

“EMOTIONS AND THE CHRISTIAN”
(A Sermon Series on a Topic of
Universal Interest and Relevance)

Installment No. 17: *“Improving Your Self-Image”* (Part 1)

I. Establishing the Need for This Study

- A. “Do you remember the story about the children of Israel when they had been delivered out of Egypt and were on their way to the land that God had promised them? As they came near to Canaan, God instructed Moses to send men to spy out the new land. Spies were chosen and duly dispatched with instructions to explore the land and see if it was good or bad. After a while the spies returned, but their reports were conflicting. Some said that what they saw was a land flowing with milk and honey and that although the people were strong, they would be overcome. Other spies had a different story: ‘And there we saw the giants . . . and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers . . .’ (Numbers 13:33, NEB). Giants and grasshoppers! The problem for us is that when we send our ‘self-evaluation’ spies to search the depths of our beings, they come back with the same report: We are only grasshoppers and our enemies are giants. This is the problem of low self-esteem or self-hate—a problem every one of us must struggle with to some extent.

“Many psychologists feel that an epidemic of inferiority is raging through our society. There are more grasshoppers than giants in the land! In some ways these grasshoppers have always been with us. But what we are experiencing as a phenomenon of twentieth century Western culture is quite unique. It is as if something has gone wrong with our cultural genetics. We can’t help perpetuating self-hate in our offspring.” (Archibald D. Hart, *Unlocking the Mystery of Your Emotions*, c.1989, pp. 93-94)

- B. “In a widely read book which appeared several years ago, physician Maxwell Maltz estimated that 95 percent of all people in our society feel inferior. He argued that millions of persons are seriously handicapped because they have a strong sense of inadequacy, and he went on to suggest that a more positive self-image is the ‘key to a better life.’ Many years before Maltz, psychiatrist Alfred Adler had reached a similar conclusion. To be a human being, he once wrote, ‘means the possession of a feeling of inferiority that is constantly spurring us on . . .’ Feelings of inferiority, therefore, are very common and likely to be encountered in the work of any Christian counselor.” (Gary Collins, *Christian Counseling*, c.1980, pg. 347)

- C. The three primary sources of emotional pain:

1. Lack of **SELF-WORTH**
2. Lack of **INTIMACY** with others (loneliness)
3. Lack of **INTIMACY** with God

(Frank Minirth and Paul Meier, *Happiness Is a Choice*, c. 1978, pg. 54)

II. The Nature of Self-Image

- A. What is it? “The individual’s mental and spiritual **CONCEPT** or '**PICTURE**' of himself. It is what a person **BELIEVES** about himself, the **MAP** he consults in order to **UNDERSTAND** himself.” (H. Norman Wright, *The Christian Use of Emotional Power*, c.1974, pg. 133)
- B. “A person’s self-image or self-estimate is the result of the **INTERPRETATION** he makes of his involvements with others. What really matters to this person is not what others actually think, but what he **THINKS** they **THINK** of him! It is this subjective interpretation that is important to his self-image.” (Wright, pg. 135)
- C. The building blocks of self-image, reflecting our basic needs as human beings:

	BELONGING <i>I am what I'm a part of</i>	WORTH <i>I am what is valued in me</i>	COMPETENCE <i>I am what I can do</i>
SOCIAL MANIFESTATION	Leads to concern with _____	Leads to concern with _____	Leads to concern with _____
SPIRITUAL DIMENSION	Satisfied in relationship with God the _____ (Jn. 1:12-13; 1 Jn. 3:1)	Satisfied in relationship with God the _____ (Rom. 5:8; 8:17, 32)	Satisfied in relationship with God the _____ (2 Cor. 3:5-6)

III. Two Biblical Illustrations of Individuals with a Good Self-Image

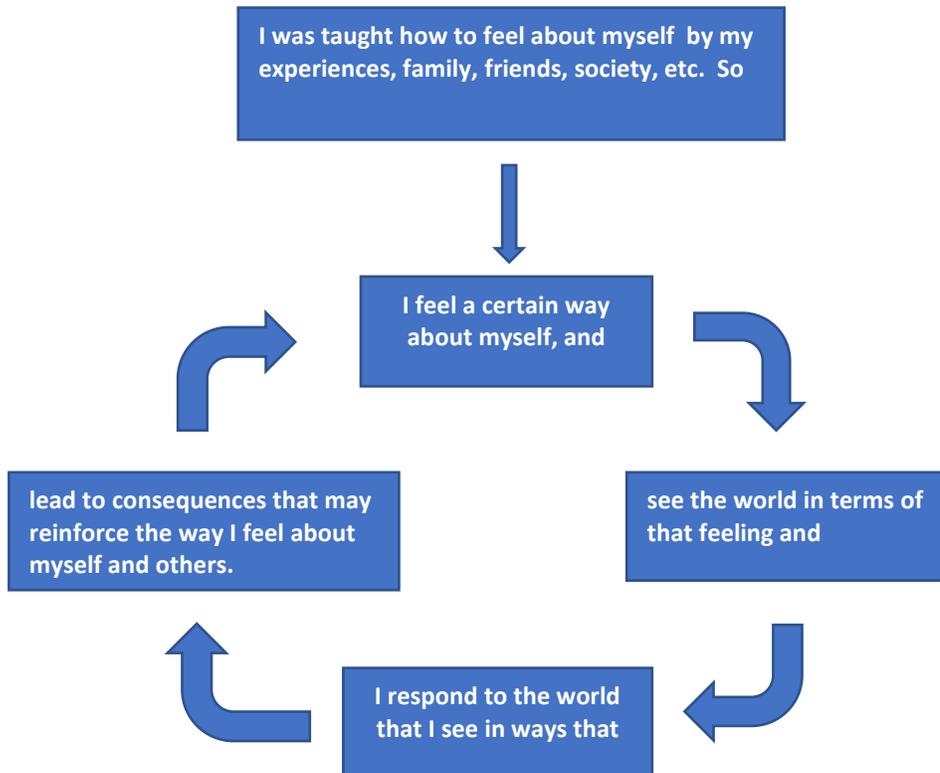
- A. David – 2 Samuel 7:18-29
- B. Jesus – John 13:1-5

IV. The Causes of Inferiority and Low Self-Esteem

- A. Family **RELATIONSHIPS**
- B. **SINS**
- C. Past **EXPERIENCE**
- D. Unrealistic **EXPECTATIONS**
- E. **SOCIETAL** Influences

- F. **FAULTY** Thinking
- G. Faulty **THEOLOGY**
- H. **COMPARISON** with Others

A graphic representation of the above:



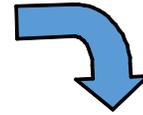
I was taught how to feel about myself by my experiences, family, friends, society, etc. So

I feel a certain way about myself, and



I see the world in terms of that feeling and

lead to consequences that may reinforce the way I feel about myself and others.



I respond to the world that I see in ways that

