

## **Practical Christian Living**

### **Lesson 4: How to Overcome Feelings of Inferiority**

**Key Verse:** *"But Godliness with contentment is great gain." 1 Timothy 6:6*

**Dear Friend,**

**There is a certain problem which almost everyone faces at one time or another. For some people it is a lifelong problem. But it is especially hurtful and painful to young people.**

**What is this problem** which causes so much hurt and pain? It's the feeling that you are not as good as other people. It's that awful feeling that you are ugly and unattractive and that nobody likes you. It's feeling that you are dumb and that other people are smarter than you. It's the feeling that you are a failure and a loser. It's called *"feelings of inferiority."*

Why do we have Feelings of Inferiority?

**Feelings of inferiority** come from accepting the wrong values of the world. We have already seen that wrong thinking leads to wrong actions and wrong feelings. In this case, the wrong feelings are feelings of inferiority.

**What does the world value most?** The world puts its highest value on three things:

- (1) **Physical attractiveness,**
- (2) **Intelligence, and**
- (3) **Money.**

Most people, especially young people, think that they must have these things in order to feel good about themselves. Let us consider them.

#### **1 - Physical attractiveness**

**So far as the world is concerned,** a person's looks is one of the most important things about him or her. The world says, *"If you are a 'beautiful person,' you are worth a lot; if you are not beautiful, you are not worth much and you probably won't be happy in life."*

**This is one of Satan's lies.** Even though it is not true, many people believe it and it has a profound effect upon them. Some people dislike themselves and some even hate themselves because they are so dissatisfied with the way they look.

They think, *"If only I could look like so-and-so, I'd be happy."*

**The fact is** that physical attractiveness does not make a person happy. A noted psychiatrist studied some of the most beautiful women and the most handsome men to see how they felt about themselves and how they got along with others. After considering the results of his study, he said, *"It has been a source of startling surprise to me to see the amount of depression, loneliness, and deep unhappiness among beautiful people."*

God wants us to see that our worth as a person does not depend on our outward appearance. The Bible says, *"Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7*

#### **2 - Intelligence**

**The world says,** *"If you are smart, you are worthwhile; if you are not, then you are not worth much."*

**This is another of Satan's lies.** Your value is not determined by how smart you are. Some young people have a hard time in school. They do not learn as easily as others. When they give a wrong answer in class, everyone laughs. This makes them feel dumb and inferior.

The more a person fails at something, the more discouraged he gets. Gradually he comes to think that he is a complete failure. He may decide that he can't do anything right and quit trying. This brings on more failure and deeper feelings of inferiority.

God never values a person by his intelligence. When the Lord Jesus chose His disciples, He did not choose the smartest, most intelligent people of His day. He chose plain, ordinary people. The Bible says, *"For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." 1 Corinthians 1:26*

### **3 - Money**

**A third way** that the world values a person is by his wealth. The world says, *"If you want to be important and you want to be happy, you must have money."*

**This too is one of Satan's lies.** Money does not make a person happy, nor does it determine his value. The Lord Jesus said, *"A man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses." Luke 12:15*

Those who make wealth their goal in life fall into many sins. The Bible says, *"But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." 1 Timothy 6:9*

God wants us to see that we do not need money to be happy. The Bible says, *"Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing let us with these be content." 1 Timothy 6:6-8*

### **Change Your Thinking!**

**Wisdom is seeing things** as God sees them. God never values a person by his outward appearance, or by his intelligence, or by his wealth or social position. God deals with rich people exactly the same way he deals with poor people. The Bible says, *"For there is no respect of persons with God." Romans 2:11*

Physical attractiveness, intelligence and money are not evil in themselves. It is the wrong value that the world places on these things that is wrong. If we accept the wrong beliefs and values of the world, it will lead to feelings of inferiority.

**To change the way we feel** about ourselves, we must change our thinking. We must see that our worth as a person does not depend on our outward appearance, our intelligence, our wealth or our social position.

**We must see ourselves as God sees us.** What are we worth in God's sight? We are worth what He paid for us. He gave His Son to redeem us. That's how much we are worth in His sight.

We must see too that God loves us and accepts us as we are. His love does not depend on what we are or what we have or what we do. God says, *"Regardless of whether you are a success or failure, regardless of what you may think about yourself, regardless of what other people may think about you, **I LOVE YOU!**"*

*Remember from last week –*

***The Wisdom of God = Right thoughts ► Right actions ► Right feelings***

Some Practical Suggestions...

**Here are** a few practical suggestions that will help you overcome feelings of inferiority:

• **Recognize that you are not alone**

**You are not alone** in your feelings of inferiority. As you go about school or work, you come in contact with many other people—some smiling, talking, and laughing. You might think that they do not have a care in the world. But underneath it all, you will probably find that they, too, have deep feelings of inferiority. Almost all people have these feelings.

When you realize that other people have the same problem that you have, it helps you to understand them.

• **Make genuine friends**

**You don't have to be** beautiful or highly intelligent or have a lot of money to make friends. The best way to have a good friend is to *be* a good friend. Never make fun of another person. Respect others and accept them as they are. Let them know that they are important to you. Be especially considerate of those who have difficulty making friends. They will love and appreciate you for this. Nothing helps your self-confidence more than having genuine friends. When you realize that other people like and appreciate you, it is easier to accept yourself.

• **Learn to do something well**

**Everyone needs** to have proper self-esteem. One way to build proper self-esteem is to learn to do something well.

Find something that you like to do and then work at it! Say to yourself, *"I'll learn how to play a musical instrument,"* or *"I'll succeed in my part-time job,"* or *"I'll learn how to play basketball as well as possible,"* or *"I'll see how many friends I can make,"* or *"I'll learn to be a good tennis player,"* or *"I'll learn to be a good cook."*

Don't waste time feeling sorry for yourself. Make the most out of what you have. Develop a skill that will make you feel good about yourself. Do the best you can in that particular thing. As you do, you will begin to like yourself more.

• **Face your problems honestly**

**Get alone** where you can be quiet and think. Then make a list of all the things which you most dislike about yourself. Be honest. No one need see this except you and God.

Do people get the wrong impression of you from the way you dress? You can correct this and you should. Are you lazy and careless about your work? Do something about it! We should do all things to the glory of God. Careless, haphazard work does not bring glory to God.

**Whatever your problems are,** write them down so you can face them honestly. Check the ones that you can do something about. Perhaps you know an older person—someone you can trust—who could help you.

**"Unsolvable Problems"**

**What about the problems** you have left on your list—those "*unsolvable problems*"? Everyone has one or more of these.

The best thing to do with your "*unsolvable problems*" is to give them to the Lord Jesus. Tell the Lord that you cannot handle these problems and that you are giving them to Him. Your prayer should contain these thoughts, stated in your own words:

**Dear Lord Jesus,** You know all about me. You know about these "*unsolvable problems*." I cannot handle them, so I'm turning them over to You. I'm giving myself to You and I'm giving these problems to You. From now on, I am not going to worry about these problems because I've given them to You. I'm trusting Your love and Your wisdom and Your power to make something beautiful of my life.

**When you have prayed** this prayer, destroy your paper as a symbol that you have turned these problems over to the Lord forever. Whenever you start to fret about these problems again, remind yourself of your decision. Tell the Lord that you have turned these problems over to Him and that you are trusting Him to handle them.

Discovered Gem: Accepting the values of the world leads to the feelings of inferiority; accepting God's values takes away feelings of inferiority.

**Questions:**

1. Where do feelings of inferiority come from?
2. What three things does the world value most?
3. Does God value a person by his outward appearance? What does he value a person by?
4. What must we do to change the way we feel about ourselves?
5. What is wisdom?
6. When it comes to inferiority, is it felt by many? Why or why not?
7. What causes feelings of inferiority?
8. What is the best thing to do with your "*unsolvable problems*", and why?