

Question: I recently read that some psychologists have said that we are facing an epidemic of low self-esteem. I have to admit that I often feel rather worthless. What can we do to counteract this?

Today's American culture places so much emphasis on physical beauty, intellectual achievement, athletic ability and financial success that those who lack these often feel devalued. Accepting such a standard can lead to low self-esteem and casts aside so much human potential. In addition, many individuals have felt belittled by some people in their circle of social relationships just because they are different in some way. All of these factors plus others can contribute to low self-esteem.

From the spiritual viewpoint, every human being is valuable to God because each one has been created in his image (Genesis 1:27). There is uncertainty among biblical scholars as to what is meant by "image of God." But, to say the least, we can know that God so valued us that from the beginning he gave something of himself to each human he created. In fact, God has given each of us neither less nor more of himself than he gave any other human being regardless of attributes like physical beauty or intellectual capacity.

Now, even though the image of God in us has been marred by sin, something of that image and likeness first given to Adam has been passed on (Genesis 5:3). Unfortunately, Satan has blinded many unbelievers from seeing the image and glory of God in Jesus Christ and his coming into our world (2 Corinthians 4:4). But through faith in Christ, believers are called upon to die to the old self and ways in which we once lived and to "put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator" (Colossians 3:9-10 NIV).

In addition to being renewed in the "image of God," God's love for each of us gives us value. He knows each of us individually. He knows our strengths and weaknesses, our failures as well as our successes; yet, he loves us and paid the price of his Son's blood to purchase us for himself (Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 6:19). Knowing that God so highly values us should provide the encouragement and hope we need to believe that we matter no matter how others may treat us or what they may say about us.

Christians are not only valuable because they belong to God and are loved by him, but each one has been blessed with some unique gift which can be used for serving in God's kingdom. He left no one out. Each one who comes to God through faith in Jesus has something to contribute to the good of others (Romans 12:6-7).

May each of us learn to emphasize our strengths that come from God instead of dwelling upon our weaknesses. We need to accept our value in God's sight, and value others for the same reason. Although we are valuable to God, we should not be surprised that an unbelieving world will attempt to devalue us. But those who also truly trust in Jesus will value us. Our value before God is what matters above all. Jesus said: "Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows" (Luke 12:6-7).

May each of us see how greatly God values us and find our self-esteem in a relationship of faith in him. When we learn what living as a disciple of Jesus is all about, then we can know how to live as a child of the King.

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