**How Do I Gain Self Esteem?**

Self esteem: **Self**: n. a person’s essential being that distinguishes them from others, especially that which is deep inside. **Esteem**: n. respect and admiration, honor and reverence for an individual.

Living in the world today we are inundated with the idea that we need to feel good about ourselves. The concept of a positive self-image and sense of personal worth seems to have risen to near the top of the pyramid of character traits we wish for our children. The result is that we teach our children from a very early age that ultimate right and wrong are not necessarily the most important thing. Rather, we have rewarded their efforts with “participation trophies”, we have played sports where no one keeps score so that there are no “losers”, we confirm that their efforts were wonderful, regardless of their outcome.

A positive self-image is undoubtedly an important character trait for anyone to possess. The question at hand is, how do we accomplish that task from a Biblical perspective? What does God have to say about our social development? How do we develop Godly, well balanced children in the environment that we find ourselves in?

Social media confirms to those immersed in it’s “make believe world” that other’s lives are wonderful and amazing. We see only the positive posts from other people of their incredible adventures, but never the down side of their existence. And we then compare those rose-colored stories to our meager experience. As a result, our personal self-worth plummets.

Product commercialization has led us to become a society that values physical attractiveness-however that is defined at any given moment-as the greatest factor in deciding how acceptable we are to others. We all are prone to develop a personal definition of what we consider the perfect goal. The deciding factors include money, body weight, height, color of hair, body type, whiteness of teeth, personal hygiene, clothes…all physical issues over which we may have very little control. We don’t want to become the butt of a joke or the target of a bully.

Left to our own thoughts and personal inward focus, our tendency is to spiral down into self-pity and loathing for the hand that we have been dealt in life. Not everyone descends deeply into the abyss, but an honest evaluation of our lives will show that all of us, at times, teeter on the edge of a very deep chasm.

The question then becomes, “How do I gain self esteem?” Strangely, the Bible NEVER tells us that we need to gain self esteem, that we need to feel better about ourselves. Rather, God tells us that we need to have less inward focus on our lives and more outward focus upon others. Romans 12:3 is a perfect example. Paul states, “*Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment…”* He then immediately segues into the concept of concern and investment in other people’s lives.

Does God not want us to feel confident about ourselves and have a positive self-image? Certainly, but in balance. Low self-image, low self-esteem, is the natural outgrowth of pride. That may seem to be an oxymoron but allow a bit of explanation. Many times, through the Bible, God warns us of pride. It is the default characteristic of the human condition. When our focus is upon ourselves, we tend to see only the aspects of our lives that we want to see, and we ignore those things that are of concern to God. And as our lives revolve more and more upon ourselves, we will, ultimately, discover them to be empty and shallow, puffed up like a marshmallow—a life with very little actual substance. Adam was created with an innate need to invest his life in other people. We all inherited that characteristic. It’s how God planned things. And our complete fulfillment in life can only be realized when we do things God’s way.

Jesus was asked what He considered to be the greatest commandment. His response is quite telling. He taught that we are to love God with every fiber of our being. That we can understand clearly. But He followed that statement with a second comment that must follow the first. We are to love others. Truly there are moments that we must reflect upon ourselves and correct or adjust our lives according to God’s teaching. Introspection can be a wonderful tool to bring our lives into alignment with the Word. But the commandment is specifically geared to remind us that the focus of our lives must move from “me, myself and I” to others that we are in contact with each day. Only then will our lives have meaning and fulfilment—and ultimately, self-worth.

We don’t need SELF-esteem. We need GOD-esteem!

We will only be comfortable and content with our condition and place in life when we see that we are His creation. Formed in His likeness and placed in the exact position in life that He desired, He gave us the physical attributes and personality that pleased Him most—warts and all! Who are we to say He was wrong?! We must respect and follow His plan.

God loves us dearly. None of us is simply a random face in a sea of humanity to God. One of the key character traits of God is that of zeal. Zeal is defined as “being intensely interested and invested in something or someone.” When we recognize that simple truth involves each of us, that God is pouring His love and affection into each of our lives, it changes everything.

The Bible describes our position as “being heirs.” Have you ever seen the movie “Tangled”? A young lady going through life begins to realize that she has been lied to. She is not who she was initially led to believe. She discovers that she is the long-lost child of the king and queen, is ultimately reunited with them, and they live happily ever after. Sounds a bit like salvation to me. He gave us an amazing gift—salvation. A relationship with Him now, and an eternity of perfection to come!

Ultimately, the Biblical recipe for personal self-esteem is tied firmly to how well we live by God’s standards. His plan revolves around the concept that we focus upon others, that we display love in the world that we walk through each day, that we invest our time, talent, and money into the lives of other people. When we get that balance correct, when we have God-esteem, our sense of self-worth, our view of our lives will be where it needs to be.