



Spiritual Growth and Self-Esteem

Spiritual Growth and Self-Esteem

- Spiritual growth is a choice based on a determined mind and active body; it does not occur by passively waiting for it to come to us.
- Directed by God
 - 2Peter 3:18 - “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”
- Assisted by God
 - Phil. 2:13 - “For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure”

Spiritual Growth and Self-Esteem

- Blessed by God

- 2Peter 1:8-11 - “For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. 10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; 11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Spiritual Growth and Self-Esteem

- Requires diligent effort
 - Phil. 2:12 - “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”

Spiritual Growth and Self-Esteem

- Many Christians do not reach their potential for spiritual growth
 - Character development is random and minimal; consequently, abilities are underdeveloped
 - Years pass by with little or no progress

Spiritual Growth and Self-Esteem

- In some cases, the reason is poor self-image
 - This causes many Christians to underestimate their potential
 - Do not believe in themselves; in some cases, misled into thinking self-abasement is a virtue
 - Because they do not believe in themselves, they do not see what God and many others see in them.

Self-Esteem And Christians

- Self-esteem is our internal feelings and evaluation of ourselves based on our personally “perceived” self-image. It is how we feel about ourselves, based on how we view ourselves
- Self-esteem and self-image are closely related; often on feedback during childhood and school years
- Feedback comes first from others (parents, peers, other persons important to us)
- Over time, it is reinforced by our own self-talk (what we tell ourselves)

Self-Esteem And Christians

- Healthy self-esteem is enhanced by childhood experiences that include:
 - Being complimented for doing well and reaching your potential
 - Being listened to and spoken to with respect for you as a person
 - Getting healthy attention and expressions of affection
 - Experiencing success in education, sports, creativity, chores, etc
 - Having trusted relationships
 - Being corrected in a manner that demonstrates concern for their well-being, and not as an inconvenience for others

Self-Esteem And Christians

- Childhood experiences that lead to low self-esteem include:
 - Being harshly criticized, yelled at, or punished erratically or unfairly
 - Being ignored, ridiculed, or bullied
 - Being expected to be “perfect” all the time
 - Experiencing constant failure in daily activities and challenges
 - People with low self-esteem were often given the message that failed experiences (losing a game, getting a poor grade, etc.) means that they are failures as persons

Self-Esteem And Christians

- The consequences of poor self-esteem:
 - Can create anxiety, stress, loneliness, and a risk of depression
 - Can cause problems with relationships
 - Can seriously impair academic and job performance
 - Can lead to a lifetime of underachievement and increased vulnerability to drug and alcohol abuse and promiscuity
 - Most importantly in spiritual matters, they do not believe they are worth saving and often act in ways to make that true

Self-Esteem And Christians

- If they remain in the church, they do so believing they are evil, hypocritical, always doubting they will ever get to heaven.
- They have little or no confidence and joy in the Lord
- They are marginally involved in the Lord's work believing they are incapable of good or that they will fail or lead others to fail
- These negative consequences reinforce the negative self-image and take one into a downward spiral of lower and lower self-esteem and increasingly nonproductive and often actively self-destructive behavior

Self-Esteem And Christians

- Christians have two primary reasons for having a healthy self-image:
 - Dignity by virtue of Divine generation
 - Dignity by virtue of spiritual regeneration

Self-Esteem And Christians

- Dignity by virtue of Divine generation
- We were created in God's image
 - Gen. 1:26-27 - "Then God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."
- We were created to exercise dominion
 - Gen. 1:28 - "Then God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Self-Esteem And Christians

- God has fully demonstrated His high estimation of humankind by His love for us
 - John 3:16 - “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”
 - 1John 4:10 - “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”
 - Rom. 5:8 - “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Self-Esteem And Christians

- Dignity by virtue of spiritual regeneration
- Once we were sinners, but we have been regenerated
 - Titus 3:5 - “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit”
- We are now reborn as His children
 - 1John 3:1 - “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!”

Self-Esteem And Christians

- Christians have other reasons for having self-respect
- The blessing of continued forgiveness and renewal when we stumble back into sin
 - 1John 1:9 - 2:2 - “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. 2:1 My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”

Self-Esteem And Christians

- The blessing of being a part of the greatest family this world will ever enjoy -- God's family (the church), who, like the best of families, is there for each other
 - Heb. 3:12-13 - "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; 13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called Today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."
 - Heb. 10:25 - "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."

Self-Esteem And Christians

- The blessing of God's own assurance never to forsake us, distinct from the manipulative, co-dependent relationships of this world that threaten to leave or withhold love or else
 - Heb. 13:5-6 - "Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you. 6 So we may boldly say: The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"
- The fact is, God highly esteems His children. Even though we sin, He wants us to have a healthy estimation of ourselves.

Self-Esteem And Spiritual Growth

- Poor self-image hinders spiritual growth
- Proper self-esteem enhances spiritual growth

Self-Esteem And Spiritual Growth

- Consider the healthy self-esteem of the apostle Paul:
- For himself
 - Phil. 4:13 - “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

Self-Esteem And Spiritual Growth

- For others
 - Phil. 1:6 - “Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ”
 - Phil. 2:12-13 - “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”

Practical Steps For Improving Self-Esteem

- Identify and accept your strengths, weaknesses; everyone has them, no one is completely perfect
- Envision an “I can” attitude and try it on, and offer yourself encouragement along the way. Coach yourself
- Set small, realistic goals in the beginning, and then take joy in your achievements (giving God the glory), and reward yourself with a kind word and encouraging self-talk
- Each success will fuel the next one; achieve a small one yesterday, set a larger today

Practical Steps For Improving Self-Esteem

- Don't try to be someone else; be thankful for who you are.
 - God believes in you; look at what He has done to show His faith in you.
 - The church here believes in you; we are often frustrated at our limited capacity to communicate that to you.
 - Please come to see what God and His children see in you
- Explore your own talents; learn to love and appreciate the unique person you are

Practical Steps For Improving Self-Esteem

- Eliminate negative self-talk; consider the following:
 - It takes about twenty positive statements about ourselves to counteract just one negative personal statement
 - It doesn't take a continual repetition of negative statements from our parents, peers, and others throughout our childhood to maintain our low self-esteem.
 - Once we get a couple of them fixed in our head, we use them over and over again, taking those false negatives and repeating them unconsciously, like having a constant heckler in our heads

Spiritual Growth and Self-Esteem

- Poor self-esteem is a major hindrance to spiritual growth
 - We make excuses for not trying
 - We often give up before we make progress
- On the other hand, spiritual growth greatly enhances self-esteem
 - As we grow, our achievements encourage us to do more
 - As we grow, we gain confidence that we are on the right track

Spiritual Growth and Self-Esteem

- Rather than let a mistaken estimation of self to hinder our service to God:
 - Allow God's estimation of us to enhance our self-image and self-esteem
 - Allow God's estimation of us to encourage the spiritual growth of which we are capable
 - We will feel better about ourselves leading to doing better which will lead to feeling better which will lead to doing better which will lead to... ad infinitum