

## "HOW IS YOUR SELF-ESTEEM?"

The State of California has authorized \$750,000 to study whether there is a relationship between lack of self-esteem and social problems. A study already done of 200 criminals at St. Elizabeth's hospital led them to the conclusion that there was not a single criminal "who believed he was evil. Each criminal thought of himself as a basically good person...even while planning a crime." Yet a well-known religious author calls for a "new reformation". He states, "I contend that this unfulfilled need for self-esteem underlies every act, both negative and positive. Self-esteem, then or "pride is being a human." is the single greatest need facing the human race today." A well-known Christian psychologist writes, "If I could write a prescription for the woman of the world, I would provide each one of them with a healthy dose of self-esteem and personal worth....I have no doubt that this is their greatest need."

How do these views compare with the views of Jesus and Paul? Has there ever been a greater proliferation of books on "self" available than we see today? Books on self-esteem, self-image, self-confidence, self-assertion and self-love have become instant best sellers. This emphasis on self should cause red lights to flash in the mind of the Christian. Paul warned us that in the last days one of the characteristics of the age would be that "men would be lovers of self." (II Timothy 3:2). Therefore, beware of men that tell you to love yourself or build up yourself. Didn't the author of Proverbs teach us years ago, "let another man praise you and not your own mouth?" (Proverbs 27:2)

Then there are the words of Jesus that indicate that rather than emphasize self, we are to die to self and serve others for the sake of the good News. Listen carefully to Jesus' words as spoken to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. (Luke 9:23,24) We are, to die to self each day and live for Christ and the Gospel.

Jesus taught His disciples that "apart from Me you can do nothing", but, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you." (John 15:5,7) Paul put it another way, saying "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13)

I see a great danger in the "self" movement taking emphasis away from God and His great plan of redemption through Christ. We are no longer amazed at God's grace but we are enamored with our own wonderful worth and all of the great things that we can do. When Moses degraded himself and said he was not worthy or capable of delivering Israel from bondage, God did not seek to build up his self-esteem. Instead God said that He was the great "I Am" and He would go with Moses and therefore Moses would be successful in the strength and ability of God.

The great need today is not to build up our self-esteem, self-image, self-confidence or self-assertion, but rather to place our dependence on the great God of the universe, who made us! Gave His Son that we might have eternal life through believing on His name and through whose strength we can do all things. May we go forward boasting not in self, but in Christ who is our wisdom, redemption, righteousness, and strength.

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