

Snapshots

By
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“Snapshots”

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Lesson 1

The image we have of self: self-esteem

It is plainly stated that God loves all of us. The Scriptures record for us that man was “fearfully and wonderfully made,” Psalm 139:14. We are the only creatures on earth that were made in the Lord’s image. Why is it then that there is an epidemic of low self-esteem?

As young girls we have been taught that we must be beautiful, athletic, smart and working towards being successful women in our future. If we aren’t ALL of these things, or if we don’t think the world perceives us this way, then sometimes we feel we have failed.



Take a moment to write some things that you think contribute to low self-esteem in America today.

What contributes to a low self-image and ill conceived concepts that we have to look like Barbie dolls??

What did you come up with? You could have listed: 1) one of the thousands of new diet plans that tells us we can lose weight in 2 weeks? 2) magazines with airbrushed models? 3) actresses who appear like they haven’t eaten a meal in months? There is nothing wrong with diet plans, magazines, and movies until we let the women in these media affect the way we look and feel about ourselves.

Focus on YOU

Instead of comparing yourself to others whom you find beautiful, focus on what is beautiful about yourself. Try the exercise on the next page.

Make a list of 5 things you are pleased with about yourself physically. Then ask a parent, sibling, or friend to tell you what they think is your strongest physical attribute.

Outward qualities

Those in the world who like or dislike us simply because of how our body looks should not affect our self-worth. After all, these physical bodies are only temporary, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. After we die and judgment day comes, our bodies will be nothing more than dust, Genesis 3:19.

Also, even here on earth, our physical bodies will change continuously throughout our lives. When we are babies, a number of us have lots of hair, while some of us are completely bald. Various children have rolls and rolls of baby fat, and others are very skinny and homely. While we are children, a few of us need to wear braces, and another group of us have to wear glasses. As we grow into our adult bodies, several will lose the “baby fat,” but others will gain the weight back later. Many factors in life will affect the way our physical bodies change. However, the people we hold most dear to us and that care about us the most won’t care if we look like super models. And, of course, the same holds true with God...He looks on the inside not the outside. “But let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit which is precious in the sight of God,” 1 Peter 3:4.

Bring a magazine to class that you feel may contribute to low self-esteem. Discuss these pictures and/or articles and determine how they can negatively affect self-esteem.

Inward qualities

Something that can help the way we feel about ourselves is to focus on our strengths.

Our talents

God has given each and every one of us a unique personality and special talents. My sister, for example, is very good at computers. I, on the other hand, am able to do nothing more than surf the internet and type a Word document. However, while I am able to speak in front of tons of people and never get nervous, my sister is very wary of large crowds and would much rather be “behind the scenes” than in the limelight. Heather also is fabulous with young children. She is patient, yet firm, and she does a fantastic job teaching young children in Bible class. Conversely, I am not extremely comfortable around small children because I am not always sure how to relate to them and what to say. However, I love relating to junior high and high school age students whom I would much rather teach than the younger children.

My father is a very structured person and has always been very good with money. He serves our local church not only as an elder, but as the treasurer. My mother is very much a “people person” and LOVES to be around people. She is an excellent listener, teacher, and a great example to the women of the congregation.

I believe some of us focus too much on how great others are around us. We may have siblings who seem to be great at EVERYTHING they do. They may be great athletes, star students, and have tons of friends. But what we need to focus on is what WE are good at. “Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load,” Galatians 6:4-5.

Our personalities

ALL of us have different aspects of our personality that we can use to help others around us and even improve ourselves. God has NOT given all of us the same talents, and even the same amount of talents. But what a blessing that is! What good would the world be if everyone was a carpenter, and no one was a decorator? What if everyone was a brilliant mathematician, but there were no artists, writers, or musicians? How drab and boring our lives would be. Let’s make sure to focus on what we ARE good at and what we CAN do.



Take a moment to write down things that you are good at, for example academics, sports, public speaking, acting, music...

Now take a moment to write down positive characteristics that you possess, for example sympathetic, patient, sincere...

After making your lists, consider how your talents and characteristics can be used to help in the Lord's work. Get input from the class to help you with your list.

I was blessed to have a wonderful Psychology teacher in high school. He is one of the most positive and upbeat men I know. One of the best assignments he gives his students each semester is to create a "Me Board." Our assignment was to take a poster board and fill it with things that were special or meaningful to us. We could use cutouts of magazine pictures to represent special things in our lives, or we could use words out of books, magazines, or newspapers that describe us. Some more artistic students drew on their boards. I, on the other hand, used mainly photographs. I used pictures of my best friends and my family members to cover my board. This activity not only made me thankful for all of the things that God has given me, but also allowed me see the differences in people and how unique God makes each one of us.

Make a "Me Board." Here are some ideas to include: Favorite quotes, favorite lyrics, pictures of your heroes and/or role models, symbols that represent what you want to do with your life, pictures of yourself, friends, and family members, pictures of your favorite sports teams, favorite Bible verses or songs, etc. There are no limits. Share your board with others in the class.

Thought provoking quotes:

Low self-esteem is like driving through life with your hand-break on.
~Maxwell Maltz

Of all the judgments we pass in life, none is more important than the judgment we pass on ourselves. ~Nathaniel Branden

Persons of high self-esteem are not driven to make themselves superior to others; they do not seek to prove their value by measuring themselves against a comparative standard. Their joy is being who they are, not in being better than someone else.
~Nathaniel Branden

I have been driven many times upon my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom and that of all about me seemed insufficient for that day.

~Lincoln Observed: The Civil War Dispatches of Noah Brooks edited by Michael Burlingame (Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1998), p. 210.

Love is the great miracle cure. Loving ourselves works miracles in our lives. ~Louise Hay

