

DEVELOPING SELF ESTEEM IN YOURSELF AND OTHERS

I am glad you came back today. I pray for you a lot. I ask God to bless you, encourage you, and let you know just how much He loves you. There is no one who loves you like God. He has only your best interests at His heart. He thinks about you all of the time. Did you realize that? We are going to study that in the Bible today, in Psalms 139. It says, "He is thinking about you all of the time." He knows about everything you do. The Bible says even the hairs on your head are numbered. Who cares how many hairs you have on your head? Who cares about numbering them? God does because you are so special to Him.

Today we are going to talk about how to develop self esteem in you and in others. It has to be developed. People today struggle with a lack of good self esteem. I am not talking about being prideful or arrogant.

That is actually not good self esteem. That usually is a mask for something else, usually insecurity. I want to talk to you today about how to get good self esteem. How do you make sure your children have it?

Recently I was watching a television show and they said they could judge successful marriages by looking at the pictures of the people when they were children. You might wonder why that would be. They said when you look at pictures of little children and they are not smiling, something is wrong in the home. Good self esteem starts with what is going on in your home. You may say to me, "Then I don't have a chance."

My home right now is like hell on earth. It is horrible. My parents put me down all the time, they argue all the time." They might have drinking problems or drug problems. No one you know is happy. Remember, God is the one who loves you the very most. He believes in you totally. He thinks you are the cutest thing that ever walked the earth. In fact, He loves you so much, as if no one else had ever lived on before or was even alive right now. You are so special and so important to God that he would still send Jesus to die for your sins. Someone has to pay for them and God does not want you to. There is more to it than that, though.

Let's talk about how a child develops low self esteem a child. Maybe you suffer with it. I can help you figure it out. Sometimes it comes from parents and other children in the family who put you down all of the time. They tell you that you cannot do anything right, that you are stupid and lazy, you will never amount to anything, and you are such a klutz. Those are such hard words to say to a child because children believe authority and believe what they say to you. When people have said cruel things to you and been harsh in their attitude to you, or harsh in the way they speak to you, it hurts you on the inside. It makes you think, "There is nothing to me." That is how people get eating disorders. Someone is coming along and either saying constantly harsh things or they expect you to be perfect. You have to do everything right to please them. That hurts a person's self esteem, too, because you really cannot please everyone.

I do not think you can please anyone 100% of the time. Just think about how this has come to you.

Another thing is if you have had a lot of really harsh, bad things happen to you early in life. There is an amazing verse to read in Ecclesiastes that says it is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth. I remember the time the Lord said that to me. I really did have a lot of hard things happen to me when I was growing up, and I have had self esteem issues. I thought, "It is good, Lord? It is good for me to have borne the yoke in my youth?" I can tell you why it is. It makes you compassionate and soft. It makes some people bitter, but you do not want to be like that. You want to develop compassion and understanding for people who are going through things. Sometimes as a child, you can even have a school teacher who for whatever reason does not like you. It will hurt you and hurts your self esteem.

Another thing that hurts your self esteem is your appearance. You may think, "I am not pretty" or "I am not handsome. I am not tall enough, or skinny enough." Who knows what people think about all of that today? I want to show you in Psalm 139 that God designed you. Let me tell you something about me.

You may not be able to tell from watching this show, but I am short. I am about 5 feet 3 inches, and I have big feet. I probably wear a size 9 shoe. For those of you living in America, you know that is big. For those watching around the world, it might be a 42. I cannot remember European sizes. I can remember that it hurts your self esteem when all of the other girls are walking around with little bitty feet, and I have big feet. I remember saying, "Lord, why did You give me these big feet? They don't fit with my body." I am a tennis player, and I do not ever lose my balance. Another thing is that I like shoe sales, and those big sizes are always the ones left so I can get shoes at a great bargain. There is good in everything. Say you have a disfigurement in your face and you had nothing to do with it. You were born with it. Maybe you have a cleft palate or maybe you had a burn or something else bad that happened to your face. Those people have to deal with that and the way they deal with it determines whether they walk through life with

people have to deal with that and the way they deal with it determines whether they walk through life with good self esteem. I know two people who have one of those birthmarks, and neither one of them have ever let that hold them back at all. They just go on with life with the attitude of, "This is what I have, this is who I am, and I am a person that is worthy of anything that God has."

You have a choice and you need to understand that. You can choose good, good things and good thoughts; or you can choose the other that gives you low self esteem. I knew a lady who had really bad teeth and really bad hair. She was not what you would call attractive at all. She had the most wonderful self esteem. You could see it in the way she conducted herself. I said to her, "How do you have that? How do you feel so good about yourself?" She said, "My daddy loved me so much, and he let me know he loved me." There is something about the parent thinking you are so wonderful that gives you that confidence, and she had it. It does not matter what you look like.

Not everyone is beautiful, not everyone goes through life with no scars on their face. But that does not matter. What is on the inside is what matters. Believing that you are a good person, believing that you have value and worth. I want to read to you what God says about you in the Bible. Psalm 139 says, "Lord, you know everything about me." That is a good thing to know, that God knows everything about you and He still loves you. That is when it is a good friend. "You know when I sit or stand. When far away, you know my every thought. You chart the path ahead of me and tell me where to stop and rest." That is good for all of you people who are busy. "Every moment You know where I am. You know what I am going to say before I say it. You both receive me and follow me and You place Your hand of blessing on my head." God has put his hand of blessing on your head.

Do not listen to what people tell you about you. It is not true. It is a lie. Maybe they are jealous. Maybe they do not want to change or correct things in themselves. God has placed his hand of blessing on you. The Scripture says, "It is so wonderful. I can't even get away from you Lord. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex. It is amazing to think about. Your workmanship is marvelous and how well I know it. You were there while I was being formed in utter seclusion. You saw me before I was born and you scheduled each day of my life. How precious it is, Lord, to realize You are thinking about me constantly. I can't even count how many times a day Your thoughts turn toward me." Do you know that? Were you aware that God cannot get you off His mind? Have you ever had someone on your mind? There you are thinking about them again. Then there it is again, and again. That is how God is. You might say, "How can that be? God is running the universe. He has all of these problems; He has millions and millions of people. How could He do that?" He can because He is God and because He wanted you born. It says so in the Bible. You might say, "No, I am an accident. I should never have happened." You may be an accident to humans, but you are not an accident to God. He wanted you born. God loves you so much.

I want to read you another verse to show you how much God loves you. Isaiah 43 says, "I am the Lord your God, your Savior, the Holy One of Israel. I gave all of these nations in exchange for your freedom and for your ransom. Others died that you might live. I traded their lives for yours because you are precious to Me and honored and I love you." What a wonderful thing to come into the place that you know God loves you. That gives you such a strong sense of self esteem and worth. If you do not know that, ask God. Just keep saying, "Lord, today show me You love me." Begin to say out loud, "God is for me, God is not against me. God loves me and thinks I am special." I will tell you something else you can do that might seem weird, but it works. Look into the mirror and say, "You are special and God loves you."

Something that really hurts your self esteem is when you have sinned and done wrong and you know you have. You feel this guilt and heaviness and shame. But you can go to God and say, "Lord, I am so sorry. Forgive me and heal me. Take the hurt away, help me to forgive myself." He will because he wants to put that in you. He wants you walking in power. He wants to use you where people know you and say, "That is a person who knows God. That is a person who has God in them. I want to be around them." You can do this for your children. As a parent, as a mother or dad, it is very important that you help your child realize how special they are. That is what puts good self esteem in them. One time I sat down with my son and said, "Let's make a list of everything wonderful about you. I mean your hair, your eyes, what you can do. We made the longest list. At first he thought there would not be much there. We worked at it a long time and the list was really long. Then I said, "Okay, now no one is perfect. What do you need to work on?" You would be surprised that there were only three or four things. You are like that, too. What do we do? We concentrate on the bad that we have done or a weakness that we have. We tend to ignore everything that is good. We compare our weak qualities to someone else's great quality, not thinking about the fact that they have weak qualities, too. We all have weak qualities. We make ourselves look short and come up short. Remember what I read to you. God saw you before you were even in your mother's womb. While you were being formed there, He scheduled every day of your life. Do this with your children. Take your children out and spend a day with them. If you have a lot of children, it is hard but you can still give every child in your family a feeling of being wanted and loved. Tell them, "We are so glad you are in our family, and we are so proud of you." By doing that, they begin to feel special. It does not matter how many children you have. They can all feel loved. They can all feel like you are so glad that you have

new many children you have. They can all feel loved. They can all feel like you are so glad that you have them.

The first thing to do is to realize you are special and that Jesus died for you. He gave His life for you because you are that special. The second thing to do is go with God's opinion of you, not someone else's opinions. Sometimes people just give you a bad opinion. As I told you, they have their own problems. Make a decision, "God says I am special and He thinks I am wonderful. He said other people died so that I could live. He says I am precious and He loves me." Go with that. Feel the love God has for you because God is loving and you want to be like Him.

Know that you want to count for something. That is when you really have good self esteem, when you know that your life is counting. Counting for something almost always involves helping other people and doing something that helps other people. A lot of times, people say, "I am stuck in this job. I don't feel like I am doing any good. I am not helping anyone, and yet I have to have this job. I have to have a job because it is hard to get a job in the country I live in. I have to have this job whether I like it or not, but I don't feel special and I don't feel like I am contributing anything." You can pray and say, "Lord, I want to count for something. Use me some way in this job. Take this job and turn it into a blessing for my life or find something for me to do outside my job that counts and that makes a difference, which changes lives and touches people."

The saddest thing you could ever hear someone say is, "I have wasted my life. I wish I had done something with my life." I remember something Lee Iacocca said when he took over Chrysler. He said, "When you die, you are not going to say I wish I had spent more time at the office working harder and harder." You want to be a person that can say, "My life has really counted. I have made a difference." If you are really old, maybe in a hospital and you do not have much time left. You might think, "I have wasted my whole life and I feel really bad about myself." I had been a Christian most of my life and had been in church all my life, but I did not want to give Him first place in my life and make Him the most important thing. I began to question all of that. I began to meet people who were doing it, but I was struggling with it. "Do I really want to give up everything and put God first?" My pastor at that time told this story. He said, "This week I had something sad happen. I went to the hospital and met with a man who was in the last stages of dying. The man was so depressed and said his life had not counted for anything, and now he was dying." Guess what, his life counted for me. I listened to what he said. Isn't that man going to be surprised when he meets me in heaven and I say to him, "Your life counted for me because I listened to what you said and I made a decision that I am going to do something with my life for God." You can work in church; you can work in the community. God can put you anywhere. Jesus is a market place Jesus; He goes out where the people are. He does not sit around and wait for everyone to come to church even though He has church for you to be around other believers, and you need them. He has a place for you. You will feel special when you belong somewhere. So find where you can belong.

Another thing is begin to accumulate success. None of us starts out totally successful. We have to work at it. Every time you do something and you know you did a good job, think about it. A lot of times, people will say, "I don't want to think about it. I might get into pride." A woman preacher told me one time, "When you do something for God as a speaker and everyone is praising you, just say 'Thank you. That makes me feel great, that is really nice of you.' Then when you get alone, all by yourself, say 'Up to you God, up to you, all of it goes up to you.' That way, you feel special but you don't get cocky." No matter how small the success is, it counts. Think about it. You have been more successful than you think you are. Count them up. Expect the best, and do not ever settle for less. One of the worst ways to have low self esteem is that you have to settle for experience, a settle for job, a settle for spouse. For those of you thinking about getting married and you are looking for the right person, do not just settle for someone. Do not ever settle for. God has the highest and the best available for you. If you will trust Him and you will ask Him to bring the right job to you, the right person to you, the right experiences to you, He will do it. You might have to wait, but God will do it.

Another thing to do is to set goals. Do you set goals? Not everyone does. That has been a surprise to me because I am a goal setter. I like to say "I want to do this, and I want to do this, and I want to do this," and then try for it. Not everyone is like that. There is something about setting goals that gives you a feeling of accomplishment, whether it is losing weight, becoming better at a sport, whatever. It gives you a feeling of accomplishment. As I said, accomplishment is what makes you feel great. Look for things that you can do and success at.

Another way to develop self esteem in yourself is to give other people compliments, genuine compliments. Do things that make them feel special, and do things that help them have good self esteem. I am not talking about being a flatterer or a phoney. I am talking about really caring about people. The more you genuinely care about other people, the more you will care about yourself. Life is all about helping others. Be generous with sincere compliments. Look for the things in others that you really admire in them, and then tell them "You know what I like about you, you are a very dependable person."

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You might have a really beautiful child and something could happen. They might lose that or they do not need to concentrate on that. When someone comes to you and says, "Your child is so beautiful," and it is in the presence of the child, just say, "Thank you. He (or she) is very obedient." Pick a really good character quality and compliment them on that. Good character is what gives you good self esteem.

Doing the right thing, making the right choices, the right things being important to give you good self esteem. A servant's heart is a happy heart. You need to teach your children to be servants. Children today are always saying, "I want this, I want that. Do this for me. Do that for me." In doing that, they become selfish and self centered and there goes their self esteem. Teach people to respect others, teach them to care for others and to get involved in others. Teach them to do something for no reason other than just because it is good and it helps other people. If you tend to be a person who says, "No one praises me, no one thanks me. No one thinks enough of what I am doing," you are concentrating on people and not God. God says, "I notice everything you do." Remember that I read to you that God said, "I know every thought you have. I know when you sit down." Yes, we do need praise. You need to be a person who praises people because people need it. If you do not get praise from others, you know you will get it from God. You can even go to the Lord and say, "Lord, I am really feeling down. I am really not feeling good about myself. Show me what You think of me." He will show you.

Another thing that produces really good self esteem in you is self discipline. Are you a disciplined person? Self discipline is making yourself do something when you do not want to do it. Reading the Bible is one. You make yourself do it because you know it is going to make you more like God. In doing all of that, putting self discipline into your life increases how you think about yourself. You see yourself as a person who can go when it is hard, who can go when you are dry, who can go when everyone around you is not going. That produces a feeling inside yourself of worth, good self worth.

Make a list of what you are good at. Sometimes that is really hard. People can tell you, "I can tell you everything I do wrong, I have a long list." You need to know what is special about you that God has done. Sometimes you have to go to your mate. Sometimes you have to go to your children. They can tell you, they live with you. They can tell you, "You are good at this. You do that really well." That produces self esteem in you. It produces a feeling of "Oh, I am too hard on myself." I can be a person who can be too hard on myself and it is not good. God is not nearly as hard on you as you are on yourself. You need to relax and let go, and say, "I can have a better life than this. I am a good person." What about when you have done something really wrong, like maybe you are in jail. You have got to forgive yourself and realize there is good stuff in there, there is really good stuff in you, and God wants to encourage you and say, "Come on, you can do it."

QUIET TIME QUESTIONS

1. How is low self esteem developed?
2. How does God help us with self esteem issues?
3. What steps to you take to develop self esteem?
4. How do you help others develop self esteem?

To watch the video on DEVELOPING SELF ESTEEM IN YOURSELF AND OTHERS, Pillar Five, Relational Skills, go to www.bettyswann.com.

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