

## **God and Self-Esteem**

by

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*Valley News Dispatch 12/01/96 - Community Columnist*

I believe our society suffers from an epidemic of unhealthy self-esteem. A negative upbringing, peer pressure, racial stereotypes or just the numbing preoccupation of self lead many into a difficult trap that often lasts a lifetime. Perhaps most significantly, some forms of advertising subliminally make us feel less human by defining what is beautiful yet so unattainable for most of us.

Whether it takes two parents, a village or a pack of dogs, the term "family values" has been so besmirched that the issue became all but irrelevant during this past Presidential election. I sense that the most ignored family value issue is that we have a bunch of people that come from all kinds of situations that have terrible self-esteem. Although, it spans all socio-economic classes, the poor often bare the additional burden of being scorned by those that have. Regardless of class, the erosion of self-esteem is not only dehumanizing but blasphemous. It denies the essence of God's beautiful creation.

The manifestation of bad self-esteem is almost always self-destructive or other-destructive. When people have no regard for themselves, they have no regard for life at any level. Whenever I hear of someone senselessly shooting another, the word "nutball" usually runs out of my mouth but I sometimes pause to reflect because there must be a world of hurt going on inside. Show me someone that has little reverence for morality and I will show you someone that has little reverence for oneself. Show me a pompous, conceited business executive and I will show you someone incredibly insecure. Show me someone that has no respect for people and I will show you someone that has no self-respect.

I believe the cumulative effect of this negative self-esteem has warped our collective self-conscience. Somehow freedom has become not only the highest value but the only value. All other values have become relative to the situation and the moment. In the process, we have become idolaters of popularity. We have grown to accept almost anything in part because we cannot fully accept ourselves.

While my parents were far from being Ward and June Cleaver, they gave me a great gift that more need today. They taught me that God loved me the way I was. I believed it. Without saying any words, without the assistance of any psychological books, my parents gave me great self-esteem and the confidence that usually follows. I learned that I was to live for something a whole lot bigger than myself which included God, country and fellow human beings.

I know there are many distressing circumstances in life. If I grew up in abject poverty or if my father had abandoned me would my esteem have been the same? Probably not.

The notion of God's love or even God as father may have been too abstract or too far-fetched to fathom.

Many would contend that healthy self-esteem can be arrived from a variety of directions but finding good self-esteem is fleeting without acknowledging the beauty of God's creation and goodness. There are rarely simple answers to complex questions. However, I believe good self-esteem is only whole if it is predicated on God's love which is both unconditional and indiscriminate. I believe people were constructed to be in communion with God. The harmonic convergence of God and humankind through prayer leads to humility and a sense of peace that we are somehow all right.

Since I advocate God as being the answer, I feel obligated to note that some churches succumb to the bad self-esteem lie. There is one school of thought that teaches we are innately evil beings. There is another that teaches we are created good yet we often fail because evil tempts us to do wrong. Both views agree that God is the answer. However, the former demoralizes self-esteem. The latter reinforces it.

It is good that we teach our young people to just say "no" to evil things like drugs. It would be even better to encourage them to say "yes" to God who is good and "yes" to God's creation by humbly saying "yes" to the reflection we each see in the mirror.



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