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SPIRITUAL SELF-ESTEEM

1. Self-esteem is a major issue in everyone's life. A person's attitude toward self affects his entire outlook on life. Following is a quote from Nathaniel Branden in "Honoring the Self":

Of all the judgments we pass in life, none is as important as the one we pass on ourselves: for that judgment touches the very center of our existence. We stand in the midst of an almost infinite network of relationships: to other people, to things, to the universe. And yet, at three o'clock in the morning, when we are alone with ourselves, we are aware that the most intimate and powerful of all relationships and the one we can never escape is the relationship with ourselves. No significant aspect of our thinking, motivation, feelings, or behavior is unaffected by our self-evaluation.

2. Human self-esteem is based on self, and there lies the rub. We all want to feel good about ourselves and yet, we are all fatally flawed.

Jer. 17:9 - The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

a) Our nature is normally arrogant, greedy, self-centered, superficial, cowardly, petty, rebellious, devious, self-righteous, cruel, and violent.

b) Even when we temporarily rise above our natural inclinations, we usually become arrogant, and then we self-righteously start to judge others.

c) The great majority of the human race does not have a positive self-image. People fully recognize that they fall short of their own relative standards, to nothing of completely failing by God's absolute standards.

3. "Human self-esteem is an elusive and flimsy substitute for what man really needs and what God in His grace has provided: SPIRITUAL SELF-ESTEEM. Spiritual self-esteem is based on who and what God is, not on who and what man is. It stands on God's absolute integrity, not on man's unstable character." Christian Suffering, R.B. Thieme, pg. 70.

4. Spiritual self-esteem is the inevitable result of a believer's reciprocal love for God which is just one of the many by-products of his consistent intake and application of B. D.

5. This love is much different from the pseudo-love for God that most believers profess to have which is based on nothing more than emotion. True love is based on thought, not emotion.

a) Rather than teaching spiritual dynamics and the mechanics needed to reach spiritual maturity, the average pastor entertains and tries to stimulate the emotions of his congregation in an effort to make them "feel" like they are spiritual and close to God. And congregations lust to have their emotional juices flowing so that they can "feel" good about God and about themselves.

b) Consequently, the average believer remains ignorant of God's attributes and His plan. Therefore, his relationship with God remains superficial while he continues to place his confidence in himself rather than God.

6. Church Age believers are a new spiritual species (II Cor. 5:17). We were baptized by the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation which means that we were put into union with Jesus Christ for the purpose of using divine power and esteeming God instead of vesting our confidence in human power and esteeming ourselves.

a) Being spiritually ignorant, the average believer tries to execute the spiritual mandates for the Royal Family of God through acts of morality and human good.

b) Because he does not know how to access the supernatural power of God in order to obey commands, he misses the opportunity of seeing the grace and power of God at work in his life.

c) The result is a believer with lost potential, no proper appreciation for God's character, and therefore, no true love for God.

7. We are transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:2). We use our spiritual assets to advance to spiritual adulthood by concentrating on every word that is taught by an academically prepared pastor-teacher who is filled with the Holy Spirit.

a) True love for God precedes spiritual self-esteem which is the initial stage of spiritual adulthood.

b) It is not acquired by the believer who concentrates only on doctrines that apply to his current problems. Studying B.D. is not for the purpose of getting us out of our current jam. Every doctrine we study contributes some vital aspect of the magnificent love, grace, and character of God so that we can come to know and love Him.

8. Love for God cannot be obtained in a moment of emotional excitement. It is developed over years of faithfully inculcating the Word of God. Believers must go through stages of spiritual childhood and adolescence before they can reach spiritual adulthood (Gal. 4:19, Eph. 4:11-14).

9. Eventually the believer is able to think independently using the doctrinal inventory in his soul. He thinks divine viewpoint and applies doctrine to his circumstances. He has moved out of spiritual childhood into spiritual adulthood with the beginning of spiritual self-esteem.

10. Prov. 19:8 - He who gets wisdom (B.D.) loves his own soul (spiritual self-esteem); He who keeps understanding prospers (is promoted into spiritual adulthood).

a) "Wisdom" (Heb. CHOKMAH) does not refer to human intelligence but to divine enlightenment. It is personified in Proverbs chapter eight.

b) "Loves his own soul" does not refer to conceit, pride or self-adulation; it refers to the high esteem of the doctrine in one's soul.

c) "Keeps understanding" (Heb. SHAMAR TABUWN) means to keep, tend, watch over, or retain for a long period of time the understanding of the doctrine one has accumulated.

d) "Prospers" (Heb. TOWB) means to prosper or to find good. Believers who maintain their spiritual momentum certainly find good as they acquire spiritual self-esteem and are promoted to spiritual adulthood.

11. Such believers recognize the transformation that has taken place in their minds and greatly honor and esteem what God has accomplished.

12. The believer with spiritual self-esteem does not depend on the opinion of others to handle the exigencies of life, he does his own thinking from the abundant inventory of doctrine in his soul.

a) He has independent thought based on doctrine. He has the courage in his convictions and perceptions.

b) Independent thought does not mean that he is a rebellious free spirit, no longer needing guidance from the Holy Spirit or his pastor's teaching.

c) It means that he leans on no one but God. He doesn't require flattery, praise, recognition, encouragement, or counsel from others.

13. Because of his intimate relationship with God, he neither craves approval from others nor does he fear their rejection. He does not overreact when they disapprove of him or talk about him behind his back.

14. He is relaxed and can always be himself because he doesn't try to imitate anybody.

a) The Lord is his role model and he tries his best to imitate Him.

b) He knows and abides by the Royal Family Honor Code by being thoughtful and sensitive of others' feelings, but he doesn't change his personality or demeanor in order to gain approval or to get ahead.

15. Some believers attend Bible class for years and can recite numerous doctrines, GNOSIS, but have never acquired spiritual self-esteem. Why? Because they never metabolize, truly believe, and think them out for themselves, EPIGNOSIS, nor do they put them to practice on a daily basis. The doctrines are just information floating around in their heads that they spout off from time to time to impress others.

a) There has been no real transformation of the mind. They still think the way they always have, basing all decisions on old human viewpoint and emotions.

b) They know doctrine, but they just don't apply it. Their vocabulary has been transformed but not their mind. They can parrot back doctrinal phrases but they can't explain them in their own words to others.

c) They seldom if ever tap into the divine power that is available because they consistently fall back into their old ways of thinking and acting.

d) Consequently, their relationship with the Lord remains superficial because they develop no track record of seeing Him in action in their lives.

e) They lack spiritual momentum because they have developed little, if any, true love for God.

16. The adolescent believer goes through an awkward stage characterized by overconfidence. He is bursting with answers, quick to tell others that they are wrong and eagerly imposes his ideas on them. This is arrogance, not spiritual self-esteem.

17. The spiritually adult believer is genuinely humble, is a good listener, and honors the privacy and space of other people. His motto is, "live and let live." While he is always ready to defend the faith, he is not pushy. When a brick wall of negative volition is thrown up, he shakes the dust off and moves on.

Luke 9:5 - If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them.

18. CHARACTERISTICS OF SPIRITUAL SELF-ESTEEM

(1) CONTENTMENT, regardless of present circumstances.

2 Cor. 12:10 - That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses (Undeserved Suffering), in insults (People Testing), in hardships (Thought Testing), in persecutions

(System Testing), in difficulties (Disaster Testing). For when I am weak, then I am strong.

(2) MENTAL STABILITY is developed over a long period of time, learning B.D. Phil. 4:11-12 - I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty, or in want.

(3) SELF-ASSURANCE belongs to the believer who has developed confidence from experiencing doctrine at work in his life.

2 Cor. 5:6-9 - Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight.) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

(4) GRACE-ORIENTATION becomes a reality when all credit and honor are given to God rather than to self. It is complete confidence that God will always provide, based on who and what He is, not on who and what we are.

1 Cor.15:10 - But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. . .

(5) ORIENTATION TO REALITY means that the believer has developed spiritual common sense that keeps him humble and helps him maintain a sense of humor.

Rom. 12:3 - For by the grace given to me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself in terms of sanity, being rational as God has allotted to each one a standard of thinking from Bible doctrine.

(6) STRENGTH that comes from residing in the Divine Domain, thinking divine viewpoint, and relying on divine omnipotence available to all believers.

Eph.6:10 - Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might.

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

Eph.3:16 - I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,

(7) SPIRITUAL INDEPENDENCE is a by-product of the consistent intake of doctrine and maximum use of one's royal priesthood.

Phil. 4:13 - I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

2 Cor. 3:4-5 - Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.

(8) A NEW ATTITUDE TOWARD LIFE occurs when one's perspective in life is focused on God rather than on people. Difficulties are seen as opportunities to utilize doctrine in the soul.

2 Tim.2:3-4 - Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs - he wants to please his commanding officer.

Gal.2:20 - 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.

Phil. 1:20-21 - I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

(9) MAXIMUM PRODUCTION OF DIVINE GOOD is motivated by personal love for God as an effort to please Him.

John 15:5 - "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

Col.1:10 - . . . live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God.

(10) AN OPTIMISTIC OUTLOOK occurs when a person's mind has been transformed by the consistent intake of doctrine. Instead of dreading trouble and problems in life, people with Spiritual Self-Esteem see adversity and unpleasant circumstances as spiritual tests and opportunities to strengthen application muscles.

Eph.4:21-25 - Surely you heard of him (Christ) and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off (Rebound) your old self (OSN), which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds (by intake of B.D.); and to put on the new self (as a member of the Royal Family of God), created to be like God in (the sphere of) true righteousness and holiness. Therefore each of you must put off falsehood (Satanic lies) and speak truth (B.D.) to his neighbor (fellow believer), for we are all members of one body (the body of Christ).