

Jesus Wept: The Bible and Human Emotions

Self-Esteem

Lesson #9 for February 26, 2011

Scriptures: Psalm 100:3; Acts 17:24-28; Romans 12:3; Matthew 22:39; 2 Samuel 9; Luke 15; Ephesians 4:23-32.

1. What is a person worth? How do we develop an estimate of our own value? Every person has a mental picture of his/her own self-worth. Sometimes, that picture is very distorted. We develop that mental picture through a collage of contributing factors: 1) Our self-evaluation based on what we believe we have accomplished and input we get from others; 2) As Christians we should also consider our origin—we are children of our heavenly Father; and 3) What value does God place on us?
2. “One soul is worth more than all the world. For one soul Jesus would have passed through the agony of Calvary that that one might be saved in his kingdom.” {*RH*, May 3, 1892}
3. We should feel the responsibilities that rest upon us as Christians, and labor as though we realized the value of souls, remembering that one soul saved in the kingdom of God is worth more than ten thousand worlds like this. {*RH*, April 1, 1880 par. 1}
4. “I saw that his soul was worth more than ten thousand worlds like this.” (*Manuscript 5*, 1850, *MR18* 13.2)
5. Who is a more accurate judge of our value? Ourselves? Or, God? Diminished self-esteem is a modern plague. Why is it so common? Certainly, one factor must be our media. Our media focuses on those they regard as stars and those who are high in political positions. It is natural for us, even unconsciously, to compare ourselves with such people. But, not everyone can be a star or a president. But, we may feel inadequate because we do not measure up!
6. There are two mutually exclusive—even contradictory—views as to the origin of human beings. Are we sons and daughters of God and heirs to an eternal kingdom? Or, did we arise from a primordial ocean—through ooze and slime, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals, and finally, become human beings? If we take the view that we are God’s children, then that view should help to determine our self-worth. That is supported by the following: 1) We are made to be like Him (Genesis 1:26,27); 2) We are made only a little lower than God Himself (Psalm 8:5); 3) God is directly active in keeping us alive and making every part of our beings function (Acts 17:24-28); and 4) “Every pulsation of the heart is a rebound from the touch of the finger of God. He watches over us by day, and under his wings we find shelter by night.” (*Review and Herald*, December 2, 1890, par. 15)
7. By contrast, those who take the evolutionary route believe that they have avoided all responsibility to God and to the church and thus, have attempted to avoid God’s future judgment of themselves. They believe there is nothing beyond this life and thus, no accountability to any higher power. Of course, that idea is a very modern one, only having arisen in the last 150 years of human history. If evolutionists are right, we all go to the same place. If they are wrong, they will lose so much!
8. So, which is it? Did God create us, plan to redeem us, and save us? Is He preparing an eternal home for us to live in forever? Or, is there nothing beyond this life? Before Darwin, philosophers were more or less forced to accept God as the Creator because they had no other explanation for origins. There is good scientific evidence for intelligent design. When we as creationists talk to evolutionists, we must never allow them to get away with the idea that it is their science versus our religion. We both have data and science. Their interpretation of the data is their “religion.” So we can compare science with science, or we can compare religion with religion.
9. While many suffer from low self-esteem, there are others who think much too highly of themselves! Paul tells us in Romans 12:1-3 that God is not looking for dead pigeons or dead

lambs any more. He is looking for “living sacrifices”—human beings who will think carefully through the issues and regard God as of supreme worth, thus giving their intelligent worship to Him. This will lead us to put a correct and proper evaluation of ourselves not as worthless scum because, in fact, we are children of the King of kings. However, neither should we think of ourselves too highly because everything we have and do and are has been given to us by God. God who formed us wants to transform us to be like Himself.

10. A 1994 record album by the Halo Benders was entitled, “God Don’t Make No Junk.” Whether they were trying to deal with the self-esteem issue or not is unclear.
11. If we show respect to those around us, are we building up their egos? If we constantly take the proper perspective of ourselves and others by keeping Christ’s ministry in mind, does it help us to maintain a balance? God originally formed us in His image. It is His intention that through cooperation with Christ and the Holy Spirit, we can be transformed to become more and more like Him. How would that impact our self-esteem? But, we must keep our focus on Him.
12. Why is it that our self-evaluations and self-perceptions are so often faulty? Why is it that we so often misinterpret the motives and characters of others as well as those of ourselves?
13. What primary criteria do we use for evaluating ourselves? Is it ability? Looks? Character? Power? Popularity? How do these values compare with God’s way of judging us? See 1 Samuel 16:7.
14. Read Matthew 22:39. This, of course, is the second great commandment. What does it mean to love others *as you love yourself*? In what way are you to love yourself? Do most Christians believe that they are supposed to love others more than themselves? The Greek verb is *agapao*. This is a form of love based on principle and has nothing to do with affection, or sexual love, or passionate love. Did Jesus respond to every beggar that He saw?
15. In Romans 12, Paul described the members of the church as parts of a human body. Every part of the body has its place and its work. None of us is to despise others even though their place and their work might be different from ours.
16. What gifts in the form of personal attributes, characteristics, mental abilities, social abilities, and spiritual abilities has God given you? As you evaluate those, does it make you humble?
17. As we look at what God has done for us, does it help us to have a correct value or estimate of our own worth? Our self-esteem is usually much determined by the attitudes and reactions we get from those closest to us. This is a major factor in our self-worth.
18. One very decorated Olympic diver came up with a novel way to handle the stress of the moment. Unlike a team sport, diving is a very solitary endeavor, so he devised a strategy for calming his nerves. As he stood atop the diving platform, right before he launched into the air, he repeated the following: “Even if I blow this dive, my mother will still love me.” (*Adult Teacher’s Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, p. 105)
19. This diver is one of the most decorated divers in the history of the sport. There were times when he lost, and there were many times when he won. But, he did not allow his self-worth to be determined by a particular win or loss.
20. If God is our closest Friend as He should be, does our self-worth depend on the feedback we get from Him? Is that the most reliable information?
21. Different cultures place value on different assets. To some, what matters is wealth. To others, it is appearance. Are we placing a correct value on ourselves and others around us as we are looking through the lens of Christianity? So often, human societies base their values on external characteristics. But, God is more concerned with honesty, kindness, temperance, and firm commitment to principles and ideals.
22. The Jewish people have always claimed a special relationship with God based on their hereditary link to Abraham. Paul’s words in Galatians 3:28,29 upset them a great deal. To

Paul—and the Holy Spirit—there are no more gender, class, or nationality distinctions of any kind. We are to do our best to eliminate all our prejudices.

23. Read 2 Samuel 9. What happened to Mephibosheth's self-image when he met David? He was invited to always eat at the king's table. Has God invited us to join Him at the table in heaven?
24. Read Psalm 8:5. In the *King James Version*, it suggests that we are made a little lower than the angels. But, the verse literally says, "A little lower than God (or gods)." And what will be our status in heaven *vis-a-vis* the angels? Will we be lower than the angels and thus, jealous of them? Will we be higher than the angels and thus, proud?
25. One way to help us maintain a correct balance in terms of self-esteem is to constantly "practice the presence of God." Another very important guideline is suggested in *Great Controversy* 555.

It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature that by beholding we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence. (*Great Controversy* 555.1)

26. What do we know about the childhood and youth of Jesus? We know almost nothing about that from the biblical record. Two chapters in *Desire of Ages* are very helpful. "As a Child" and "Days of Conflict" give us some very interesting insights into the childhood of Jesus. How did Jesus develop a correct self-image? Who was/were His teacher(s)?

The child Jesus did not receive instruction in the synagogue schools. **His mother was His first human teacher.** From her lips and from the scrolls of the prophets, He learned of heavenly things. The very words which He Himself had spoken to Moses for Israel **He was now taught at His mother's knee.** As He advanced from childhood to youth, He did not seek the schools of the rabbis. He needed not the education to be obtained from such sources; for **God was His instructor.** {DA 70.1}

. . . Since **He gained knowledge as we may do,** His intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures shows how diligently His early years were given to the study of God's word. And spread out before Him was the great library of God's created works. He who had made all things studied the lessons which His own hand had written in earth and sea and sky. . . .

Thus to Jesus the significance of the word and the works of God was unfolded, as He was trying to understand the reason of things. **Heavenly beings were His attendants, and the culture of holy thoughts and communings was His.** From the first dawning of intelligence He was constantly growing in spiritual grace and knowledge of truth. {DA 70.3}

Every child may gain knowledge as Jesus did. As we try to become acquainted with our heavenly Father through His word, angels will draw near, our minds will be strengthened, our characters will be elevated and refined. We shall become more like our Saviour. {DA 70.4}

What does that tell us about the transformation process? At what was Jesus looking?

27. Read Luke 15. Why do you think Jesus told these stories? Notice that in each case, the owner left the safe and secure "valuables" behind and went to search for the one lost. Whether it was a sheep, a coin, or a son, the owner longed for its return. Do those with whom we associate in the world and even among other church members recognize immediately that we value their souls? Are we prepared to make it clear to those around us that this world is only a transitory place for us to live? Do they understand that we are living in light of the full presence of God and that our eternal home is with Him?
28. Read Philippians 2:5-11. This is an excellent passage for us to consider when thinking of self-

esteem. The *Good News Bible* says:

⁵ The attitude you should have is the one that Christ Jesus had:

⁶ He always had the nature of God, but he did not think that by force he should try to remain equal with God.

⁷ Instead of this, of his own free will he gave up all he had, and took the nature of a servant. He became like a human being and appeared in human likeness.

⁸ He was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death—his death on the cross. (Phillips says, “the death of a common criminal”)

29. Jesus, who was the Owner, Creator, and Ruler of the entire universe, came and died the death of a common criminal for us. What does that teach us? Jesus wants us always to keep in mind His constant love for us.
30. How should we relate to those who fall away from God’s ideal? We are supposed to go to them, deal with them as Christians, and encourage them to return to the fold. If they will not listen to us, we should take others to reinforce the message. (Matthew 18:15-20)
31. Read Ephesians 4:25-32. There, Paul told about the gifts that have been given to the church through the Holy Spirit. These gifts are to help all members of the church to grow up until we become mature and not shaken or tossed about by every wind of teaching or doctrine that might come along. Then, he went on to describe the kind of people we should become. There should be no lying, no anger leading to sin, no robbing; we should be earning an honest living; we should help the poor; we should never give the Devil a chance; there should be no harmful words, no bitterness, no passion, no anger, no shouting, and no insults. We should be always ready to forgive others.
32. Repeatedly in Scripture, we are encouraged to help and assist others who need our help. Why is it that doing so seems to increase our self-esteem? Should it?
33. In our world of Internet connectedness and with social networking sites becoming the norm for reaching out to our friends and even to those we don’t know, some researchers have begun calling this the narcissistic generation! Do those social sites help us to reach out in Christian ways to help others? Or, do they focus more on our appearance and what we think of ourselves and what others think of us?
34. If you have a friend who is spending a lot of time on social networking sites, ask him/her to try shutting off the computer for a week and reaching out to people in person. Think of the characteristics of God that you most admire, and see if you can emulate some of them.
35. Regretfully, in this last century with the increase of knowledge, science, transportation, and interconnectedness, we have had the greatest wars of all time. What does that tell us about our ability to get along?
36. To those of us who have espoused the larger-view, trust, healing model of the plan of salvation, and who recognize that the great controversy is about the character and government God, and Satan’s attempts to misrepresent, to distort, and to malign God’s character, it should be clear that we should avoid aligning ourselves with Satan as he has been trying to take the place of God. Instead, we should be on Jesus’ side as He humbly died the death of a common criminal on our behalf. Do we clearly understand the issues that are involved? Are we prepared to follow our Savior’s example?

© 2011, *Kenneth Hart, MD, MA, MPH. Permission is hereby granted for any noncommercial use of these materials. Free distribution is encouraged. It is our goal to see them spread as widely and freely as possible. If you would like to use them for your class or even make copies of portions of them, feel free to do so. We always enjoy hearing about how you might be using the materials, and we might even want to share good ideas with others. So, let us know.* Info@theox.org

Last Modified: January 10, 2011

Z:\My Documents\WP\SSTG-Hart\HumanEmotions\SS-9-HumEmot-2011_03_05-2011_01_04-Fin+.wpd