

Self Esteem

The foundation for the life of the Christian is Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11). We must indeed believe He is the Christ the Son of God (John 8:24; 20:30-31), and that faith must lead us to obey Him (Matthew 7:21-27; Luke 6:46) and to pattern our lives after Him (Luke 6:40). And what kind of example did He leave for us to follow?

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:5-8).

The mind of Christ we must emulate is humility, and the life of Christ we must follow is one of self sacrifice in order to obey God and to serve others.

Experts tell us that “self esteem” “refers to an individual’s sense of his or her value or worth, or the extent to which a person values, approves of, appreciates, prizes, or likes him or herself. The person with “high self esteem” “values, approves of, appreciates, prizes” himself. But, if we follow Christ, we do nothing through conceit but “esteem others better than” ourselves.

John Rosemond, a professional family psychologist who writes a nationally syndicated column wrote an article entitled “Self-Esteem Isn’t Praiseworthy Goal.” He cited “an extensive study” “by professor Roy Baumeister of Case Western Reserve University which concluded, not surprisingly, “that people with high self esteem tend to have low self-control.” For example, he has discovered that criminals do not suffer from low self esteem. Mr. Rosemond referenced a second study published in the November 2001 issue of “Personality and Social Psychology Review” which indicates “while self-esteem among America’s youth has been on the rise for the past 30 years, accomplishment and responsible decision-making have been on the decline.”

The apostle Paul warned Timothy of “perilous times” during which people would be “lovers of themselves,... boasters, proud,... disobedient to parents,... without self- control, brutal,... lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God” (2 Timothy 3:1-5). Hmmm. We’re in perilous times indeed, aren’t we?

Thayer defines the word “proud” as “showing one’s self above others, with an overwhelming estimate of one’s means or merits, despising others or even treating them with contempt, haughty”. Would someone please explain to me the difference between self esteem and pride? I have been unable to find a single passage of Scripture that commends pride in oneself.

The apostle characterizes sinners in these “perilous times” as “having a form of godliness but denying its power” (2 Timothy 3:5), i.e., claiming to be reverent toward God while remaining worldly in heart and life. Thus, churches which have bought in to this ‘self esteem movement’ are appealing to worldly folks because they offer “a form of godliness” (outward show of reverence for God) but deny its power (no real change of heart and life). It’s the easy, broad way that leads to destruction rather than eternal life (Matthew 7:13-14).

The greatest and universal human need is salvation from sin. The “whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one” (1 John 5:19; cf. Matthew 9:36-38; Romans 3:23; 6:23). Our job is not to make lost sinners feel good about themselves in their sins. We must get them to see they are spiritually “wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked” (Revelation 3:17) (By the way, the Lord Jesus was here describing sinful Christians who had very high self esteem).

Instead of artificially elevating their ‘self esteem,’ we need to point lost sinners to “Christ, the Savior of the world” (John 4:42), so they can be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). Thus “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard” their “hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7), and they will “rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8) in the hope of heaven. And that’s what the gospel and the church of our Lord Jesus Christ are all about.

- by Keith Sharp (edited for length)

Honesty, Error, and Truth

There are many good people in the world who are honestly mistaken, but when a man who is honestly mistaken hears the truth, one of two things must happen: he will cease to be mistaken or, he will cease to be honest. If he does not obey it, he will no longer be honest. If he does obey it, he will no longer be mistaken. Honesty and error must separate when truth comes along. No man can be honestly mistaken if he has heard the truth.

- by ***Eugene Britnell***

Should We Be "Tolerant?"

Many people have the opinion that we all should be "tolerant" of the religious views of everyone else. In fact, about the only thing that receives much criticism these days is the "intolerance" of some of us who argue against certain religious beliefs. We're frequently viewed as being "fanatics," and mean-spirited "bigots." They tell us to be less judgmental and learn to accept all forms of religious expression as being equally good and beneficial.

All of this stems from an apparent failure to distinguish between different forms of "tolerance." There are at least three kinds:

- *Legal tolerance*: This is the recognition that everyone has a legal right to believe and practice whatever he or she feels is best and right.
- *Social tolerance*: This is the notion that everyone ought to be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their particular religious convictions.
- *Uncritical tolerance*: The idea that no one ought to ever make a judgment relative to what others believe religiously. It suggests that it is not possible to determine what is right or true, and that all religious beliefs and practices are equally good.

We agree that all Christians are obligated by the Word of God to honor the first two forms of "tolerance." We would fiercely defend the legal right of every person to make their own decisions in matters of religion. Furthermore, we understand that the Lord has taught us to treat everyone with honor and dignity (1 Peter 2:17). To do otherwise would put us in direct violation of His will.

It is the idea of "uncritical tolerance" that is not found in the Scriptures. Instead, we are commanded to compare what people teach and believe with what the Bible says (1 John 4:1,2; Galatians 1:8,9; Matthew 7:15-20). We are to "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3). In this regard, there is no room for tolerance -- we must be faithful to God and His word (2 John 9-11).

- by ***Greg Gwin***