

## Practical Christian Living

### Lesson 5: Learning to Accept Myself

**Key Verse:** *"I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made."* Psalm 139:4

**Our happiness in life depends a great deal on our attitudes. Our attitude toward ourselves is perhaps the most important attitude of all because it has such a profound effect on our life.**

This attitude toward ourselves has a special name. It is called "**self-image**." Our self-image is the way we see ourselves.

**Our self-image is important** because it affects our attitude toward our family, our friends and others. It also affects our work and our chances of success. People who have a poor self-image usually have trouble getting along with other people. Generally, they are unhappy.

**Our self-image also affects** our attitude toward God. Those who have a poor self-image tend to be bitter and resentful toward God. They find it hard to trust Him and to believe in His love for them. We are not to think poorly of ourselves, nor are we to be proud or conceited. Neither of these attitudes brings happiness or right relationships. God wants us to have a proper self-image. He wants us to think rightly about ourselves.

We were Created by God

**In Lesson 3 we learned** the importance of our thoughts. What we think determines what we do and what we feel. We are controlled by the way we inwardly see and believe things to be. This is what the Bible means when it says,

*"As a man thinks in his heart, so is he."* Proverbs 23:7

***What we Think   ➡   What we Do   ➡   What we Feel***

It is therefore essential that we think rightly about ourselves and see ourselves as God sees us. To do this, we first want to consider some facts regarding man:

1. We were created by God.

**Man did not come** into being by the process of evolution. We were created by God. The Lord Jesus Himself said, *"From the beginning of the creation God made them male and female."* Mark 10:6

2. We were created in the image of God.

**God honored man** above all other created beings in that He created man in His own image. Not even the angels have this honor. Man alone was created in the image of God. The Bible says, *"So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him..."* Genesis 1:27

3. We were created to glorify God.

**God had a purpose** in creating man. He created man for His glory. In Isaiah 43:7, God says, *"I have created him for My glory."* The church fathers were right when they said, *"Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever."*

4. We were given certain characteristics and abilities from God.

**No one had any choice** as to his parents, his race, the color of his skin, his intelligence, his physical appearance, or his natural abilities. These all came to us by birth and they all came from God.

If we have special gifts and abilities, we should recognize them for what they are—God's gifts to us. We cannot claim credit for them any more than we can claim credit for being tall or having blue eyes. All natural characteristics and abilities come from God. Since this is true, there is no place for pride on our part. The Bible says, *"For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive?" 1 Corinthians 4:7*

It is also true that we have nothing to be ashamed of regarding the things we received by birth. God is the Creator of all men. He is not ashamed of His handiwork; neither should we be ashamed.

**God is very displeased** with anyone who looks down on or despises another person. If you mock or make fun of someone, you are reproaching God because He is the One who made that person. The Bible says, *"He who mocks the poor reproaches his Maker." Proverbs 17:5*

To look down on yourself or to despise yourself is just as wrong as looking down on or despising another person.

### **Gaining a Proper Self-Image**

**With the above facts in mind**, we now want to share with you some things that will help you to have a proper self-image.

#### **1 - Realize that you are a special individual.**

**Because we live in an age** of many marvelous scientific inventions, we may tend to think that man is not so important. But the most wonderful thing in the world is not a spaceship or some new electronic device. The most wonderful thing in the world is a human being. David said, *"I will praise You; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." Psalm 139:14*

The important thing about us is not what we look like. The important thing is that we have the potential for becoming a member of God's family and being transformed into the image of Christ Himself. This is what makes every person of such great value in God's sight.

**Our Creator is a God of infinite variety.** He does not make any two leaves exactly alike. He does not make any two snowflakes exactly alike. And He does not make any two people exactly alike. You are a special, absolutely unique, one-of-a-kind individual. And you can bring special glory to your Creator that no one else can bring.

#### **2 - Begin a personal relationship with your Creator.**

**We were created in the image of God**, and being made in His image, we have the capacity to know Him and to come into a personal relationship with Him.

You will never see your true worth nor accept yourself fully until you come into a personal relationship with your Creator. Once you get to know God and something of His love for you, you will begin to see how much you are really worth in His sight.

The Lord Jesus pointed out to his disciples that not even a little insignificant sparrow could fall to the ground without the Heavenly Father knowing it. Jesus said, *"Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows." (Matthew 10:31)*

Jesus went on to say that even the hairs of our head are numbered. If we are that important to God, then surely we should think more of ourselves. The more we know of God's love for us, the more we will gain a sense of our true worth.

“You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in You.” - Augustine

### **3 - Don't compare yourself with others.**

**Little children are happy** because they do not compare themselves with one another. They are happy just being themselves and having what they have.

As children begin growing up, they start looking around and comparing themselves with others. It is then that many of them decide that they got a *"raw deal"* in life because they are not as good looking as So-and-So, or as smart as So and-So, or they do not have money like So-and So. But God tells us not to do this. The Bible says, *"...they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."* 2 Corinthians 10:12

### **4 - Respond correctly to "defects."**

**Most people**, especially young people, are very concerned about their physical appearance. They examine themselves carefully in the mirror. Since no one is perfect, they usually find one or more things that they dislike about themselves. They think about these *"defects"* most of the time. Instead of enjoying all the many advantages God has given them, they allow themselves to become miserable and depressed over their so-called *"defects."*

Actually, no one has a perfect body. Everyone has something that could be called a *"defect."* But a defect need not keep you from glorifying God in your life.

**A young man in Japan** was born with a terribly deformed body and face. Few people ever saw Kandura because his parents kept him in seclusion.

With a deformed face and a deformed body, unable to walk or talk, what did he have to look forward to in life? Seemingly very little. But his radio brought him the message that God loved him and had sent the Lord Jesus to be his Savior.

When a Japanese Christian visited this young man, Kandura readily put his faith in Jesus Christ. Later, he scrawled this message: *"Day by day as I walk this road of blessing, I receive the fruits of faith in my hands. These blessings come from my Lord who is my strength and my hope. Praise the Lord for He gives me this wonderful salvation."* Kandura

Though terribly handicapped, this young man glorified God and praised Him for His wonderful salvation.

After reading this, how can we feel sorry for ourselves? How can we feel bitter and resentful toward God because of something we don't like about ourselves?

***God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change...Courage to change the things I can and wisdom to know the difference.***

### **5 - Realize that God is still working on you.**

The Bible says, *"For we are His workmanship."* (Ephesians 2:10) This means that God is working on us to make us what He wants us to be.

What is God's plan for us? His plan is to make us like the Lord Jesus Christ. God is working to conform us to the image of His Son. The Bible says, *"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son..." Romans 8:29*

God has much to do in us to make us what He wants us to be. When He completes His work, we will be just like the Lord Jesus. Meanwhile, let us remember that God is still working on us. We should be encouraged, knowing that God Himself will complete the work He has begun in us. The Bible says, *"Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ." Philippians 1:6*

## **6 - Reject bitterness.**

**God wants to do** many things in our life, but He requires our cooperation. God never overrules our will. We must choose to let Him have His way in our life. If we are bitter and resentful, He is hindered in His work of changing us.

He can make something beautiful of your life if you will let Him. If you have had feelings of bitterness and resentment toward God, will you confess this sin to Him right now? Just tell Him the truth:

*"God, I've been bitter and resentful about \_\_\_\_\_. I'm confessing this sin to You right now."*

## **7 - Be thankful.**

**Our happiness in life** does not depend on how beautiful or how handsome we are. It does not depend on how smart we are. It does not depend on how much money we have. ***It depends on our attitude.***

**Many years ago**, a tragic mistake resulted in the loss of sight for a child. The little girl, Fannie Crosby, was born with normal sight, but when she was just six weeks old, she had an inflammation of the eyes. A local doctor applied the wrong medicine to her eyes, blinding her for life.

This little girl could have been bitter and resentful about what happened. She could have hated the one who had made such a tragic mistake. She could have even blamed God for letting it happen. But she did none of these things.

She had a grandmother who held her in her arms and taught her to know and love the Lord Jesus. As a small child, she opened her heart to Him.

**As Fanny Crosby learned** more of God and of His love for her, she gave herself to Him completely. She did something else. She made up her mind to be contented. Though she did not understand why God had allowed her to become blind, she was confident of His love for her. When she was just eight years old, she wrote this poem:

*"O what a happy child I am,  
Although I cannot see!  
I am resolved that in this world  
Contented I will be!  
How many blessings I enjoy  
That other people don't!  
To weep or sigh because I'm blind,  
I cannot and I WON'T."*

When she grew up Fannie Crosby began writing hymns of praise and thanksgiving to God. She wrote over 6,000 hymns! Christians around the world have sung her songs—songs such as, *"To God Be the Glory," "All the Way My Savior Leads Me,"* and *"Blessed Assurance."*

**Though she was blind** and spent her life in darkness, Fannie Crosby was one of the happiest Christians who ever lived. What was the secret of her happiness? It was this: ***She trusted in the love and wisdom of God.***

She did not understand why God had allowed her to become blind, but she trusted in His love and wisdom. She accepted herself and her circumstances, and God made her a blessing to the whole world.

Accept Yourself—NOW!

**Accepting myself is based on** trusting the love and wisdom of God. It comes down to this: Will I thank my Creator for the way He made me? Will I trust His love and wisdom for my life?

You can go through life with a poor self-image, feeling bitter and resentful about yourself. Or you can have a proper self-image by accepting yourself and trusting God's love and wisdom. Even those things which seem to be against us can work together for our good if we trust God. The Bible says, *"...we know that all things work together for good to those who love God..." Romans 8:28*

Accepting ourselves as God made us sets us free. We do not have to try to impress other people. We do not have to struggle for recognition. We do not have to try to be somebody great.

**We are what we are.** We are loved and accepted by the One who created the universe. We do not have to be anxious or unduly concerned about what others think of us. God has accepted us, and that is what really matters.

**Trust God's love** and wisdom for your life. Tell Him right now, *"God, I've been ungrateful and unthankful to You. I want to confess this sin right now and ask You to forgive me. I thank You for the way You made me and for Your workmanship thus far. I am trusting You to make me what You want me to be."*

**Discovered Gem:** Accepting myself is based on trusting the love and wisdom of God, the One who made me.

### **Questions**

1. Our attitude toward ourselves is called? Why?
2. How is it that all mankind was created by God, in His image?
4. Why were we created?
5. Is it ever right to look down on or despise another person? Why or why not?
6. Is it ever right to look down on or despise yourself?
7. How does trusting the love and wisdom of God help one accept themselves?
8. What does it take to see your true worth and accept yourself fully?
9. Does God ever overrule our will?
10. What should we be controlled by?

