

Coping with Low Self-Esteem; Having our Worth Come from Christ (Ps 16:2; Romans 12:3; Eph 1:14)

Prepared and preached by Pastor Steve Rhodes for and at Bethel Friends Church in Poland, OH on Sunday, November 6, 2022

James Dobson writes:

If I were to draw a Caricature that would symbolize the millions of adults with low self-esteem, I would depict a bowed, weary traveler. Over his shoulder I would place the end of a mile-long chain to which is attached tons of scrap iron, old tires, and garbage of all types. Each piece of junk is inscribed with the details of some humiliation—a failure—an embarrassment—a rejection from the past. He could let go of the chain and free himself from the heavy load which immobilizes and exhausts him, but he is somehow convinced that it must be dragged throughout life. ... Paralyzed by its weight, he plods onward, digging a furrow in the good earth as he goes. You can free yourself from the weight of the chain if you will but turn it loose.¹

Today, we deal with the difficult topic of low self-esteem. How do we cope with that? This topic corresponds to depression and anxiety.

My theme today is:

We cope with low self-esteem by re-orienting ourselves in the Lord.

Remember that you are not ordinary.

C. S. Lewis writes:

There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. nations, cultures, arts, civilizations — these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit — immortal horrors or everlasting splendours. This does not mean that we are to be perpetually solemn. We must play. But our merriment must be of that kind (and it is, in fact, the merriest kind) which exists between people who have, from the outset, taken each other seriously — no flippancy, no superiority, no presumption. And our charity must be a real and costly love, with deep feeling for the sins in spite of which we love the sinner — no mere tolerance or indulgence which parodies love as flippancy parodies merriment. Next to the blessed sacrament itself, your neighbour is the holiest object presented to your senses. if he

¹ Charles R. Swindoll, [*The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart and 1501 Other Stories*](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2016), 510.

*is your Christian neighbour he is holy in almost the same way, for in him also Christ vere latitat — the glorifier and the glorified, Glory Himself, is truly hidden.*²

1. We cope with low self-esteem by asking God to be our refuge (verse 1).
 - a. Psalm 16:1-2 (ESV) ¹*Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge. ²I say to the LORD, “You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you.”*
 - b. One source shares: *The psalmist seeks divine protection because he has remained loyal to God. He praises God for his rich blessings, and is confident God will vindicate him and deliver him from death.*³
 - c. In verse 1 David is asking the Lord to preserve him.
 - d. We must re-orient ourselves to take shelter in the Lord.
2. We cope with low self-esteem by recognizing that we have no good apart from the Lord (verse 2).
 - a. Verse 2 said exactly that.
 - b. Sometimes low self-esteem could be due to depression.
 - c. Sometimes low self-esteem could be due to our self-absorbed culture. That is exactly why we must re-orient ourselves so that everything is about Jesus.
 - d. We must focus completely and solely on Jesus.
 - e. Pour ourselves more and more into Him. We will come back to this idea in verse 11.
 - f. Verse 2 is an example of hyperbole to show how important the Lord is to David.
3. We cope with low self-esteem by delighting in other Christians (verse 3).
 - a. Psalm 16:3 (ESV)
 - b. ³*As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight.*
 - c. David points to the saints in the land.
 - d. In context he said that he has no good apart from the Lord, but now he seems to want to acknowledge the saints in the land.
 - e. They are his delight.
 - f. We need the body of Christ to help us.
4. We cope with low self-esteem by leaning on the everlasting arms (the whole Psalm 16).

² C.S. Lewis; C. S. Lewis. *The Weight of Glory* (pp. 26-27). UNKNOWN. Kindle Edition.

³ Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2005).

5. We cope with low self-esteem by recognizing God will not let us suffer in hell. As Jesus was raised from the dead, so will we (verse 10).
- a. This is powerful:
 - b. Psalm 16:10: ¹⁰*For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.*
 - c. This is David writing about his life, but it also applied to the future Messiah. We know that since the Holy Spirit applied these verses, verses 8-11, to Jesus in the New Testament in Acts 2:25-28.
 - d. Verse 10 is also cited in Acts 13:35.
 - e. David is saying that he is rescued after death. This means that in the original context David knew that God would deliver him from what he was facing. This is especially applied by Peter to Jesus. Peter goes on following Acts 2:28 that David was seeing the Messiah. Jesus would be delivered from the grave.
 - f. We must re-orient ourselves to who we are in Christ. Jesus will deliver you from the grave as well.
 - g. The Messiah was resurrected and lives!
 - h. Dr. Constable: *This is one of the few clear references to resurrection in the Old Testament (cf. Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2).*²⁸¹⁴
 - i. Because Jesus lives, you can face tomorrow.
 - j. Because Jesus lives, you will be resurrected (1 Cor. 15:50-58).
 - k. Who are you in Christ?
 - l. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says that when we are in Christ, we are a new creation. The old has gone and the new has come.
 - m. We cope with low self-esteem by re-orienting ourselves to who we are in Christ. This is not only about our eternal life, but our life now.
 - n. If you know Jesus:
 - o. You are regenerated. The Holy Spirit has given you new life so that you could receive Him as Lord and Savior (John 3:3-17).
 - p. You are sanctified and being sanctified. This means that God has set you apart for His purposes and is setting you apart by making you more like Him (1 Cor. 1:2; Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 4:3; 5:23).
 - q. You are justified, this means God has clothed you in Jesus' righteousness (Rom. 3:24; 5:1; 8:30).
 - r. You are adopted as a child of God (Rom. 8:15; Eph. 1:5; 1 John 3:1).

²⁸¹ Merrill, "Psalms," p. 414.

⁴ Tom Constable, [*Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible*](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Ps 16:11.

- s. The wrath of God has been removed as Jesus absorbed the wrath of God (Romans 3:25).
 - t. You will be glorified. This means that when we know Jesus, He will perfect us in Him when we join Him in Heaven (Romans 8:30).
 - u. When we deal with low self-esteem, we must re-orient ourselves to these awesome realities.
 - v. Also, remember every human being is made in the image of God.
 - w. Re-orient yourself.
6. We cope with low self-esteem by asking the Lord to make known to us the path of life, in His presence having fullness of joy, and at His right hand are our pleasures forevermore (verse 11).
- a. Psalm 16:11: *You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*
 - b. In verse 11 we see a powerful verse about trust.
 - c. God makes known to David, and to us, the path of life.
 - d. Our path of life is only in God.
 - e. In God's presence is fullness of joy.
 - f. Our joy is ONLY in God.
 - g. David is saying this about him, but we can apply it to us.
 - h. Our path of life is only in God.
 - i. Now, at God's right hand are pleasures, and those pleasures are forevermore.
 - j. Only at God's right hand, God's hand of authority.
 - k. There are other things we can do for self-esteem. I have mainly focused on re-orienting ourselves to who we are in Christ and focusing on God.
 - l. Some may have more deep needs and should see a counselor.
 - m. Dr. J.P. Moreland gives a lot of help in his book, "Finding Quiet." On pages 70 and following he gives some really good therapeutic mental exercises. This concerns mixing low self-esteem with depression and anxiety, but I know they may not be linked.
 - n. *STEP 1: RELABELING. Your thoughts are simply uncomfortable, deceptive, destructive brain messages that are mere habits of yours with no connection to reality. Call these messages what they really are.*
 - o. *STEP 2: REFRAMING. Take the power out of the thoughts as you change your perception of the importance of the deceptive brain message by (1) being mindful, in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, by actively focusing your attention on the deceptive brain message to become fully aware that you are having it, what its content is, and*

how you are currently feeling; and (2) labeling the message correctly under one of the major types of distorted thinking patterns.

- p. *STEP 3: REFOCUSING. Refocus your attention on something that distracts you and gets you into a flow—move on. Flow occurs when you are so focused on something that you lose track of time and what’s going on around you. The key is not to ruminate about the message, arguing with yourself why it isn’t true or drawing out horrible implications of it. Such rumination, even telling yourself why the message isn’t true, actually deepens the brain grooves that trigger the message and makes it harder to get rid of. The goal is to dismiss the message that is disempowered by steps 1 and 2.*
- q. *STEP 4: REVALUING. After a while and when it is safe to go back and reflect on your employment of steps 1–3, think about what you did, be strengthened by what you did well, learn from your mistakes, and recommit yourself to doing this repeatedly throughout each day to make all of this a habit.*
- r. *About reframing he writes:*
- s. *While inviting the Holy Spirit in through praying Psalm 139:23–24, step 2 urges us to become so aware of the thought and its associated feeling that we can give a name or label to the thought. Among other things, this gives us a genuine sense of power over it. And it reminds us that we are not alone in suffering from this habit of thinking. Rather, it fits a category in which numerous other people engage. Here is a fairly standard list of distorted thinking traps:*
 - i. *All-or-nothing thinking. (If you’re not perfect or if you get anything wrong, you’re a total failure.)*
 - ii. *Overgeneralizing. (“I always do that.”)*
 - iii. *Mental filter. (You pick out a single negative detail and dwell on it.)*
 - iv. *Discounting the positive. (If you did a good job, you tell yourself that anyone could have done it.)*
 - v. *Jumping to conclusions or mind reading. (You interpret others’ actions, tone of voice, or body language in a negative way or, like fortune-telling, you assume and predict that others don’t like you and that things will turn out badly.)*
 - vi. *Magnification or catastrophizing. (You exaggerate your weaknesses or the harmful aspects of events that have happened or may happen, thus minimizing your strengths or the odds that the event will never happen and, even if it did, the results won’t be that bad.)*

- vii. *Emotional reasoning. (You actually believe that reality is the way you feel.)*
- viii. *Inappropriate “should” statements. (“I should avoid being around people because they will see what a loser I am.”)*
- ix. *Self-labeling. (“I made a mistake, so I am a loser.”)*
- x. *Self-blame. (You blame yourself for events outside your control.)⁵*
- xi. *We reframe and then we must refocus our thoughts and so on as I have described.*
- t. *What I am saying is that we must re-orient ourselves to who we are in Christ.*
- u. *We must ask a Christian friend to help us, or a counselor, and use a journal.*

Piper will help us wrap this up:

In this life of sin and pain, joy is embattled. Just like faith. And Paul says to Timothy, “Fight the good fight of the faith” (1 Timothy 6:12). So it is with joy. We must work for it and fight for it. Paul said to the Corinthians, “We work with you for your joy” (2 Corinthians 1:24).

How then shall we fight for joy? Here are 15 pointers.

1. *Realize that authentic joy in God is a gift.*
2. *Realize that joy must be fought for relentlessly. And don’t be put off by the paradox of these first two pointers!*
3. *Resolve to attack all known sin in your life, by the power of the Holy Spirit.*
4. *Learn the secret of gutsy guilt — how to fight like a justified sinner.*
5. *Realize that the battle is primarily a fight to see — to see God for who he is.*
6. *Meditate on the word of God day and night.*
7. *Pray earnestly and continually for open heart-eyes and an inclination for God.*
8. *Learn to preach to yourself rather than listen to yourself.*
9. *Spend time with God-saturated people who help you see God and fight the fight.*
10. *Be patient in the night of God’s seeming absence.*
11. *Get the rest, exercise, and proper diet that your body was designed by God to have.*

⁵ Moreland, James Porter . Finding Quiet (pp. 70-75). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

12. *Make a proper use of God's revelation in nature — take a walk in the woods.*
13. *Read great books about God and biographies of great saints.*
14. *Do the hard and loving thing for the sake of others (your verbal witness and deeds of mercy).*
15. *Get a global vision for the cause of Christ, and pour yourself out for the unreached.*

Every one of those has Bible verses to support it. If you want to see them, they are in the book *When I Don't Desire God: How to Fight for Joy*.⁶

Prayer

⁶ https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/fifteen-tactics-for-joy?utm_campaign=Daily%20Email&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=86861722&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-PzFTMSI340DTsu_EKgu2UplbN6SEO_i60qJ9mxQAwRgTFZPfs3zh2HEzD6E4HpmjC5PfqFrDN-a4VbNq-z3H5lj-tDA&_hsmi=86861722