

I Want to Like Myself – Surviving Low Self-Esteem

Surviving as a Teen, Part 1

Open

- Let's face it – life is hard, and if you're in your teen years, it can feel overwhelming at times. Being a teenager and a Christian isn't easy. This series of lessons will touch on some of the major issues teens of today deal with.
- What are some issues teenagers of today have to overcome in order to stay true to God?
- Today's lesson will take a look at surviving low self-esteem, one of the bigger issues that is facing teenagers of today.

Exodus 3:7-12

Ex 3:7 ¶ *And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; Ex 3:8* *And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.*

Ex 3:9 *Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.*

Ex 3:10 *Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.*

Ex 3:11 ¶ *And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?*

Ex 3:12 *And he said, Certainly I will be with thee*

When God called Moses to go to Pharaoh and declare freedom for the Israelites, Moses gave the response that many of us feel – “Who am I?” God calls us to do amazing things. He asks us to go and preach the gospel, help the needy, stand up for justice, heal the sick, and be like Jesus on the earth, yet most of us are stuck saying “Who am I?” Sometimes, it seems hard enough just to get up in the morning and face yourself in the mirror, let alone shine as an example of Jesus.

Through it all, though, God gives the same answer He gave Moses – “I will be with you.”

You may feel completely inadequate. You may feel like a total loser in life, but God's answer is the same – “I will be with you.” When God created you, He made you for great things, no matter how small or worthless you feel.

LOOK UP

1. You are Small

Job 40:4 Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.

- Job suffered more greatly than probably anybody before or since, and if anyone had a right to be angry with God, it was him. Yet God corrected Him and proved that even Job had no right to complain. Job's answer to God was that he was "unworthy." Did he have low self-esteem? No, he had the answer to combat it.
- This may seem like an odd way to begin teaching about overcoming low self-esteem, by saying that you really are unworthy, but this is the key.
- There is a lie in the self-esteem message that keeps people trapped. The idea of improving your self-esteem places the emphasis on you rather than on God. It's ultimately a prideful stance. You will never truly be free simply by trying to make yourself feel better about who you are. What you need is to realize that you really are unworthy compared to God. Anything else is pride, whether you call it that or you call it low self-esteem.
- What does the Bible teach about God's reaction toward pride? God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble (*James 4:6*).
- Read Job 38-42 for God's full answer to Job's challenge, to which Job answers, "*Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes*" (*Job 42:6*). Here is where you must begin if you hope to win against low self-esteem. It's not that you should think badly of yourself, but that you need to see that you aren't the issue – God is.

2. God is Big

Ps 29:2 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

- God is great and deserving of our praise. Once you realize that your problems are small and that your feelings really are not that important, then you can really start to give God the glory He deserves.
- To survive low self-esteem, look up to God! You ultimately don't matter that much, but He matters more than anything.
- Why do you think it's important to acknowledge that while you are small God is great? It draws your focus onto God and forces humility; it keeps you from just feeling bad about yourself, etc.

3. The Example of John the Baptist

Joh 3:30 He must increase, but I must decrease.

- Jesus moved in to where John the Baptist was baptizing people and John's disciples became worried that their own ministry was challenged by Jesus'. An attitude like this can be fueled by pride and low self-esteem. The self-image of John's disciples was based on baptizing the most people, not on God.
- John, instead of feeling challenged, said rightly that he must become less so that Jesus could become greater. To win in the battle against low self-esteem, He

- must become greater and you must become less. The more of God that is in you, the better your self-image will become.
- What happens when you become less and God becomes greater in you? For one, you don't worry about your own problems, because they're so much less than God, who is great in you.
 - The idea is that you go from seeking self-esteem to start to want God-esteem, where God is so important in your life that your desires and worries don't even matter.

LOOK IN

1. "I No Longer Live..."

Ga 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

- When you become a Christian, you are crucified. You die. Now Jesus lives in you instead. Your self-esteem shouldn't even be an issue, because your self is gone. Everything about you is wiped away and you get to start over.
- The Bible calls this being "born again" because you get a fresh start in life (*John 3:1-21*).
- If you have low self-esteem, this is the best answer in the world – you can get rid of it all and not even worry about yourself anymore! See *Romans 6:6* and *Ephesians 4:22* for more.

2. "... But Christ Lives in Me."

Col 1:27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

- Your old self is done away with when you become a Christian, and now you have Jesus in you, "the hope of glory."
- If you're struggling with low self-esteem and are a Christian, look in you. You shouldn't see yourself but God. And with God in you, you can do anything He asks of you (*Romans 8:37*).
- If you're not a Christian, then the first step is to let your old self be crucified with Jesus so that He can live in you.

LOOK AROUND

1. See Them

Mt 9:36 But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

- When Jesus saw a crowd of people, the last thing He was thinking about was how inadequate or unworthy He felt. He wasn't thinking about Himself at all, but about the crowds of people who needed help.

- One of the greatest keys to overcoming low self-esteem is to look around and see the crowds of people who need help. See *Matthew 14:14, 15:32, and 20:34* for more times that Jesus looked around and had compassion on the hurting.
- Do you know any famous people who seemed to see crowds this way? Mother Theresa, Gandhi, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., among others.
- It is much easier to feel bad about yourself and have low self-esteem when you only look at yourself and not at the crowds of people who need help.

2. Serve Them

Mt 25:40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

- Jesus says that if we serve others, we're serving Him.
- To combat a low self-esteem, don't just see the crowds and have compassion, but serve them and help them. In doing that, you are really serving Jesus and will be rewarded by Him (*Ephesians 6:7-8*).
- In *Mark 10:45*, Jesus commands us to serve, because this is what He did.
- How would serving people help you overcome low self-esteem? Because you are not focusing on yourself, because you are being useful and feel better about yourself for it, etc.
- In the same way that it is easy to have low self-esteem when you look only at yourself, it is also easier to have low self-esteem when you look at the crowds of people but do nothing to help them.

LOOK OUT!

1. The Devil's Job

Re 12:10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

- Sometimes, you may be looking up at God, looking at Jesus alive in you, and looking around at people you can help, but you still have low self-esteem. Now it's time to look out, and throw down the devil's lies about you.
- The devil's job is to accuse you and lie to you, about everything, including yourself. In *John 8:44*, Jesus says that he's so good at lying that it's his native language.
- Has anyone ever been accused of something wrongly? That's what the devil does all the time.

2. Your Job

2Co 10:5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

- When you feel bad about yourself and are succumbing to low self-esteem, you've got to take every thought captive and make it obedient to Jesus.
- Taking thoughts captive means that you don't let the devil's lies stick around in your head but you throw them out and believe what God says instead.

- You need to be strong in order to stand against the devil's lies (*Ephesians 6:10-18*)
- At times, you may need to do more than take your thoughts captive. You may need to cast some tormenting spirits out of yourself (*Luke 6:18, Matthew 10:1*)

LISTEN

1. God Made You

Ge 2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

- God made you! This alone should be enough to convince you that you are amazing!
- If you have low self-esteem, you need to get your eyes off yourself first. Once you do that and stop worrying about your own feelings, God is ready to tell you exactly how amazing He thinks you are.
- If God made you, what does that say about who you are? It says God meant to make you the way you are. It says the way you are is good.
- In *Genesis 1:31*, God says that what he made was “very good.” You’re included in that.

2. God Knew You

Jer 1:5 Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

- Not only did God make you, but He knew you before you were even born.
- God even knows exactly how many hairs you have on your head (*Matthew 10:30*).

3. God Loved You

Joh 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

- What are some ways to show people that you love them?
- In the single greatest act of love in recorded history, God himself came to earth to die on your behalf, so you and He could live together forever. This beats any other way you could show somebody you love them.
- Jesus goes on to say that He didn't come to condemn the world but to help it (*John 3:17*).

Close

Ps 139:13 For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.

Ps 139:14 I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.

- God says that you're "fearfully and wonderfully made." He created you just the way you are and He loves those He made.
- If you're suffering from low self-esteem, don't fall into the trap of just trying to make yourself feel better, but die to yourself and let God come alive in you.
- It might sound harsh, but you've got to get your eyes off yourself as the first step, because you ultimately don't matter. Only then, when you stop worrying about you, will God tell you how amazing He made you.