

From Cope To Hope: How to Effectively Handle Life's Problems & Challenges

Part 5, "Mirror, Mirror, What Do I See?"

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Mark 12:30 *And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. 31 And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'* There is no other commandment greater than these."

Psalms 139:13-14, *For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well.*

Matt. 6:26 *Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?*

Matt 12:11 *Then He said to them, "What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? 12 Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."* 13 *Then He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other.*

How you see yourself determines, in large part, how you live and treat others. Jesus said, "Love your neighbor as you love yourself." We can't live or love in a significant way beyond our ability to recognize life and love within ourselves.

The concepts of self-image and self-esteem is something that Bible writers did not consider in the same way that we consider it today. The Bible does address self-value, personal responsibility, and understanding how and why God made us. Self-Image is how you see yourself. Self-esteem is your sense of value.

When we face challenges, it is our inner image that reacts or responds. **Reactions** come from that untrained or ill-trained part of us. **Response** comes from training and a positive self-image.

An Old Testament example of the power of self-image affecting self-esteem and effectiveness.

The Lord wanted Moses to provide a self-image test for Israel.

Numbers 13:1, *And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel; from each tribe of their fathers you shall send ... 17 Then Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said to them, "Go up this way into the South, and go up to the mountains, 18 and see what the land is like: whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, few or many; 19 whether the land they dwell in is good or bad; whether the cities they inhabit are like camps or strongholds; 20 whether the land is rich or poor; and whether there are forests there or not. Be of good courage.*

You can only embrace blessings that your heart won't reject because of poor self-image. Asking the people to "see what the land is like" revealed what their hearts were like. They saw themselves as grasshoppers, not people belonging to God.

Look at what they said, Numbers 13:31 *But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we." 32 And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. 33 There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers IN OUR OWN SIGHT and so we were in their sight."*

Why would they see themselves as grasshoppers? It had to be associated with being a nation of slaves for 400 years being treated as worthless, weak and insignificant people.

People can only export what is in their hearts. Look at the consequence of bad influence from the 10 of the 12 leaders.

Numbers 14:1, *So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. 2 And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! 3 Why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?" 4 So they said to one another, "Let us select a leader and return to Egypt."*

Only Joshua and Caleb had the correct **response** in the face of the people's **reaction**. The old saying is true, "It's not the size of the dog that matters, but the size of the fight in the dog that matters." Look at what Caleb said, *"Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, **for we are well able to overcome it.**"*

The importance of faith to self-image and self-esteem.

Our actions reflect our hearts. Faith in God and His word are the basis of all good actions. Sin (meaning to "miss the mark") is the result of faith and resolve in the heart.

Romans 14:19 *Therefore let us **pursue the things** which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. 20 Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, **but it is evil for the man who eats with offense. 21 It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak. 22 Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. 23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; **for whatever is not from faith is sin.*****

A Contrary View

Some Bible commentators teach that self-esteem is an unbiblical sinful attitude. Arrogance and conceit are not the same of self-esteem. This contrary view shows the very personal nature of self-image and self-esteem. Those who teach there is something wrong with the concept of self-esteem are likely people whose circumstances and culture do not challenge or denigrate their sense of value or self. People like women, immigrants, minorities, and disabled people sometimes have to fight against negative perceptions or stereotypes. It's easy for an entitled person to think that others should not "need" to address matters of self-image and self-esteem.

Jesus confirms the **value** of people which can be understood by as healthy self-image and self-esteem: Matt. 6:26 *Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. **Are you not of more value than they?***

The Apostle wrote to a former slave, *That the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.* (Philemon 1:6)

For many people, self-esteem is less an issue of developing a sense of arrogance and conceit, and more an issue of casting off negative perspectives and stereotypes imposed by others.

Factors that shape and influence self-esteem

Self-image and Self-esteem begins to form in early childhood. Factors that can influence self-esteem include:

1. Your own thoughts and perceptions
2. Physical Features
3. Lack of Education
4. Tragic Circumstances
5. Physical or Emotional Neglect or Abuse
6. How other people react to you
7. Experiences at home, school, work and in the community
8. Illness, disability or injury
9. Culture or religion
10. Role and status in society

11. Media messages
12. Relationships with those close to you — parents, siblings, peers, teachers and other important contacts — are important to your self-esteem.
13. Sin

Your Relationship With God is Has the Greatest Impact Your Self-Image

The greatest and ultimate source of a good self-concept is the knowledge that we are created, gifted, loved and watched over by the God of the universe. The Bible declares, "*You are created a little lower than the angels and crowned with glory and honor*" (Psalm 8:5).

Encouraging Scriptures

Jeremiah 29:11, *For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.*

Genesis 1:27, *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

Ephesians 2:10, *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

1 Peter 2:9 ESV, *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

Romans 12:3, *For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.*

Philippians 4:13, *I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*