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a resource in:

Spiritual Growth

Christ-Centered Self-Worth



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Christ-Centered Self-Worth

Many of us struggle with having an accurate sense of worth or value. This struggle impacts and can interfere with our emotional, relational, spiritual, and physical health. Self-worth can be defined as the combination of how you view yourself plus your perceptions of how other people and God view you.

The desire to feel a true sense of value, acceptance, and love is given by God and is to be satisfied in Him. Struggles with self-worth can occur when too much emphasis is placed on performance and other's opinions. It is also further complicated by a history of trauma, abuse, family experiences or situation, excessive comparison to others, and emotional struggles. Our self-worth should be based on two sources: 1) being created in God's image and 2) our position in Christ.

The journey towards an accurate, Christ-centered self-worth should not be traveled alone. Since we are all on the journey and often at different points, we can help one another along; in helping others along, we end up helping ourselves as well. As we encourage one another, we ourselves are encouraged.

Luke 6:38, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."

2 Cor. 1:3-4, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

This paper includes six independent sections that when put together can help provide you with direction and support for developing a Christ-centered self-worth.

Contents:

1. God-Image
2. Connecting with God
3. Spiritual Gifts
4. Emotional Regulation
5. Self-Talk & Perfectionism
6. Additional Resources

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1. GOD-IMAGE: BEGINNING WITH AN ACCURATE VIEWPOINT

Our view of ourselves and our view of God go hand-in-hand. As we seek to know God better, we come to know ourselves more accurately. Similarly, as we come to understand ourselves accurately in the light of the Word, we understand our Creator better. *Genesis 1:27*, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” As we seek to know the Image of God that is reflected in us individually, we come to know that source of the Image better.

An accurate God-image accepts God as perfect and humans as imperfect. As we develop a healthy view of self, made in the Image of God, we are able to integrate both positive and negative aspects about our self. We are able to accept both our strengths and weaknesses; areas in which we need to grow and areas in which we are gifted.

What do each of the following verses tell you about God?

Deuteronomy 31:6 “Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.”

Deuteronomy 4:24 “For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.”

Isaiah 43:1-3 “But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. 2 When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. 3 For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour:”

Lamentations 3:22 “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.”

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John 1:14 "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

How would you summarize what these verses tell us about God?

Are there truths about God from these verses which are difficult for you to believe?

Write down 3 fundamental truths about God you want to focus on throughout your week.

Spend time in prayer this week focusing on praising God for these truths and asking God to write them upon your heart.

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2. CONNECTING WITH GOD

An accurate self-worth is based on our ability to understand the fact that we are made in God's image and to understand our position in God's family; therefore, *time* with God is an essential element in the journey. Through time with God, we are able to understand how He sees us, draw closer to Him, and receive His love and acceptance. It is important to develop our own method and practice of meeting with God. Following are some suggestions that can help get you started in finding new ways to draw near to God and embrace the truth of His Word. Sometimes, we need to quiet ourselves in order to connect with God. The "Listening Prayer" exercise can guide you through that process. Other times, we need to engage our minds so that our thoughts can be accurately connected with the Truth in God's Word. "Discovering your True Identity" is an activity based on that concept.

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Listening Prayer

Prayer is an essential component of spending time with God. However, many people think of prayer as time to give God our requests. While talking to God is one part of prayer, *listening* is another very important part. Following are some suggestions for how to put yourself in a position to be able to fully *listen* and hear God's voice.

- Find your own special place where you can best connect with the Lord and where distractions will be minimal. For some it may be outside, for others it may be in their bedroom. Find what works for you.
- Sit comfortably in a way that allows you to fully relax such as with eyes closed, taking deep breaths, etc. Take a few minutes to quiet your mind and calm your body.
- The goal is to meditate on (concentrate, think about) small portions of Scripture rather than trying to digest a large portion.
- Realize that for this exercise, the *quality* of your time with God is more important than the *quantity* of Scriptures you cover.
- Having a Bible and a journal available is often helpful. In addition, keep a separate sheet of paper nearby to jot down "to-dos" that will tend to creep into your mind. When this happens, write it down, and go back to concentrating on a Scripture verse to turn your attention towards Christ.
- To begin the meditation process, slowly repeat a brief Scripture verse, either out loud or silently to help concentrate your thoughts. Also, do this when your thoughts start to be distracted.
- Ask God to speak to you personally from the verse or verses you are concentrating on.
- Consider putting yourself into the biblical scene, noticing the sights, sounds, and feelings that would go along with it.
- Consider using a comforting picture to help concentrate your thoughts. It may be a picture of Jesus* or a peaceful nature scene.
- Be aware that thoughts such as "I'm just wasting time," "I have so many things to get done," "This isn't working," "I don't know what I'm doing," etc. will likely enter your mind. When this occurs, redirect your thoughts back to the core Scripture passage and take deep breaths to help your body and mind to relax.
- If this activity is new for you, you may begin by spending about 10 minutes in listening prayer. With practice, you may increase that time to 20 or 30 minutes or more depending on the time you have available for this exercise.

Adapted from, Sandra D. Wilson, *Into Abba's Arms* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1998), 207-209.

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Discovering your true identity

Meditating on God's Truth expressed in the Bible is a way to connect with God and learn about Him and about you. The following verses discuss who we are in Christ. They will help you see yourself as God sees you. As you read each one, pray that you can believe what the verses tell you about who your heavenly Father says you are. That is, pray for help in believing God's message about your identity. Then, personalize the verse by writing out how the truth of God's word applies to your life.

You are forgiven:

Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Colossians 2:13-14, "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, **having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;**"

Romans 5:1, "Therefore being justified by faith, **we have peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ."

You have a place in God's family or have potential for that position by grace through faith:

John 1:12, "But as many as received him, to them **gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.**"

Ephesians 1:6, "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us **accepted in the beloved.**"

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Romans 8:35-39, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, **in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.** For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Ephesians 1:3-4, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as **he hath chosen us in him** before the foundation of the world, **that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.**"

Galatians 4:4-7, "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. **Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.**"

You have been granted access to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit:
Ephesians 2:18, "For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

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*Eph. 3:12, "In whom we **have boldness and access** with confidence by the faith of him."*

*John 14:16, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, **that he may abide with you for ever;**"*

*Jeremiah 33:3, "Call unto me, and **I will answer thee**, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."*

You are loved by the Father:

*1 John 4:10, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that **he loved us**, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."*

*Romans 5:8, "But God commendeth his **love** toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, **Christ died for us.**"*

*1 John 3:1, "Behold, what manner of **love** the Father hath bestowed upon us, **that we should be called the sons of God**: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not."*

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3. SPIRITUAL GIFTS

God has created each one of us in a unique way to allow us to participate in the body of Christ and to serve Him. God equips us through our experiences, personality, natural talents, interests, and spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts are related to what we believe God has laid on our heart and what we do well and enjoy. Part of understanding our identity and the source of our worth involves identifying and using our spiritual gifts.

Read 1 Corinthians 12-13. What do these chapters tell us about spiritual gifts?

Who does God give spiritual gifts to?

What is the purpose of these gifts?

How has God gifted you to serve in the body and bring glory to His name?

For a more in-depth look at spiritual gifts go to “Identifying and Developing Spiritual Gifts” packet at : www.accounseling.org/spiritualgifts

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4. EMOTIONAL REGULATION

Emotions play a very important role in our lives. Part of life is being able to feel joy, sadness, anxiety, and excitement. The ability to *feel* plays a major role in our relationships with others, decision-making, etc. At the same time, emotions can vary widely and are not always based on the truth. Our emotions can be a major barrier to fully grasping our self-worth in Christ. Often, we need to identify how our emotions may be distracting us from the truth. Many of us need to learn how to manage emotions rather than letting them manage us. The following pages include tools that can help you better understand your emotions and know how to best regulate them.

What To Do:

The first step in emotional regulation is identifying and naming your emotions. We need to know what we are feeling in order to know *how* to best regulate those feelings. Keep in mind that often, we experience more than one emotion at a time.

The second step is understanding and identifying the intensity of your emotions. Page two in this section explains the varying intensities. The intensity of emotions determines what kind of regulation that is needed to manage those emotions.

Finally, the third step in emotional regulation is knowing how to manage your emotions. The rest of the pages in this section provide a variety of options for managing and regulating your emotions.

What Not To Do:

Stay out of judging the validity of your emotions. When you feel sad let yourself feel sad. Then determine when to engage helpful actions and helpful thoughts to shift from sadness.

Don't spend too much time analyzing emotions. It is helpful to identify the emotion you are feeling along with the intensity of the emotion but it is not helpful to stay in an endless cycle of trying to determine why you feel the emotion you feel.

Don't get lost in your emotions. Emotions can be very intense and therefore consuming. Remember emotions don't always speak the truth. Feeling something does not necessarily make it true. Try to refocus your mind to what is true based on scripture.

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Identifying emotional intensity: The intensity of our emotions determines how we need to best regulate them. Learn the differences in intensity of emotions before you find yourself overcome by them.

RED ZONE:

- Highest intensity of emotions
- Emotion feels overwhelming
- Difficult, if not impossible, to think logically through the given situation.

WAYS TO MOVE TO LOWER INTENSITY

- Physically calm your body. Take deep breaths and find ways to self-soothe.

YELLOW ZONE

- Moderate level of intensity of emotion
- Still possible to think logically through the situation.
- Emotions are strong, yet manageable.

- Identify any distortions in your thoughts that have led to the emotion. Think on things that are true, comforting, soothing (*Philippians 4:8*).

GREEN ZONE

- Feeling calm, peaceful, content, and collected.
- Able to feel emotion and able to think logically.

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Emotional Self-Soothing: Use these tools when the intensity of your emotions are “yellow” or “red.”

“Get up and go!”:

-  Walk
-  Run
-  Swing
-  Work in the yard
-  Visit a bookstore
-  Ride a bike
-  Do volunteer work

Engage your 5 senses: When emotions get overwhelming, engaging in an activity that utilizes any of your five senses can help you shift your focus away from what is bothering you to something neutral or positive.

-  Touch—take a shower or bubble bath, put on scented lotion, pet an animal
-  Taste—make some tea or coffee; chew gum; have some hard candy
-  Smell—light a candle, put on scented lotion, bake
-  Sight—look at photographs; gaze at the night sky; watch a sunset or sunrise
-  Hearing—listen to music, listen to the animals outside (birds, crickets, frogs)

Quieting activities

-  Write in a journal
-  Do a crossword puzzle or Sudoku
-  Read the Bible
-  Read a book
-  Pray
-  Write a poem or short story
-  Scrapbook

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Self-soothe skills

| | |
|--|--|
| <p><i>Physical Activities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tend the garden• Go for a walk• Exercise• Ride a bicycle• Go swimming• Go hiking• Go fishing• Go skating• Play tennis• Play a lawn game• Go on the swings• Play on the playground with children• Do yard work• Play frisbee• Sew | <p><i>Involvement with Others</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visit a friend• Call someone on the phone• Send an e-mail• Write a letter to someone you love• Pray• Do volunteer work• Hug someone• Visit a relative• Make someone laugh• Invite a friend to visit• Go out on a date with your spouse• Participate in a discussion• Have a conversation• Go out to eat at a restaurant with a friend |
| <p><i>Get Perspective</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help someone• Watch children play• Watch the sun rise or set• Visit a new place• Enroll in a class• Go to the library• Go to a café• Pray• Give to charity• Look at the stars• Go to a bookstore• Observe animals in the wild• Write in your journal• Count your blessings | <p><i>Use your 5 senses</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Go for a walk in a natural setting• Get a massage• Take a bath• Play with an animal• Make tea or hot chocolate• Listen to the rain• Walk in the rain, stepping in puddles• Put lotion on your body• Brush your hair• Take a shower• Build a bonfire at night• Sit on the porch and observe your environment• Make a fire in the fireplace• Look at the night sky |

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Self-soothe skills, cont.

Use concentration

- Read a book
- Play a board game
- Play a musical instrument
- Draw or paint
- Take photographs
- Fix something that is broken
- Learn a new craft
- Solve a brainteaser
- Prepare a healthy meal
- Pray
- Arrange flowers
- Do a word game
- Redecorate a part of your home
- Write a poem
- Play chess
- Light a candle and watch the flame
- Bake
- Practice listening well to another person
- Finish some task you have been putting off
- Fly a kite
- Organize something
- Put together a jigsaw puzzle
- Figure out how something works

Involve different emotions

- Listen to music
- Watch children play
- Sing a song
- Go to a museum
- Meditate on Scripture
- Pray
- Smile
- Look at beautiful pictures in a book
- Throw a party
- Buy or make someone a present
- Buy or make yourself a present
- Make someone laugh
- Tell a joke
- Tell a story to a child
- Compliment someone
- Plan a trip
- Go on a picnic

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Time to take in the positive

The following are exercises you should follow exactly at first and then start varying a little after you attain a degree of mastery. And of course you can make substitutions if you need to. Don't drink hot coffee or tea? Try orange juice. The details are less important than your overall goal, which is a life more awake and alive to each moment as it happens. Don't let the positive simply pass you by, and don't let your thoughts of worry rob you of fully living beautiful and pleasant moments. Don't avoid the positive.

*Drinking Your Favorite Hot Drink*¹

If you buy your drink at a restaurant or café, decide ahead of time that you will sit in the café for a while, taking your time. Hold your hot drink in your hands. Feel the warmth of the drink radiating through your cup or mug. Notice how your hands and skin respond to that warmth. Slowly lift the drink to your nose. Slowly and deliberately take in the smell of the drink. Be attentive to the aroma filtering through your nostrils. Let your sense of smell be alive to the aroma. Take your first sip very slowly and deliberately. Let the drink slowly wash through your mouth and over your tongue. Try to notice the flavor or mixture of flavors. Describe them to yourself. Is it bitter? Sour? Sweet? Milky?

As you continue this attentiveness to your drink be alert to any worry thoughts, thoughts of work, school, church, and home. Let these thoughts come and go. Don't hold on to them. Simply notice these outside thoughts, let them go and gently bring your awareness back to your drink. Right now, your drink is all that this moment is about. As distractions come and go, use your breath to become centered again at this precise moment of practice, neither going to the future, even if it's only a few minutes away, nor the past, even if it was a short while ago. Stay in this moment with this experience as long as you can. As you finish your drink you can allow yourself to return to your work, reading, or people watching.

*Walking through the Park*¹

Find a park in your area that feels comfortable and pick a safe time to walk through it. If there isn't a park nearby, choose a local neighborhood where there are plenty of trees and as little traffic as possible. As you walk, notice the sights of the trees, flowers, houses, and people. Taking all of this in, let yourself feel the emotion of joy in response to beauty and peace. If there is sunshine, be mindful to that and the beauty inherent to the sun and the colors that it reflects. If it's sprinkling or raining, notice the beauty of the coolness and damp that brings forth life and nourishes living things. Do all that you can to abandon yourself to this moment, not letting work or worries pull you away. Don't be mindful to what is happening tomorrow. Tomorrow has enough trouble of its own. Simply be present in your walk. Feel your feet touching the ground and lifting, noticing your stride as you walk along at whatever pace is natural to you. Give yourself a good hour to thoroughly enjoy your walk.

1. Quoted from: Spradlin, Scott, *Don't let your emotions run your life*, Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, 2003, p. 122-124.

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5. SELF-TALK & PERFECTIONISM

We constantly have a stream of thoughts going through our mind. We keep a running commentary of what we need to do, how we are doing, how we think others are responding to us, etc. This “self-talk” can both help us and hinder us in developing a Christ-centered self-worth. The following resources will teach you about “self-talk” and help you modify it so that it is centered on the truth of the Word. In addition, another potential hindrance to self-worth, perfectionism, is discussed. When our standards for our self are unrealistic due to perfectionism or comparison to others, our self-worth is at risk. Our standards are to be based on the truth that God made each one of us just how he wanted and equips us with His grace to fully live out who He created us to be. In addition, we accept that we are in the process of becoming complete in Christ.

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6. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. *Search for Significance* by Robert McGee

This book is about developing Christ-centered self-worth. It is good for individuals dealing with low self-worth, fear of failure, unhealthy people pleasing, and feelings of inferiority.

2. “Mastering Christian Meditation”, a chapter from *The Anxiety Cure* by Dr. Archibald Hart

This chapter defines and describes Christian meditation. It contrasts this type of meditation from other types of mediation that are not centered on Christ. The guidance in this chapter supplements the section on “Connecting with God.”

3. *Learning to Tell Myself the Truth* by William Backus, Ph.D.

This workbook helps readers to understand their negative self-talk and learn to use scriptural truths to think in a healthier, more Christ-like manner. It includes specific chapters on dealing with depression, anxiety, anger, and perfectionism.

4. *Healing for Damaged Emotions* by David Seamands

This book has a realistic and Biblical approach to finding healing from crippling emotions such as perfectionism, depression, low self-worth, and inner hurts.