yourself above them:
  - “I have never met a person I could despair of, or lose all hope for, after discerning what lies in me apart from the grace of God.” Oswald Chambers
- Pray for direction and open doors, maintain accountability.
- Don’t be afraid to invite them to church, introduce them to other believers (males to other Brothers…)

**Marriage By Faith**

New Life ➔  Old Life

**What this process isn’t…**

- The ultimate solution to all (sexual issues, debt, self-worth, etc.) Issues from your past will follow you into marriage if they are not resolved before.
- Going into marriage “blind”
- Relying fully on signs or misusing Scripture to find the answer you want
- A passive, waiting around for life to change
- An assurance that everything will be perfect from here on out (“happily ever after”)
What this process is...

- Self-examination using the light of God’s Word
- Laying aside short-term wants, trusting God to take care of long-term needs
- Balancing faith and wisdom in decision making
  - Taking into consideration sound judgment and common sense (which grow from experiences and understanding) and balancing these with scriptural principles
- Obedience
- Separating out self from God’s plan for your life
  - What if God asks you to be single? What if God asks you to marry someone you didn’t foresee? Would you fight or accept these things?

Biblical examples

Which of these stories is an example of marriage by faith?
- Isaac and Rebekah?
- Ruth and Boaz?
- Jacob and Rachel?

God was able to work in each of their circumstances to bring about His plan in their lives.

Our perception is not always accurate...

- Often we only hear the “miracle” stories.
- A “no” isn’t a failure on either the brother or sister’s part, but it can be used for growth and self-examination.
- Watch for the fear there’s something wrong with you if you aren’t getting proposals.
- Brothers have more control in this system, and this perception can lead to bitterness.

“For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?” - Luke 14:28

Obstacles that get in the way...

- Prejudice of the brother/ his family
- Appearances
- Pride/ selfish lifestyle
- Pressure from friends/ family/ church
- Distorted expectations of what marriage is
- Feelings for the individual or another person
- Goals for our life that are not surrendered to God
- Mental illness
- Waiting on absolute certainty (what does absolute certainty look like?)

Do not make a proposal bigger than it is YET do not disregard its seriousness...
**Steps to take now...**

**Before a proposal:**
- Grow in your experiences/ healthy relationships with others
- Check your motives for why you desire marriage
  - Do I feel it will solve my problems? Status?
- Understand others’ experiences with Marriage By Faith
- Grow in your relationship with God:
  - Seek to understand His plans and purpose for you
  - Do not “wait around for the next best thing” to appear

**Steps to take now...**

**Before a proposal:**
- Remember you are a complete person in Christ now
- Be proactive and attempt to focus on the opportunities and not the “deficits”
- Focus on today, not the future
- Be careful not to view marriage as the next necessary step or a higher level (even though others may imply that)

**Steps to take now...**

**Before a proposal:**
- Take an inventory of where you are at emotionally, spiritually, relationally, financially, physically
- Any things you should be working on now which would interfere with a relationship?
- Recognize the ways life may not have turned out the way you wanted
- As you experience grief, acknowledge the losses, and work through it with the Lord and other people - you can experience hope...God can redeem your pain!

*Do not look for perfection, but a better understanding of your strengths & weaknesses.*

**Steps to take now...**

**If you do have a proposal:**
- Take your time
- Pray about God’s plan for you… and whether or not this is marriage - *He will not “hide” His will from you*
- Do not make your decision in isolation- talk to someone you trust (i.e. elder, parents, mentor)
- Ask good questions- to yourself, your elder, possibly the brother involved
- *Remember there is no “right” or “wrong” answer*

**Living abundantly as a singleperson...**

- Identify your gifts and desires and use them for God’s glory.
- Reach out to people who are in all of the various stages in life.
- Fight the tendency to believe that life starts when you get married.
- Seek out someone whom you can mentor and seek out someone who can mentor you.
- Remember your worth and identity comes from your relationship with Christ.

**Discussion Groups**