

## BUILDING YOUR SELF-IMAGE - Josh McDowell

We are all made in the image of the Creator -- "You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor" (Ps 8:5). 12

### 1. SELF-IMAGE: WHAT IS IT? 19

Our mental self-portrait, that self-image, has a tremendous bearing on our emotional and spiritual well-being... Research has shown that *we tend to act in harmony with our mental self-portrait. If we don't like the kind of person we are, we think no one else likes us either. And that influences our social life, our job performance, our relationships with others.* 20

"For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather **think of yourself with sober judgment**, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you" Rm 12:3.

*What you think of yourself, your self-image or sense of self-worth, influences every part of your life... Our self-images have definite structures, composed of conclusions we have reached about ourselves.* 22 *Your self-image ebbs and flows in daily interactions.* 23

People with a **GOOD & HEALTHY SENSE of SELF-WORTH** *feel significant. They believe that they matter, even that the world is a better place because they are there. Such persons can interact with others and appreciate their worth too. They radiate hope, joy, and trust. They are alive to their feelings. They accept themselves as delightful to God - a ship moving forward confidently, under full sail. They believe in themselves as lovable, worthy and competent parts of God's creation, sinful by nature, but redeemed and reconciled to God to become all he wants them to be.* 24

An **INADEQUATE SELF-IMAGE** robs us of the energy and power of attention to relate to others *because we are absorbed with our own inadequacies.* That is especially true when we're in the presence of people who remind us of our shortcomings or whose judgment about ourselves we value and want to influence. In such situations we are so self-conscious that we cannot give sufficient attention to others. As a result we may be regarded as being either uncaring or proud. Our feelings of inadequacy prevent us from reaching out to love and care for others. 24,25

**-- An inadequate self-image robs us of the energy and power of attention to relate to others --** 25

Persons with an **inadequate self-image** look to others people's opinions, praise, or criticisms as *determining factors in how they feel or think about themselves* at a particular

moment. Persons with a poor sense of self-worth are *slaves to the opinions of others*. *They are not free to be themselves*. 25

Regrettably, many people perceive themselves more according to a *picture of themselves formed early in life* than by their accomplishments as adults. Any individuals who are outwardly successful are constantly depressed and anxious inside because of the poor self-image they developed in childhood. 25

Persons with a ***poor sense of self-worth*** expect to be cheated, rejected, and deprecated (to express disapproval of; deplore; to belittle; depreciate) in life. Expecting the worst, *they often create what they fear*. They engage in self-defeating behaviors, distrusts, and suspicions. They struggle with the tension of trying to be acceptable while believing they are not. 25

It's like the old illustration of a ***black speck*** on a white page. Some people see the black speck and focus on it. Others see all the white space and concentrate on that. *It depends on one's perspective*. 26

If you see yourself as a failure, you will find some way to fail, no matter how hard you want to succeed. On the other hand, *if you see yourself as **adequate** and **capable**, you will face life with more optimism and perform nearer your best*. 28

Bk: How Much Are You Worth? (John DeVines) -- ***Your view of yourself is far more important than most people think it is...*** The answer to how ***much I am worth determines whether I am happy or sad, excited or depressed, in love with life or thinking about suicide***. If ***I think that I am valuable - worth a lot - I will function well at my job, get along better with my spouse, and have a tremendous sense of well-being***. But if I think I am ***worthless***, I lack motivation for work, and am convinced that everything I do will fail. 28

## 2. A NEW NAME for a BIBLICAL CONCEPT 31

*The following verses indicate that we do think and have feelings about ourselves:*

- Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to *your own interests*, but also to the interests of others. ***Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus***. Ph 2:2-5
- For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: *Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought*, but rather ***think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you***. Rm 12:3
- ...and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Col 3:10
- Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Rom 12:16
- And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Phil 4:7

- "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline" 2 Tim 1:7. 37

*Paul referred to the thoughts, beliefs, and feelings that individuals are to have toward themselves when he said we each should have the **same attitude within ourselves that Christ had**: Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, **did not consider equality** with God something to be grasped, but **made himself nothing**, taking the very **nature of a servant**, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he **humbled himself** and **became obedient to death** -- even death on a cross! Phil 2:5-16      *Paul alluded to his own self-image when he wrote, "By the grace of God **I am what I am** (1 Cor. 15:10). Other of Paul's statements include: "Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else" (Gal. 6:4). 38**

Thus far we have defined **self-image** as "what we think and feel ourselves to be."

-- **A healthy self-image is "seeing yourself as God sees you - no more and no less"** --  
39

The **key** to bringing unity in the midst of such diversity is for Christians to *be honest in evaluating themselves and the gifts God has given them for His service*. They should do that, however, without comparing themselves with others in attempts to see if they are superior or inferior. Paul said that those who compare themselves with others "are without understanding" (2 Cor. 10:12). He also emphasized that we should not evaluate our gifts and abilities in order to exalt ourselves over others or to brag about our special characteristics. Rather we should look at ourselves and our God-given abilities as a basis from which to serve others. 41

Jesus' death on the cross was the payment for our sins. You are **worth Jesus** to God because that is what He paid for you. That is His statement of your value. And God's view of you and your worth is the true one. 42

This is the one and only solution for the paradox of human nature, a paradox for which secular psychologists have found no explanation. Only through a loving God's intervention can humankind's two natures be reconciled. That reconciliation is divine solution, foreign to human intellect and understanding. 43

The distinction between **self-worth** and **pride** is hard to perceive. **Self-worth** is a conviction that you have fundamental value because you were created by God in His image and because Jesus died for your sins. **Pride** points to self. It is rooted in the pleasure you find in yourself for what you believe you can do or have done with your life. **Pride** is an attitude of superiority, a puffed-up mentality, that manifests itself in an arrogant, unrealistic estimation of oneself in relation to others. 44

"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because **I am fearfully and wonderfully made**; your works are wonderful, I know

that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be" Ps 139:13-16. 44

Elizabeth Skoglund writes: "Many people confuse the distinctions among *pride*, *humility*, and good *self-esteem*. The problem is not that self-esteem contradicts the scriptures but rather that the words pride and humility are not correctly understood in the total light of scripture. *Pride* in the biblical sense involves a not-honest estimate of oneself. Real *humility* is simply an absence of concentration upon oneself. It means that while I like and accept myself I don't need to prove my worth excessively either to myself or to others." 45

**Humility:** "knowing who you are, knowing who made you who you are, and giving God the glory for it." 45 In humility we acknowledge our weaknesses and strengths, our shortcomings and abilities, our limitations and special-ness, all in the light of who we are in Christ. So humility includes not only being grateful for our abilities but also trusting God for our inadequacies. 46

A **healthy self-image** acknowledges the workmanship of Christ that is innate in our being. 46 A healthy sense of self-worth is fundamental in drawing us closer to God: *it elevates our concept of God who gave us such worth. A healthy self-image also elevates in our minds the worth of others, whom we are to consider "more highly than ourselves."* 47

**Poor self-image:** we become preoccupied with ourselves, concentration on our own needs. We constantly position ourselves in order to be accepted by others. 47

**Positive self-image:** once we see ourselves as God sees us and realize who we are - that we're uniquely made in God's image and are loved, accepted, forgiven - we are set free from self-preoccupation, to being concerned for other people... **Servanthood** seems to have its roots in a healthy self-image. 47 A positive self-image is a by-product of pursuing the goals of knowing Christ and of being conformed to His image. 49

-- **Having a healthy self-esteem is not our ultimate goal. Knowing Christ in all His fullness is** -- 49

### 3. RESULTS OF A POOR SELF-IMAGE 51

One of the most profound effects of a poor self-image can be seen in the **attitude a person develops towards one's world**. Persons with an unhealthy self-image have a **fearful, pessimistic view of the world and of their ability to cope with its challenges**. They see unexpected or new situations as **threats** to their personal happiness and security, seemingly planned as attacks on them personally. They see the world as closing in on them, pushing and crushing them. 51

Such people tend to receive what the world sends their way *without challenging or attempting to change it*. They see themselves as **victims**, helplessly entrapped in a hostile environment. 52

Persons with a **healthy self-esteem** see the world as a **challenge** to be faced, an **opportunity** to exercise personal strength and trust in Christ. Such people assume they can have an **impact** on their world through Christ, and that by the grace of God they can **effectively change** their environment. They believe their destiny lies in what Christ can do through them, that they can and should accomplish significant things for eternity with their lives. 52

**Our perceptions** and **interpretations** of the world around us are affected by the picture we have of ourselves. A **poor self-image** distorts the messages we receive from people and the way we interpret the events in life. *Poor self-image filters out any positive messages.* 52

Persons with a **weak** or **unhealthy self-image** operate in life from any number of the following perceived factors and motivations: -- Extreme sensitivity to the opinions of other people; -- Self-consciousness about appearance, performance, or status; -- A view of the present as something to be pushed aside, focusing instead on past achievements or future dreams; -- Fear of God or belief that He is uninterested or angry with them; -- A habit of mentally re-hashing past conversations or situations, wondering what the other person meant; -- A critical and judgmental view of others; -- Defensiveness in behavior and conversations; -- An attitude of carrying a chip on their shoulder; -- Use of anger as a defense to keep from getting hurt; -- A tendency to develop clinging relationships; -- Inability to accept praise; -- A habit of using negative labels in referring to themselves; -- Perfectionist behavior regarding details. 53,54

Without **self-acceptance** it is hard to love or accept someone else. If you don't have a healthy self-acceptance, you'll continually try to prove yourself to yourself and to other people. Your lifestyle will be one of trying to *get* instead of trying to *give*. 55

"Self-Image affects Marriage" 55 Persons who don't have good self-acceptance focus on getting their own needs met (often accomplishing that badly) and not on meeting the needs of their mate. 56

#### **4. HOW YOU DECIDED WHO YOU ARE 59**

How Do I Look? (59), How Do I Do? (61), How Important am I? (64)

*If our image of our competence is shallow*, we will feel threatened when someone else succeeds. Or, when we hear of someone else's weaknesses or failures, a sense of pride may build up with us. 62

"How important am I" deals with our *status*. It's related to our ability to control or influence our group, the sense of power we have within our own gang. 64

*Your Inner Child of the Past* (by W. Hugh Missildine): A child develops his sense of being as a worth-while, capable, important, and unique individual from the attention given him by his parents. He sees or feels himself reflected in their love, approval, and attention to his needs... In childhood, in order to win the warmth, affection, and attention of his parents, the child absorbs and imitates even the gestures and grimaces of his parents as well as their way of liking himself and the world in general. The most important of these attitudes... how the parent feels about the child. This determines how the child feels about himself. He has no other guide, no other mirror that reflects what kind of person he is and whether he is worth loving. 64, 65

One of the ways we determined how important we were to our parents was by the amount of time they spent with us. We learned early in life that more important things take up more time than less important things. A child who is always forced to take second place to a job, television or the newspaper comes to feel unloved. 65

*-- All of us have formulated a mental image of ourselves based on the feelings of acceptance we received from our parent -- 65*

We *rate ourselves* by the amount of *time* and *attention* we receive. 66

Like a breakaway elephant, we can experience *freedom* from those internalized bonds. No longer need those feelings of acceptance or rejection keep us oblivious to the God-given qualities and strengths that now are ours. 67

## 5. GROWING UP WITH MOM AND DAD 69

Thus the everyday experiences of our *childhood* (not solely the traumatic ones) *were what shaped our self-images. The general atmosphere in our families contributed more to our view of ourselves than any single event.* We adopted the *general attitude of our families*, internalizing those feelings. Understanding that parental influence is a significant ingredient in our attempts to see our self-image transformed. 71

*-- If parents knew how important they are in their children's development, perhaps they would work harder to have an affirming attitude in their relationships with their children -- 71*

*The characteristics of a family that builds self-esteem in its children:* the most significant characteristic is an attitude of *unconditional acceptance* and *love*. *This attitude is a constant*; it is not something given or withdrawn depending on a child's behavior. The second characteristic is an *attitude of understanding*. 72

From the scriptures we can determine 3 important ingredients of the parenting process. The *first* ingredient is **modeling**. The *second* is **teaching**, and the *third* is **learning to relate**. 76

The NT presents **Jesus Christ as a model** of our Christian growth. Jesus is who we are to be like: My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until **Christ is formed in you**, Gal 4:19; Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the **knowledge of the Son of God** and become mature, **attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ**, Eph 4:13; Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things **grow up into Him** who is the Head, that is, Christ, Eph 4:15; But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation, Col 1:22; We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ, Col 1:28. 77

Most Christians focus on the **goal** of becoming like Christ and forget the **process** that is involved. 78, 79

A **child's development** involves 3 stages of parental influence:

1. The two-parent stage (from birth to age three) 81
2. The opposite-sex parent stage (age three to puberty) 81 -- In this stage the child needs much nurturing, love, attention, and affection from the opposite-sex parent... Until about ten years of age, a child needs lots of touching, hugging, kissing, wrestling, and snuggling from the parent of the opposite sex. During these years a child cannot receive too much healthy affection.
3. The same-sex parent stage (puberty to adulthood) 82

God takes all the circumstances of our lives, comforts us in those situations, and then uses their **hurts** and **pains** to enable us to minister to others. "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God" 2 Cor 1:3,4. "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" Rom 8:28. 84

Perhaps you too are coming to understand some of your **parent's failures** more clearly. If you are, you need to come to the point of saying, "Thank you, God, for my parent. I don't understand all of my childhood, but I trust that You will cause all of it to work together for good." 84

## 6. STORIES of CHILDHOOD 87

O'Neill's Story 87. Josh's Story 92.

"Thank you, God, for giving me my **childhood** and my **parents**." If it hadn't been for them, I wouldn't be much of what I am today. "Being confident of this, that he who

began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus"  
Phil 1:6. 96

## 7. THE CASE of the VANISHING FATHER 99

## 8. SELF-IMAGE: RESTING ON A THREE-LEGGED STOOL 115

Three basic emotional needs are common to all persons:

1. The need to feel loved, accepted; to have a *sense of belonging*.
2. The need to feel acceptable; to have a *sense of worthiness*.
3. The need to feel adequate; to have a *sense of competence*.

The pillars of belonging, worthiness, and competence are the supports on which a *healthy self-image* rests. If one pillar is underdeveloped or damaged, a person's entire self-image is lopsided, unstable, and shaky. 116

-- *The basic pillar to a healthy self-image is a sense of belonging or a feeling of being loved* -- 117

Sense of **BELONGING** or a feeling of being loved. It's the sense of security a person feels when one is accepted by other people, a feeling of being part of a relationship, loved by at least one other person. It's the knowledge that someone "really cares for me." *Belonging* is what I feel when I know I am *loved unconditionally*, just as I am. 117

Psychological research has demonstrated that the single most important factor in developing a *healthy personality is the sense of being loved and cared for and then being able to love others*. 118

Sense of **WORTHINESS** is feeling of being *acceptable to yourself*... "I like myself, I respect myself; I am not ashamed of the way I treat myself." It's a feeling of being okay, clean, right, and proper. It's the feeling that I'm good enough or worthy of another person's acceptance. I am worthy of being loved. 119

All of our experiences and feelings are related to our sense of *worthiness*. A healthy self-image demands a strong worthiness pillar. To the degree that our sense of worth is damaged or inadequate, to that degree our self-image is unstable. 120

Sense of **COMPETENCE**: *I can do it!* is the confident attitude of a person with a healthy self-image when they approach a new task. This optimistic outlook inspires them with hopefulness and courage. It is closely related to their success in solving past problems. Persons with a healthy sense of competence don't face each new day with fear but with joy and enthusiasm for the opportunities that lie ahead. 120

## 9. RESTRUCTURING THE FOUNDATION 125

We are all engaged in this process of growth, which includes the areas of our self-image. Through our relationship with God, we come to see the way He views us. *Our awareness*



*of that reality becomes a stable foundation on which our self-image can rest and develop.* That new foundation in turn gives us a sense of worth, security, and hope that we could receive no other way. Each pillar of our self-concept is being reinforced, transformed, and made secure on the new foundation of our Christian experiences. 128

**-- *The truest thing about ourselves is what the Bible says* -- 129**

Often we experience what could be called ***spiritual vertigo***. In other words, our emotions, feelings, and five sense tells us one thing, but the Word of God tells us the opposite is true. 129, 130

We learn that as we place our trust in what our instrument, the Word of God, says about us, our lives level out and we start to go forward again. A ***healthy self-image*** is being committed to the truth of God's estimation of you. 130

So often one's ***attitudes are developed*** and ***decisions are made*** on wrong assumptions or information. We base our attitudes on what we think God thinks about us and not on what He actually thinks about us, which is revealed in His Word. *The truth of Scripture about you and about me is the starting place for developing a healthy, positive self-image.* 130, 131

**-- *A healthy self-image is being committed to the truth of God's estimation of you* -- 131**

A key factor in understanding what is true of us as individuals in Christ is first to **UNDERSTAND HOW GOD IS:**

***God is king of the universe*** -- "Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all" 1 Chr 29:11; "Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all" 1 Chr 29:12; "O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you" 2 Chr 20:6; "Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle" Ps 24:8. This means that all circumstances are ultimately in His hand. He is in control of my life.

***God is righteous*** -- "Righteous are you, O LORD, and your laws are right" Ps 119:137. He cannot sin against me.

***God is just*** -- "He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he" Deu 32:4. He will always be fair with me.

***God is love*** -- "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love" 1 John 4:8. He wants to help me get the most out of life.

**God is eternal** -- "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. He will drive out your enemy before you, saying, 'Destroy him!'" Deu 33:27. The plan He is working out for me is everlasting.

**God is all-knowing** -- "For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war." 2 Chr 16:9. "For the director of music. Of David. A psalm. O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD. You hem me in--behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain" Psa 139:1-6. He knows all about me and my situation and how to work it out for good.

**God is everywhere** -- "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast." Ps 139:7-10. There is no place I can go that He won't take care of me

**God is all-powerful** -- "I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted" Job 42:2. There is nothing He can't do on my behalf.

**God is truth** -- "Into your hands I commit my spirit; redeem me, O LORD, the God of truth" Ps 31:5. He cannot lie to me.

**God is unchangeable** -- "I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed" Mal 3:6. I can depend on Him.

**God is faithful** -- "And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness" Exo 34:6. "May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus" Rom 15:5. I can trust Him to do what He promises.

**God is holy** -- "Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed" Rev 15:4. He will be holy in all His acts.

"Positional Truth" - found in Eph 1 & 2. 132

To the positional truths of Eph 1 we can add further descriptions of believers after they trust Christ (Eph 2:4-10); Christians are describes as: alive together with Christ, raised up with Christ, seated with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, saved by grace, His workmanship. 133, 134

Since **I AM A BELIEVER**, I can say the following about myself: ***I have peace with God*** -- Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, Rom 5:1; ***I am accepted by God*** -- Eph 1; ***I am a child of God*** -- Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, John 1:12; ***I am indwelt by the Holy Spirit*** -- Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?, 1 Cor 3:16; ***I have access to God's wisdom*** -- If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him, James 1:5; ***I am helped by God*** -- Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need, Heb 4:16; ***I am reconciled to God*** -- Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation, Rom 5:11; ***I have no condemnation*** -- Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, Rom 8:1; ***I am justified*** -- Rom 5:1; ***I have His righteousness*** -- For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous, Rom 5:19, God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God, 2 Cor 5:21; ***I am His representative*** -- We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God, 2 Cor 5:20; ***I am completely forgiven*** -- in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, Col 1:14; ***I have my needs met by God*** -- And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus, Phil 4:19; ***I am tenderly loved*** -- The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness," Jer 31:3; ***I am the aroma of Christ to God*** -- For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing, 2 Cor 2:15; ***I am the temple of God*** -- Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?, 1 Cor 3:16; ***I am blameless and beyond reproach*** -- But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation--, Col 1:22. 134, 135

## 10. A NEW SENSE OF BELONGING 137

Your sense of belonging rests on God the Father, your sense of worthiness on God the Son, and your sense of competence on God the Spirit. 137

-- ***The one who knows you best loves you most!*** (Ps 139:1-6) -- 139

I stumble and fall and am so ashamed of myself that I never want to show my face again. But God comes to me and bends over me in the person of His Son Jesus Christ, and he says, "***Get up and go on back; the game is only half over.***" That's the gospel of the second chance, the third chance, the hundredth chance. 143

***You were born again*** -- In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. How can a man be born when he is old?"

Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. John 3:3-5, For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God, 1 Pet 1:23

***as a child of God*** -- Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God -- children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God, John 1:12,13.

***You became an heir of God*** -- Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory, Rom 8:17. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory, Eph 1:13, 14

***and were adopted into God's family*** -- he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will -- Eph 1:5.

***You were loved by God the Father*** -- But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us, Rom 5:8. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins, 1 John 4:9, 10

***who poured His love into your heart*** And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us, Rom 5:5.

***You became one with Christ in such a way that you will never be parted from Him*** -- I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me, John 17:23. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me, Gal 2:20. Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you," Heb 13:5

***nothing will ever separate you from God's love*** -- For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord, Rom 8:38, 39.

***You are going to spend eternity with the one who loves you in His house*** -- "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God ; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going," John 14:1-4.

***You entered a new family to which you now belong*** -- For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink, 1 Cor 12:13. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it, 1 Cor 12:27. 143, 144.

*The fact that God accepts us should be our **motivation** for accepting ourselves.* If we cannot accept ourselves the way we are, with our limitations and assets, weaknesses as well as strengths, shortcomings as well as abilities, then we cannot trust anyone else to accept us the way we are. We will always be putting on a front, building a facade around ourselves, never letting people know what we are really like deep down inside. 144

Understanding that we belong to God the Father and His family, that we are unconditionally accepted and loved by Him, is the key to restructuring our *sense of belonging*. 146

## **11. A NEW SENSE OF WORTHINESS** 149

Another exciting aspect about God's forgiveness is that if He forgives us, we can **forgive ourselves**. Too often Christians come to the place where they can often accept God's forgiveness but still can't forgive themselves. We can be harder on ourselves than God is on us... To have a healthy self-image, we desperately need to see ourselves as God sees us - **forgiven**. 152

You can make one of **two responses to a situation**. **One**, you can continue to feel sorry for yourself, wallow around in guilt, question God's ability to deal with the situation and to use you, and look at your own frailty and sin. **Two**, you can realize that Jesus died for this situation, do all you can to make it right with your brother, confess it to God, accept His forgiveness, and recognize His ability to handle the situation. Then recognizing His righteousness, forgive yourself, lift up your head, put your shoulders back and your eyes on Christ, and go forward walking by faith. 153

The beautiful thing about developing a healthy self-image in the area of forgiveness is that you're able not only to forgive yourself, *but you're able to be a channel or instrument in forgiving others*, -- Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you, Eph 4:32. 155

-- ***Experiencing forgiveness is one of the greatest needs in the worlds today*** -- 155

Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Mat 6:26; So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. Mat 10:31. 158

"God does not love us because we are valuable; we are valuable because God loves us," Martin Luther. "...and has expressed His love by creating us in His image and, then, *recreating* us in Christ." 158

## **12. A NEW SENSE OF COMPETENCE** 161

***We have been born of the spirit*** -- In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. 'How can a man be born when he is old?' Nicodemus asked. 'Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to

be born!" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit, John 3:3-5;  
**and will be with us forever** -- And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever-- John 14:16;  
**the spirit teaches us what we need to know** -- But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you, John 14:26;  
**and testifies to us that we belong, that we are God's children** --  
The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children, Rom 8:16;  
**He guides us** -- because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God, Rom 8:14;  
**provides for us the talents, abilities, and spiritual gifts that we need to live purposeful lives serving God** -- There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit, 1 Cor 12:4, All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines, 1 Cor 12:11;  
**the spirit helps us in our weakness and intercedes for us** -- In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will, Rom 8:26, 27;  
**He is the one who develops in us the fruit of God's righteousness** -- But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law, Gal 5:22, 23. 162

The **key** lies in allowing the Holy Spirit to fill or empower our lives, so we can experience all that is available to us. It's important to realize that the words for *fill* does not mean something from without coming in *but rather something already within doing the filling*. I prefer the words **permeate** or **empower**. 163, 164

Several things prepare you for **the filling of the Holy Spirit**. **First** -- Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled, Mat 5:6. **Second** -- Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God -- this is your spiritual act of worship, Rom 12:1; **Third** -- If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all un-righteousness, 1 John 1:9. 164, 165.

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, Eph 5:18; This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us, 1 John 5:14. 165

Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our **competence** comes from God, 2 Cor 3:5; I can do everything through him who gives me strength, Phil 4:13. 166

"I'm not what I ought (or was created) to be, but I'm not what I used to be and, by God's grace, I'm not what I'm going to be." Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus, Phil 1:6. 168

### 13. THE PROCESS OF RE-PARENTING 171

When you accept Christ, you begin to reverse the process of sin that has passed from generation to generation and to shift the direction of your life toward spiritual and emotional health. The *re-parenting process* has started. Growth toward becoming like Christ has begun. This growth process is a re-parenting, as spiritual and emotional needs that were not met by relationships with your human parents are now met by God - through members of the body of Christ. 172

ONE-ANOTHER CONCEPTS - These concepts include  
*being devoted* to and *honoring* one another (Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves, Rom 12:10);  
*being of the same mind* with one another (May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, Rom 15:5);  
*accepting* one another (Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God, Rom 15:7);  
*admonishing* one another (I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another, Rom 15:14);  
*greeting* one another (Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. Greet also the church that meets at their house. Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia. Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you, Rom 16:3-6; Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings, Rom 16:16);  
*servicing* one another (You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature ; rather, serve one another in love, Gal 5:13);  
*carrying* one another's *burdens* (Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ, Gal 6:2);  
*bearing* with one another *in love* (Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love, Eph 4:2);  
*submitting* to one another (Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ, Eph 5:21);  
 and  
*encouraging* one another (Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing, 1 Th 5:11). 176

|                      | <i>Parenting</i> | <i>Re-Parenting</i> |
|----------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| GOD'S AGENTS         | PARENTS          | BODY of CHRIST      |
| Behavioral Ex's      | Modeling         | Witnessing          |
| Vital Learning Exp's | Teaching         | Teaching            |

177

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Psa 139:23, 24.  
178

-- *The body of Christ reinforces the truths I have learned from the Word of God* --  
179

|  |                                     |  |
|--|-------------------------------------|--|
|  | Understand God's love & acceptance  |  |
| See yourself more clearly and experience God's love in a fresh way |                                     | Believe you are lovable and acceptable |
|  | Healthy love & acceptance of others | 181                                    |

**14. MOVING TOWARD HIS IMAGE 185**

Self-Image is tied closely to your *self-respect*. Your behavior and attitudes become very important to restructuring and maintaining your self-image... The *choices* you make and the consequences of those choices have a profound effect on your self-image. If you choose to violate personal and Christian standards, you lose self-respect for yourself and undermine your self-esteem. With loss of self-respect often comes a loss of confidence in your ability to do what you know is right. Your self-image erodes with each choice you make that violates your beliefs and personal values. 185

Any time we choose to conduct ourselves in a manner that we cannot respect, we undermine our self-esteem, sense of worth, and self-confidence. 187

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him, Col 3:17. As Christians, however, we should have a definite *goal* to bring glory and honor to God through our lives in *all* we do. 187

**WRONG BEHAVIORS & ATTITUDES:**

There are *six things the LORD hates*, *seven* that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers. Prov 6:16-19



When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. **Put to death**, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must **rid yourselves** of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Col 3:4-10

The **acts of the sinful nature** are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. Gal 5:19-21

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 1 Cor 6:9, 10

Ten Commandments. 188-189

As we read and study 1 Cor. 8 - 10, and Romans 12 - 15, **4 principles** give us guidance in how to handle choices in the debatable or neutral area as we seek to honor God and maintain personal respect in all of our behavior. The 4 principles are taken from *Guilt and Freedom* by Bruce Narramore and Bill Counts.

1. THE PRINCIPLE OF LIBERTY: As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean, Rom 14:14. Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience, for, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it," 1 Cor 10:25,26. The *emphasis* in these passages is on **freedom**, but it is freedom to choose: "**Everything is permissible for me**" -- but not everything is beneficial. "**Everything is permissible for me**" -- but I will not be mastered by anything, 1 Cor 6:12. Keeping this in mind, we then ask, **am I likely to become enslaved to this behavior or attitude?** Some activities may not be physically addicting but they can create an emotional dependence. Some of us may become enslaved to hobbies or favorite activities that keep us from growing in our lives in other ways. Some of us even become enslaved to our daydreams and imaginations. 192

2. THE PRINCIPLE OF EXPEDIENCY OR HELPFULNESS: "Everything is permissible for me" -- **but not everything is beneficial**. "Everything is permissible for me" -- **but I will not be mastered by anything**, 1 Cor 6:12. **Is this behavior beneficial or profitable? Does it move me toward the goal of becoming like Christ? Does it make me a better person?** 193

3. THE PRINCIPLE OF LOVE AND CONSIDERATION: But if anyone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then do not eat it, both for the sake of the man who told you and for conscience' sake -- the other man's conscience, I mean, not yours. For why should my freedom be judged by another's conscience? If I take part in the meal with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I thank God for? So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God -- even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. 1 Cor 10:28 - 11:1. This principle of love and consideration for others deals with the impact our behavior will have on someone else. ***Is this behavior constructive or edifying to others? Will this activity help or hinder other person in their Christian lives, or non-Christians in coming nearer to accepting Christ?*** 193, 194

Using this principle and the verses given above, however, we Christians often fall into 2 ***traps***. ***First*** is the problem of being too concerned about what people will think. Paul points out a distinction we must make: "we are not trying to please men but God, who tests our heart" (1 Thess. 2:4b). Pleasing God does not always please everybody else. ***Second*** is the problem of adopting an across-the-board rule where the Bible doesn't state one. 194

***Legalism***: the basing of our acceptance to other people or to God on our performance.

Paul's counsel "if you know it will offend the people you are with, then don't do it; if it won't, then it's okay." But if anyone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then do not eat it, both for the sake of the man who told you and for conscience' sake -- the other man's conscience, I mean, not yours. For why should my freedom be judged by another's conscience? If I take part in the meal with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I thank God for? So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God -- even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved, 1 Cor 10:28-33. 195

4. THE PRINCIPLE OF FAITH: But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin, Rom 14:23. 196

#### CHECKLIST FOR CHOICES:

1. Be fully convinced in your own mind that an activity is okay for you and that you can engage in it by faith.
2. Know the people you are with and don't engage in any activity that would cause them unnecessary problems. Don't insist on your own way regardless of who you're with.
3. Don't engage in any activity forbidden in the Bible. However, if you do, remember that God understands and is patient with your lack of perfection. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all un-righteousness," 1 John 1:9. "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will

not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense-- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One," 1 John 2:1. 197

-- *Remember that you are free to be the divine original that God created you to be* --  
197

## 15. SELF-IMAGE WITH A PURPOSE 201

**Purpose:** "To go to heaven and take as many people with me as I can." 202

Let's look at those fears a little more closely and see if they don't fit in with the 3 pillars of self-image we've been discussing. To recognize that you do belong and are loved, that you are worthy, and that you are competent through the Holy Spirit is going to make those excuses look a lot less formidable. 203

-- *The more we see ourselves as God sees us - the more we realize the need for all people to be made aware that God loves them* -- 203

**Sharing our faith** is a part of improving yourself-image, and improving your self-image is part of discovering the desire, drive, and competence to share your faith... Realize too that your part in other people's sharing of the gospel is another reason for your being on this earth. Being an active part of the body of Christ, contributing yourself, your talents, and your income so that the body of Christ as a whole will have a better witness to the world, are all meaningful parts of your purpose for being here, even if you can't see specific ways in which your part in the whole is all that evident. 204, 205

**DOING GOOD:** "Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up," Rom 15:2; "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up, therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers," Gal 6:9, 10; "And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right," 2 Th 3:13. When our actions do result in good for others, coinciding with who we truly are in Christ, it reinforces positive feelings and attitudes we have about ourselves. 208

When you **do your best**, you like yourself. By that I don't mean doing your best in order to please others, *but doing your best in order to be all that God created you to be in His glory*. If you do your best, with the gifts, talents, and abilities God has given you, in the power of the Holy Spirit, you need not care if hundreds of people are better than you. You can still look in the mirror and say, "I like you, and so does God." 209

*For the director of music. Of David. A psalm.*

O LORD, you have searched me and you know me.

You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.

You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.

Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD.

You hem me in -- behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.  
Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?  
If I go up to the heavens, you are there;  
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.  
If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea,  
even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.  
Psa 139:1-10.

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.  
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
your works are wonderful, I know that full well.  
My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place.  
When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,  
your eyes saw my unformed body.  
All the days ordained for me were written in your bk before one of them came to be.  
How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!  
Psa 139:13-17

"Thank you, God, for who I am. Thank you for my strong points and for my weaknesses.  
I want to yield my limitations to you to make me a better instrument to share your life  
with the world. Lord, I want to love the world and I need to start by living and accepting  
myself." 213

**AFTERWARD - HABITS TO DEVELOP TO ENHANCE YOUR SELF-IMAGE**  
215

