I. **SELF-WORTH**

A. **Self-esteem** is an attitude of **RESPECT FOR** and **CONTENTMENT WITH** oneself based on the **recognition** of one’s **abilities** and **acceptance** of one’s **limitations**.

| **Self-Esteem** is **EXTERNAL** – based on Position, Power, Prestige, etc. | **Self-Worth** is **INTERNAL** – based on WHO we REALLY are |

B. **Self-Value / Self-Worth**
   1. Rids you of all jealousy
   2. Wipes out inferiority
   3. Eliminates fear of failure or defeat
   4. Gives you courage
   5. Gives confidence to rise to the importance for which God created you.
   6. Without it, you might spend the rest of your life in mediocrity and inferiority, never knowing the fulfillment God planned for you.

C. **SELF-ESTEEM = the positive value we put on ourselves**

D. **Your Own Thoughts** have perhaps the **BIGGEST impact on Self-Worth**
   1. Thoughts include "**self-talk**"  
      a. What you tell yourself — your **perceptions** of situations  
      b. Your beliefs about yourself, other people and events.  
         (1) For example, how you measure success and failure in life affects your sense of self-worth.

E. **Low Self-Esteem** can appear in the way you LOOK, BEHAVE and INTERACT with others.

II. **Characteristics of Low Self-Esteem**

A. **Negative Self-Talk**
   1. "I'm not worth other people's time, so I shouldn't ask for help."
   2. "I'm a failure."
   3. "I'll never amount to anything."
   4. "I'm too old"
   5. "I'm too fat"
   6. "I'm so stupid!"
   7. "I'm not pretty enough"
   8. "I'm not smart enough"
      (a) Trapped behind bars of their own making.
      (b) When you see yourself as **too** old, **not** pretty, **not** capable, you have **nowhere to go**.
   9. Frequently **apologizing**
   10. Making **self-doubting statements**
   11. Making cruel comments about yourself that you wouldn't make about someone else
   12. Focusing on **perceived** flaws and weaknesses.
13. Seeking constant reassurance from others and not feeling better even with positive feedback.

14. Refusing to accept compliments or denying positive comments you get.

15. Tending to be a perfectionist who's afraid of failure, which may impair work or school performance.

16. Thought patterns that tend to erode self-esteem:
   a. All-or-nothing thinking. You see things as either all good or all bad. For example, "If I don't succeed in this job, I'm a total failure."
   b. Mental filtering. You see only negatives and dwell on them, distorting your view of a person or situation or your entire life. For example, "I made a mistake on that report and now everyone will realize I'm a failure."
   c. Converting positives into negatives. You reject your achievements and other positive experiences by insisting that they don't count. For example, "My date only gave me that compliment because he knows how bad I feel." "I only did well on that test because it was so easy."
   d. Jumping to negative conclusions. You reach a negative conclusion when little or no evidence supports it. For example, "My friend hasn't replied to my e-mail, so I must have done something to make her angry."
   e. Mistaking feelings for facts. You confuse feelings or beliefs with facts. For example, "I feel like a failure, so I must be a failure."
      a. The way you THINK determines the way you FEEL, and
      The way you FEEL influences the way you ACT.

   f. Self put-downs. You undervalue yourself, put yourself down or use self-deprecating humor. This can result from overreacting to a situation, such as making a mistake. For example, "I don't deserve anything better." "I'm weak, stupid or ugly."

17. Early in life we learn that people who are bright, beautiful, popular, talented, wealthy, or productive are valued and loved.
   a. So we then measure ourselves by these values, usually to our loss of esteem.
   b. In addition, we then also measure others by these values; usually to their loss of esteem.

B. Low Self-Esteem leads to a vicious circle of poor performance, distorted perceptions, unrealistic EXPECTATIONS, and unhappy personal and social life.
   1. The vicious circle repeats itself from generation to generation, UNLESS someone learns new values and CHOOSES to incorporate these new values.
   2. What are these NEW VALUES?
      a. I am LOVABLE
      b. I am VALUABLE
      c. I am CAPABLE
         Because God CREATED, REDEEMED, and EMPOWERS me!

SELF-ESTEEM based on one's confidence of being MADE in God's image, RESTORED to God's image, and EQUIPPED by His Spirit, is solid and unchanging.
C. **SELF-ESTEEM** consists of a **VALUE**, a **FEELING**, and a **PERSPECTIVE** of the person in relation to others.

- How VALUABLE am I compared to others?
- Do I FEEL as positive toward myself as I do toward others?
- Do I SEE myself as equal to others?

1. **Consider the following criteria to help assess your self-esteem.**
   a. Humility is NOT the same as HUMILIATION.
   b. Putting off the sinful nature is NOT the same as PUTTING DOWN SELF.
   c. Self-denial is NOT equivalent to SELF-DEGRADATION.
   d. Unworthy is NOT the same as WORTHLESS. (God wants us to be a reflection of his image)
   e. Self-love is NOT the same as SELFISHNESS.
   f. Self-affirmation is NOT the same as SELF-CONCEIT. (When persons are great at what they do, they have no need to proclaim greatness; they recognize their achievements without needing recognition from others.)
   g. Self-worth is NOT the same as SELF-WORSHIP (I have value because of Who created and redeemed me)
   h. Self-aware is NOT the same as SELF-ABSORBED. (Self-awareness is essential to healthy self-esteem because we cannot esteem ourselves without awareness of who we are.)

**If we are to nourish and cherish others** (spouse, children, friends), **we must increase our ability to nourish and cherish ourselves.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sometimes we even participate in the creation of our own feelings of insecurity, inadequacy, and inferiority. We create our own self-rejection through four negative sensory experiences.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – Negative SELF-TALK (say)</td>
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2. **Those with high self-esteem** utilize the four sensory experiences positively.

   1 – Their SELF-TALK is ENCOURAGING (say)
   2 – Their SELF-PICTURING is ACCURATE and POSITIVE (see)
   3 – Their SELF-FEELINGS are ACCEPTABLE & APPROPRIATELY expressed (feel)
   4 – Their SELF-BEHAVIOR is CONSTRUCTIVE. (do)

3. **High self-esteem** individuals use what they SAY, SEE, FEEL, and DO to face **who they are**. With God’s help, they grow into beautiful people who KNOW, ACCEPT, LOVE, and SHARE themselves.

4. **To overcome low self-esteem**, one must consider:
   a. WHO they are
   b. WHAT they want – through exploring…
      - WHAT they are LISTENING TO
      - WHAT they are LOOKING AT
      - WHAT they are FEELING FOR
      - WHAT they are ACTING OUT
Healthy relationships are characterized by LOVE, that is, by ACCEPTING other people with all their spots and wrinkles WITHOUT trying to change them because change is impossible until we become aware of and experience God’s LOVE toward us.

5. You may not easily recognize inaccuracies in your thinking.
   a. Most people have automatic, long-standing ways of thinking about their lives and themselves.
   b. These long-held thoughts and beliefs feel normal and factual to you, but many are simply OPINIONS or PERCEPTIONS.

6. Remember also the victim’s state:
   a. There is a hole in their soul
   b. “God could NOT love anyone like me.”
   c. Feel flawed and dirty.
   d. Shame fills their lives and guards all doors to possible intimacy, including marital intimacy and also intimacy with God.
   e. Feel that God could not love them, so they reject themselves and assume that He does too.

A victim’s “EXPECTATIONS” tend to be flawed since their childhood experiences enforced the belief that “Good things don’t happen to me.”

Yet, their inborn needs for love, affection, attention, and approval are still gasping for fulfillment.

Hence, they believe if they DO good, TRY hard enough, LOOK attractive, etc., that someone, somewhere, will eventually notice and care.

III. With HEALTHY Self-Esteem

A. Less prone to painful feelings such as Hopelessness, Loneliness, Worthlessness, Guilt and Shame.
B. Are Assertive - which helps you express your needs and opinions confidently.
C. Have more Secure and Honest relationships.
D. You're less likely to have trouble relating to others, to be overly eager to please others at your expense, or to stay in unhealthy relationships
E. Set realistic standards for yourself and others. This makes you less likely to criticize yourself and others, or to deliberately seek out flaws or weaknesses.
F. Weather stress and setbacks better. You're often more confident and resilient when facing unexpected challenges, disappointments or illnesses.
G. Are less likely to develop certain mental health conditions, such as eating disorders, addictions, depression and anxiety disorders.

12 STEPS in the PROCESS of BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM

Step 1. ACKNOWLEDGE the Problems Low Self-Esteem Produces

The first step in building self-esteem is acknowledging the problems low self-esteem produces in a person’s life.
The pattern of influence is cyclical, beginning with NEGATIVE INTERNAL DIALOGUE, reinforced by NEGATIVE SELF-PICTURING, resulting in NEGATIVE FEELINGS, and finally producing NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR.

**NEGATIVE SELF-ESTEEM CYCLICAL PATTERN**

1. Negative internal dialogue. Distorted hearing, responding, and sending of inappropriate messages
2. Negative self-picturing. Distorted views of self and others
3. Negative feelings. Exaggerated feelings and expressions
4. Negative behavior. Poor performance

**LOW SELF-ESTEEM**

**Low self-esteem develops in relation to others** - what others SAY to us, how others LOOK at us, what others FEEL toward us, and how others ACT toward us. These responses shape our own messages, views, feelings, and behavior toward ourselves.

A common pattern in **low self-esteem** is for one to repeat to themselves the negative messages given them by significant people in their lives.

**Here are some of the common problems Low Self-Esteem produces:**

- **Guilt** heads the list.
  - The basis of this guilt is **rooted more in a belief** that the PERSON is bad **than that** his or her behavior is bad
  - “**I am evil**” is a fundamental belief characterizing this person
  - It is often the expression of incest and rape victims or people who have been severely and repeatedly humiliated in childhood
  - Seldom is this conviction of “badness” verifiable in real life
  - Some individuals even believe they are too bad to be recipients of God’s grace
    - **Typically this attitude was accepted from significant people in their lives**

- **Oversensitivity to Criticism**
  - This is an inability to respond positively to constructive criticism
  - Any attempt to correct, encourage, or suggest is heard as a put-down and rejection
  - The response is often one of hurt, anger, and defensiveness
  - Individuals raised in demanding and exacting homes that tolerate nothing less than perfection often exhibit this trait

- **Hypercriticalness**
  - Hyper-criticalness is the opposite side of the oversensitivity coin
  - This defensive posture is an attempt to protect a fragile view of oneself at the expense of others
  - They cannot tolerate other people’s accomplishments because those apparent successes diminish the critical person’s self-worth
    - **This is typically an unconscious process**

- **Embarrassment**
  - This is a heightened sense of self-consciousness, accompanied by feelings of shame
and guilt
- “Excuse me”, “I’m sorry”, “I beg your pardon” are frequent inappropriate verbalizations
- Fear of doing or saying the wrong thing predominate in such persons
- They also cannot accept a compliment graciously

e. SHYNESS
- Relates to the feeling of embarrassment
- The shy person is basically insecure and passive
- Fear of rejection predominates

f. CLOWNING
- Clowning is the opposite side of shyness
- This person looks and sounds confident, but is not necessarily assured
- Happy-go-lucky and assertive persons may feel as insecure as the shy person, but they act differently
- Psychologically, clowning behavior may be a defense against low self-esteem

g. ARROGANCE
- Arrogance is often misnamed self-confidence
- Usually, underneath this façade of “I am better than others” is a fear of being common, ordinary, and average
- These people expend a great deal of energy in showing the world how great they are
- This lack of humility is typically found in people whose aloofness is a defense against low self-esteem

h. BLAMING OTHERS
- Blaming others is a common human tendency
- A person’s ability to take responsibility for his or her own actions, however, is a sign of maturity and self-esteem
- People who are unable or unwilling to hold themselves responsible for what is happening in their lives may be persons of low self-esteem
- “I am okay only if I am perfect” is a predominant belief for these people

i. FEELING BLAMED
- Feeling blamed is closely related to blaming others
- Projection, believing others feel toward you what you are unable to acknowledge as your feeling toward them, is the label for this defense mechanism
- In its most extreme form, this attitude is known as paranoia.
- Low self-esteem persons perceive others as against them, which is a defense against their own anger and hostility toward others

j. SELF-NEGATION
- Self-negation is one of the more obvious ways that people with low self-esteem behave
- This attitude typically makes individuals unable to acknowledge any of their strengths and abilities
- They continually discount and diminish their own accomplishments and person

k. INSINCERITY
- Insincerity is perhaps the saddest form of self-hatred because it is the most hidden expression of low self-esteem and destroys the possibility of a close, honest relationship
- Insincerity is commonly an expression of fear that people will not like me if I am my true self
- Most insincerity is subtle

I. ADDICTIONS
- (Alcohol, drugs, anorexia, bulimia, sex, pornography, spending) make up a large category of behaviors that at their core frequently evidence low self-esteem

m. HOMOSEXUALITY
- Homosexuality is a behavior in which low self-esteem plays a significant role
- Because homosexuality is an identity problem (Who am I?), self-appraisal of homosexual identity and orientation is frequently negative

n. MARRIAGE and FAMILY PROBLEMS
- Low self-esteem is a contributing factor in many marriage and family problems
- How a person feels toward himself or herself influences how he or she feels toward a spouse, children, parents, and siblings

**Step 2. BELIEVE That Loving Yourself is Acceptable to God**

One must come to believe that loving themselves is acceptable to God. It is common for many to be confused on this issue and they have not adopted biblically accurate perceptions such as:

a. Self-love is not self-selfishness
b. Self-affirmation is not self-conceit
c. Self-worth is not self-worship
d. Self-awareness is not self-absorption
e. Humility is not humiliation
f. Putting off one’s sinful self is not putting oneself down
g. Self-denial is not self-degradation
h. Unworthiness is not worthlessness

Self-love is the result of surrendering one’s narcissism (I am the center of my world) and martyrdom (I will suffer needlessly) and accepting oneself as a reflection of God’s image (I am his lovable, valuable, capable creation who is being redeemed).

Christ and Paul assume that loving oneself is basic to how a person treats a neighbor or spouse.

- **If I love myself, then I will treat you as well as I treat myself.**

The principle is this:

*I will love you as much as I love myself. I may not love myself very much, and therefore I will not love you very much. Thus, MY level of self-esteem affects my level of esteem FOR YOU.*

(This being true, many of the problems we see in marriages and families can be traced to a parent’s and spouse’s low view of himself or herself.)

**We cannot expect others to love another beyond their ability to love themselves.**

The process of believing starts with being told to believe, yet that idea must be taken inside the person to form a belief.

This process of “taking inside” begins with **LISTENING**, then moves to **COMPREHENDING** and **ACCEPTING**,
The Believing Process involves four dimensions:

1 – TELLING myself repeatedly, “God says it is acceptable for me to love myself”
2 – Repeatedly PICTURING myself as God loving me (accept myself as good)
3 – Consistently ACTING in a loving way toward myself
4 – FEELING loving toward myself

Step 3. BELIEVE God Chooses to Need You

If believing is a process of HEARING, SEEING, FEELING, and ACTING (internalizing what I hear, picturing what I see, experiencing what I feel, and acting on the belief that is inside of me), then the third step becomes a possibility.

God has no needs, but, he has CHosen to involve humans in the process of making himself known to the world.

God has chosen to dwell in human bodies, so we represent God wherever we are. He has empowered us with His Holy Spirit.

What I SAY and DO reflects the God who lives in me. This truth gives my life significance.

When I recognize that I am the temple of God, I have a source of value that can build my self-esteem.

ACCEPTING oneself as part of God’s redemptive plan is a crucial step in the process of healthy self-esteem.

Step 4. DISCOVER Your Place in the Body of Christ

Every Christian has a vital part to play in the body of Christ. Paul tells us that no one Christian is more important than any other Christian.

We are not to inflate our importance in the body of Christ, but neither are we to devalue our significance.

Step 5. VALIDATE Yourself

“Let everyone be sure that he is doing his very best, for then he will have the personal satisfaction of work well done, and won’t need to COMPARE himself with someone else.” - Gal. 6:4 LBT

Validating myself is the process of endorsing my own life.

- To DO MY BEST is to DO WHAT IS POSSIBLE. I measure my best with my potential, NOT with another’s possible performance.
- VALIDATING MYSELF means that I do not need to outdo someone else; I do not need to beat someone in order to do my best.
- I examine the quality of my work in terms of WHAT I KNOW is within the SPHERE of MY CAPABILITIES.
- The basis for the COMPARISON is MYSELF, NOT you.
- If I validate myself, then I do not need to win over you to be acceptable in my own eyes.
- **I AM A WINNER** when I live up to my God-given GIFTS and ABILITIES.
- I can affirm myself as an adequate person when I do my best, comparing my efforts to my abilities.
- I can feel good about myself when I do not expect perfection.
- God asks me to be humble, to recognize that he equips, empowers, and energizes me.

Paul encourages us to **STOP PUTTING OURSELVES DOWN** because *Put-Downs lead to Self-Righteousness, not to humility.*

- “Don't tolerate people who try to run your life, ordering you to bow and scrape, insisting that you join their obsession... They're a lot of hot air, that's all they are. They're completely out of touch with the source of life, Christ, who puts us together in one piece, whose very breath and blood flow through us. He is the Head and we are the body. We can grow up healthy in God only as he nourishes us.” – Col. 2:18-19 MSG

- “So, then, if with Christ you've put all that pretentious and infantile religion behind you, why do you let yourselves be bullied by it? ...Such things sound impressive if said in a deep enough voice. They even give the illusion of being pious and humble and ascetic. But they're just another way of showing off, making yourselves look important.” – Col. 2:22-23

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**Step 6. MAKE REALISTIC Demands on Yourself**

When I validate myself, I can then make realistic demands on myself.
- I can be who I really am **without** pretense, fear, or shame.
- I am **FREED** from thinking MORE highly of myself than is realistic
- I am **FREED** from thinking LESS of myself than my talents and abilities warrant
- I do not have to deceive myself or others

**SELF-ESTEEM** is the product of making **realistic demands** on ourselves.

People who love themselves **do not have to boast** beyond their abilities or overextend their efforts.
- They can **be who they ARE** and **do what they CAN DO**.

People who value themselves **do not have to prove anything to themselves or to anyone else**

When people have realistically appraised themselves they can **volunteer** their abilities, gifts, and talents for God’s service with the assurance they will be experienced as capable and humble.

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**Step 7. WELCOME the TRUTH about Yourself**

To make realistic demands requires an **inventory** of a person’s strengths and weaknesses.

Welcoming the TRUTH about oneself takes courage.

To welcome the truth about myself requires my willingness to **become acquainted** with **WHO I AM**.
- This means that I am willing to take an inventory of my WORDS, THOUGHTS, IMAGINATIONS, FEELINGS, NEEDS, DEFENSES, BEHAVIORS, and RELATIONSHIPS.
Step 8. **LIVE with God’s Love and Forgiveness as a Way to Implement Change**

I can welcome the truth about myself when I love and value myself. My self-esteem dictates the degree of my willingness to hear the truth about myself.

A foundation to self-esteem is my ability to LOVE and FORGIVE MYSELF.
- The source of this ability is my relationship with my Creator, God.
- As I experience God’s love and forgiveness, I can then love and forgive myself.
- Living with God’s love and forgiveness helps me change myself and my reactions to what I say, think, feel, and do as well as my reactions to people and circumstances.
- Remember, I was loved even while I was his enemy (Rom. 5:8).
- His love is unconditional (Eph. 2:4-8)
- He loved me before I loved him (1 John 4:10)
- While I was lost, I was still his creation
- I am his creation, and he wants to redeem me.
- He is willing to forgive me
- Will I ACCEPT his love and forgiveness?
- When I ACCEPT God’s UNCONDITIONAL LOVE, I am FREE to LOVE God in return and to love and forgive others as God loves and forgives me.
- We all long to be loved unconditionally – just as we are, with no demands on us to change.

We hope to receive this kind of love from our parents, spouses, children, and friends.
- Unfortunately, human ability to love unconditionally is limited, so we are often frustrated.
- Therefore, we need to change our expectations of who can love us conditionally.

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**Step 9. PARENT Yourself**

Because our parents failed us in that they didn’t love us unconditionally and because no parent can give all the nurture, care, and love that we want and need, we WILL NEED to PARENT OURSELVES.
- The fact that all human beings are insatiable is another reason we will need to parent ourselves.
- It is a romantic ideal that there is someone who can give us all we need.

**Becoming MATURE depends on ACCEPTING the fact that no human relationship is adequate to meet all our needs.**
- When we accept the fact that no relationship will be sufficient to meet all our needs, then we are free to enjoy our parents, our spouses, our children, our friends, and our churches without demanding that they be unconditionally loving.
- It also frees us to be limited in our ability to love others unconditionally.

I must learn to SUPPORT, CARE FOR, and LOVE MYSELF because I am not going to get all I want or need from the important people in my life.
(This may be a painful truth, but it certainly is a freeing truth. It frees us from unrealistic, suffocating dependency.)
- Accepting this truth makes it possible to give up on attempts to control, manipulate, plead, placate, or demand that others meet our needs.
- It frees us to MATURE as independent, self-supporting ADULTS.
- It frees us to ask for what we need in ways that do not overwhelm others.
- Accepting this truth allows us to receive thankfully what we get, knowing that GIFTS are given out of a person’s AVAILABLE RESOURCES.

### Step 10. **GIVE Yourself**

Self-esteem builds when we give ourselves to the service of others.
- When we help others, feeling good about ourselves is promised in the Bible.

**We can best give ourselves WHEN we have a SELF to GIVE.**

**TO be ourselves, we must RECOGNIZE our FEELINGS, our NEEDS, our VALUES, our PERSPECTIVES, our BELIEFS – our overall IDENTITY.**

Helping others can be part of a prescription for building self-esteem.

### Step 11. **MEDITATE on Who You Are When Confronted by God**

Self-Esteem is an IDENTITY issue, and **identity is DEPENDENT on RELATIONSHIPS.**

The most important people in our lives DEFINE and INFLUENCE our definition of ourselves.
- **WHO AM I?**
  - Initially, I am who my parents, grandparents, siblings, friends, and teachers TELL me I am.
  - I do not know as a baby that I am being defined and influenced.
  - The awareness of being who others think I am and want me to be develops slowly, and comes through hearing people say, “You’re a good girl.” Or, “My, what a lovely girl!” Or, “You’re naughty!” Or, “Wow, what a homely kid!”
  - Hearing what God has to say to us and reading how He sees us can define and influence our identities and develop positive self-esteem.

### Step 12. **BE As PATIENT with the Process of Learning to Love Yourself as God Does**

Patience with oneself is the product of realistic expectations.
- Is my hope of improved self-esteem based on real resources, time, and energy?
- Do I allow time to learn the process of loving myself?

“I am what I am, a person made in God’s image, a sinner redeemed by God’s grace, and a significant part in the family of God.”

### I. **Strategies to help establish self-worth**

A. **Use Hopeful statements.** Be kind and encouraging to yourself. Pessimism can be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Try telling yourself things such as, "Even though it's tough, I can handle this situation."

B. **Forgive Yourself.** Everyone makes mistakes. Mistakes aren't permanent reflections on you as a person. They are isolated moments in time. Tell yourself, "I made a mistake but
Self-forgiveness isn’t assigning blame to someone else and letting yourself off the hook. It is simply an acknowledgment that you are human and you’ve reached the stage in your recovery where you are able to give yourself greater respect. When you forgive yourself, you don’t change the past, but you sure do change the future!

C. Avoid 'should' and 'must' statements. If you find that your thoughts are full of these words, you may be setting unreasonable demands on yourself—or others. Removing these words from your self-talk can give you and others more realistic expectations.

D. Focus on the Positive. Think about the good parts of your life. Ask yourself, "What other things have gone well recently?" "What personal skills do I have that have helped me cope with challenging situations in the past?"

E. Re-label upsetting thoughts. Having negative thoughts doesn't mean you must choose to react negatively. Instead, think of them as signals to use new, healthy thinking patterns. Ask yourself, "Which of my strengths can help me respond in a constructive way?" "What can I think and do to make this less stressful?"

F. Encourage Yourself. Give yourself credit for making positive changes. Treat yourself as well as you'd treat a loved one. Tell yourself, "I did a good job on the presentation. It may not have been perfect, but my colleagues said it was good."

G. Achieving a balanced, accurate view of yourself and accepting your value as a human being will help you feel happier and more confident.

H. The greatest step toward higher self-esteem is to realize that your SELF-IMAGE should NOT come from what OTHER PEOPLE think of you.

As long as you get your self-image from EXTERNAL sources, you will never be your REAL self, and you will always be at the mercy of what others want to tell you and how others want to treat you.

I. Use positive self-talk (Instead of the old lies, tell yourself some new refreshing truths)

J. STOP playing COMPARISON games with your friends and others in your life.
   1. Our personal worth and value,
      Our capacity to love and be loved, and
      Our ultimate care and protection are all things that have been GIVEN to us by God as our birthrights.

When we feel bound to extract these qualities from other people, something is wrong.

**Learning to be your OWN NURTURING PARENTS**

Every child needs AFFIRMATION, ACCEPTANCE, & ACKNOWLEDGEMENT - all presented with unconditional love.

When individuals grow up without the benefit of emotionally healthy parents and without the above needs met, they suffer in numerous ways. A need is a need, and when unmet, there is ongoing pain and woundedness.

Some of the effects of lack of parental nurturing are:
   a. Fear criticism and rejection
   b. Fear of being unlovable
   c. Loathsome and hateful feelings toward self
d. False concept of God – thinking He will treat them as their parents did

e. Guarding yourself – not giving others a chance to love you

f. Treating yourself badly

A. **THREE STEPS TO START HEALING**

“Your hope lies in **hearing and seeing** God as **loving and valuing** YOU, in learning to **ask your friends for what you need**, and in **BEING YOUR OWN NURTURING PARENT**.”

1. **Read the following Scripture passages that affirm the way God values you.**

   **Psalm 139**

   O LORD, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I’m far away. You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. You know what I am going to say even before I say it, LORD. You go before me and follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to understand!

   I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence!

   If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the grave, you are there. If I ride the wings of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans, even there your hand will guide me, and your strength will support me.

   You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother’s womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it.

   You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born.

   Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.

   **How precious are your thoughts about me, O God.** They cannot be numbered! I can’t even count them; they outnumber the grains of sand! And when I wake up, you are still with me!

   **Isaiah 49:15-16a**

   ’Never! Can a mother forget her nursing child? Can she feel no love for the child she has borne? But even if that were possible, I would not forget you!’
See, I have written your name on the palms of my hands.

I John 3:1-2
See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are! But the people who belong to this world don't recognize that we are God’s children because they don’t know him. Dear friends, we are already God’s children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is.”

2. **Ask your friends for at least FOUR HUGS a week.** (Safe, trustworthy friends)

3. **Begin TALKING TO YOURSELF the way you wish your parents had talked to you.**

**I. HOW TO BECOME OUR OWN NURTURING PARENTS**

**A. Start by asking yourself, “Have I ever taken care of other people, such as raising children and/or baby sitting?”**

1. How did I treat the child/children?
2. What did I say to the child/children?
3. How did I look at the child/children?
4. How did I feel toward the child/children?
5. What did I do with the child/children?
6. **What would make it possible for me to treat myself the way I took care of this child/children?**
   a. Has it ever occurred to you that you could treat yourself as well as you treat someone else?
   b. **Do you KNOW and believe that you are WORTH NURTURING?**
      (1) Individuals with low self-esteem often believe that before they can take good care of themselves, they must take good care of others.
      (2) These people feel like a martyr, a placator, a pleaser, and some people appear selfish. The truth is that both are selfish since “servants” only LOOK altruistic because behind their good deeds is a desperate need for self-fulfillment.
   c. **People usually DO whatever will bring them the greatest pleasure.**
      (1) The issue is not selfishness so much as it is HONESTY about self-interest.
      (2) Scripture tells us that people act out of self-interest.
      (3) The fact that people are selfish is a given, but it is the DENIAL or RATIONALIZATION of selfishness that prevents people from living unselfishly.
      (4) Making one’s self-interest open, honest, and conscious is a desirable choice that increases the possibility of treating others in a non-coercive, non-manipulative, non-exploitive way.
God does not ask humans to deny their self-interest. He only asks people to ADmit it and to CONSIDer the interests of others.

7. When people give, they remain who they really are — lovable, valuable, capable.
   a. To love means to give up the burden of selfishness.
   b. The power to give up selfishness is found in relationship with Christ.
   c. Becoming the giving, unselfish person God wants humans to be is the result of GROWING in God’s grace; it is not simply a human possibility.

B. The Nurturing Process

The process of becoming your own nurturing parents looks like the diagram below.

```
2- I SEE myself as lovable, valuable, and capable

3- I FEEL lovable, valuable, and capable.

1- I TELL myself I am lovable, valuable, and capable.

4- I ACT lovable, valuable, and capable.
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a. Nurturing the self involves changing **negative self-talk** to **positive self-talk**.
   b. Creating or remembering **positive pictures / images of self**
   c. Acting positively toward self
   d. Experiencing positive feelings toward self
   e. Could call this process; 1-SELF-TALK, 2-SELF-PICTURING, 3-SELF-BEHAVIOR, and 4-SELF-FEELING.

1. **SELF-TALK**
   a. Scripture recognizes the power of what a person says to himself. “**For as a man thinks within himself, so he is.**” - Prov. 23:7
   b. **Any statements** that express self-doubt, self-hate, or self-negating must be challenged in order to develop self-esteem.

**NEGATIVE:**

“I am a klutz”

“How could I be so stupid?”

“How terrible of me to forget your birthday?”

**POSITIVE:**

“While I’m sometimes awkward, on the whole I keep my balance very well.”

“I’m excited that I’m able to catch myself in mistakes and am willing to learn from them.”

“I care enough about my friend to feel sad when I forget something as important to him and me as his birthday.”

c. Positive nurturing messages can be encouraged by asking yourself to complete the following:
   - “I wish my dad would have told me……”
   - “I wish my mom would have said to me, ........................”
   - “I wish my grandma would have ..................”

d. Mimic, memorize, or read the following “I am…” self-talk statements.
   - lovable, valuable, and capable.
- somebody.
- significant.
- God’s child.
- adequate.
- entitled to my needs, feelings, and values.
- human.
- unique.
- glad I was born.

e. “I matter in this world.”
f. “I make a difference in people’s lives when I radiate hope, joy, and trust.”
g. “The world is a better place because I’m here.”

h. Translate negative self-statements:
   (1) I should, I must, I have to, I can’t  INTO  I want, I will, I choose,
       I’ll give it my best try

i. Separate your PERSONAL WORTH from your BEHAVIOR

j. VALUE yourself even when your behavior needs changing or correction

k. SUPPORT your own power to control yourself and to make CHOICES that
determine your life

l. AFFIRM your ability to meet physical and emotional needs while being
   sensitive to the needs of others

m. RELINQUISH your love of power (control, manipulation, competition) to your
   power of love (approving, accepting, nurturing)

2. SELF-PICTURING

   a. Self-image is a person’s mental self-portrait.
   b. How people SEE themselves is a REFLECTION of what the most “significant
      others” in their lives say to them and how they treat them.
   c. My parents act as a mirror to me.
   d. What I see may be an accurate reflection of what my parents say to me – how
      they look, how they feel, and how they act toward me. On the other hand, this
      picture I have of myself may be distorted.
   e. Whether it is accurate or not is of little significance since individuals act as if it
      were true.
   f. Self-CONCEPT is an illusion, based on answers to three questions:
      (1) Who do I think I am?
      (2) Who do you think I am?
      (3) Who do I think you think I am?
   g. From all of a person’s life experiences, he has built an image of himself in his
      mind, fashioning and distorting that image to make it what he wants or fears it
      to be.
   h. Self-IMAGE is learned.
      i. WHO AM I?
         (1) My parents show and tell me
         (2) I am male/female
         (3) I am wanted/not wanted
         (4) I am valued/devalued
         (5) I am nourished/neglected
         (6) I am attractive/ugly
         (7) I am okay/not okay
      j. My memory of who I am in my parents’ view influences me today either
positively or negatively.
(1) If the influence is negative, I can challenge and create a more positive view because as an adult I have more resources than I had as a child to be my own nurturing parent.

k. One must collect and create new pieces of information that challenge or substitute the existing negative self-image.

l. Think you are or think you are not; either way you’ll be right.

What is true in a person’s mind will be true in that person’s behavior, feelings, and relationships.

Of all the judgments we pass in life, NONE is as important as the one we pass on OURSELVES. Our SELF-CONCEPT tents to be our DESTINY. – Dr. David Carlson

m. Developing a positive self-image results in less worry about what others think
(1) Less shame, guilt, and fear
(2) Fewer negative comparisons to others
(3) More honesty about what a person wants
(4) Less pleasing of others at unwanted personal expense

3. SELF-BEHAVIOR
a. How we TREAT ourselves is a response to how to PICTURE and TALK to ourselves.

b. Either our BEHAVIOR matches our SELF-IMAGE and SELF-TALK, or we are living lives on incongruity.

c. Our behavior reflects the negative or positive self-view and self-talk and self-feelings.

d. We MUST learn and accept that we are MORE than OUR BEHAVIOR.
(1) BEING is more fundamental than DOING, quality is more fundamental than activity, the reality of what a man DOES is determined by what he IS.

(2) We must focus on our inner qualities more than on our behavior; de-emphasizing performance as the basis for build self-esteem

(3) Integrity is a reflection of a person living out positive personal qualities while acknowledging and challenging negative qualities within oneself.

e. Exploring how a person behaves toward himself/herself can be accomplished by asking:
(1) How do you treat yourself?
(2) How do you take care of yourself?
(3) What have you done for yourself this week?
(4) Do you treat yourself as well as you treat your spouse, children, friends, or neighbors?

Consider this:

How do you treat yourself? What is the transaction like? Does it resemble writing a LETTER, or is it more like sending a BILL? It is more like passing a LAW or SENTENCING a PRISONER?

LOW Self-Esteem individuals, notorious for unfriendly treatment of themselves, wonder WHY they feel ANGRY and DEPRESSED.
**SELF-WORTH**

**IF** they would learn to **send themselves a LETTER** rather than a **BILL**, 
they will eventually begin to feel **POSITIVE**.  
**IF** instead of passing **LAWS** or **SENTENCING** themselves, they **ACT**  
**GRACIOUSLY** and **FORGIVING**, their esteem will **increase**.

f. In healthy development, children learn to take care of themselves **BEFORE** they begin to think of other people. It is our natural progression to think of ourselves and then to go past ourselves and think of others.  
(1) This natural progression depends on how totally our caretakers are **FOR** US, how sensitive they are to our vulnerability and fragility, and how receptive we are to their influence.  
(2) **WHEN** we are **LOVED** and **CARED for**, we develop both self-love and love for others,  
(3) **WHEN** we don’t get the love and care needed, we develop self-hate and frequently also develop hatred for others as well.

g. We have more choices and resources now when it comes to how we respond to the way we were treated as a child.  
(1) I may respond to mistreatment and inadequate nurturing by becoming a delightful, loving, gentle child.  
(2) **BUT** chances are greater than I will respond negatively, becoming stubborn, aggressive, anorexic, bullying, delinquent, disrespectful, criminal, alcoholic, drug-addicted, raping, spouse or child beating.  
(3) **YET** I may become a pastor, missionary, a creative citizen, or a therapist as a way to mitigate my mistreatment.  
(4) **WHAT** happened in your life to encourage you to cope with your pain in the ways you have?

h. **BEFORE** people can take good care of anything or anyone, they **MUST** 
take good care of **themselves**, be their own nurturing parents.

4. **What do we need in order to take care of ourselves?**
   a. How do you wish your parents had treated you?  
   b. Are you willing to treat yourself as you wish the important people in your life would have treated you?  
   c. **Make a LIST of what you MISSED OUT on** as you were growing up  
      (1) Are you willing to treat yourself to the affirmations and experiences you wish you had received from your parents?  

The **MORE** you take good care of yourself, the **less** resentment and anger you feel toward yourself, your parents, your friends, and God, and the **MORE** loving you become toward yourself and others.

d. How are you stopping yourself from getting what you want?  
e. What are you doing that is robbing you of your desires?  
f. What do you need in order to treat yourself better?  
g. What can you do to be good to yourself?  
h. How can you be good to yourself now?  
i. What are you not doing for yourself?  
j. **Is there a better way for you to take care of yourself today?**
5. **Individuals whose self-esteem is rooted in their relationship with God take variable performance in stride.**
   
a. But individuals who believe that the *level of their PERFORMANCE reflects their WORTH* become depressed, sad, angry, scared, competitive, helpless, or hopeless when they evaluate their performance as unacceptable.

b. It is crucial for self-esteem to have a sense of adequacy, to know we can do something well. **Adequate = satisfactory, suitable, sufficient, enough…**

c. It is devastating if we *need to perform perfectly* or *better than others* in order to have self-esteem.

d. In Romans 7:15-25, Paul declares that his ADEQUACY is dependent on Christ.
   1. Having learned that Christ makes him ADEQUATE, he boldly declares in Phil. 4:13, “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”

   e. Paul recognized God as the source of his adequacy. *“Not that we are adequate in ourselves…but our adequacy is from God…”* – 2 Cor. 3:5

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**It is okay to be SELF-CONFIDENT, but NOT to be CONFIDENT in SELF.**

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**NUVERTURE YOURSELF by Recognizing & Accepting FEELINGS**

People often talk about how they FEEL toward themselves without realizing that **FEELINGS result from what a person SAYS, SEES, and DOES.** Feelings become the end product of the sensory sequence. They have no existence independent of SELF-TALK, SELF-IMAGE, and SELF-BEHAVIOR. Feelings may “seem” to come out of nowhere; but these emotions **GROW out of what a person unconsciously HEARS, SEES, and DOES.**

A. **How people FEEL toward themselves reflects their VIEW of themselves, their INTERNAL DIALOGUE, and their ACTIONS toward themselves.**

1. When these sensory modalities are positive, feelings will be positive. Negative sensory modalities produce negative emotions.

2. People with low self-esteem must **challenge** what they SAY to themselves, how they PICTURE themselves, and how they TREAT themselves IF their self-feelings are to be positive.

3. **Self-hate** originates not as a feeling, but as an AUDITORY, VISUAL experience which is reinforced by self-defeating BEHAVIOR.

4. **How people TALK to themselves, what they SAY to themselves, frequently repeats** the negative messages they have actually heard from significant people in their lives.
   
a. These negative messages can also be their interpretations of how they were treated by these important figures.
   
b. People do not usually come to feel negatively toward themselves without
outside help.

c.

**THE SENSORY SEQUENCE FLOW**

1. Negative Internal dialogue. Distorted hearing, responding, and sending of inappropriate messages
2. Negative self-picturing Distorted views of self and others
3. Negative feelings Exaggerated feelings and expressions
4. Negative behavior Poor performance

**LOW SELF-ESTEEM**

This negative cycle is self-perpetuating, so an individual can begin intervention at any of the four sensory modalities. The **starting point for change** is the individual’s sensory representation of the problem.

- “I feel…”
- “I see…”
- “I do…”
- “I tell myself…”

**A. Feelings are often expressed in general terms rather than specific**

1. Feelings are often expressed in terms such as “bad” or “horrible”
2. It is beneficial to express feelings in terms of scared, angry, sad, happy, excited, tender, etc.
3. Becoming aware of feelings and identifying them with understandable labels is helpful.

**B. Identifying the Evidence of Feelings**

1. People who have a hard time identifying what they feel often have difficulty knowing how they process their feelings.
   a. Do they express them appropriately; verbally, respectfully, kindly, lovingly
   b. Do they implode; hold them in, repress, suppress, discount
   c. Do they explode; uncontrolled and inappropriate letting go, swearing, depreciating, hitting, leaving
2. People often must learn to accept feelings before they can discover what they do with them.
3. When we allow ourselves to pay attention to our feelings, they tell us what we need and what is missing in our lives.
   a. Accepting feelings enables us to become aware of what is going on inside us and frees us to ask for what we need.

4. **FEELINGS are NOT Right or Wrong!**
   a. We cannot control the appearance of our feelings, but we can control their expression.
5. Learn to process your feelings by attempting the following:
   a. Become AWARE of feelings (emotions and physical sensations)
   b. IDENTIFY and label these feelings as well as specific body responses, e.g. tightness, temperature, shaking, hair raising, etc.
   c. ACCEPT your feelings as your own, indicators that something is wrong
   d. ACCEPT your feelings as resources, indicators that something is needed
   e. Learn to EXPRESS your feelings constructively and appropriately: challenging implosion and explosion of feelings.
   f. Complete the feelings by CONNECTING them to Auditory and Visual memories and thoughts, to Behaviors of self and others, and to Auditory and Visual imaginations.

6. People often want to get rid of painful feelings without processing.
   a. Ventilation of feelings is seldom enough to complete the process even though it may provide temporary relief.

7. We must accept our feelings without judging.
   a. Discover your sensory sources: WHAT am I SAYING to myself, remembering others SAYING to me, VISUALIZING, imagining what others might SAY or DO, and identifying the BEHAVIOR involved in maintaining painful feelings.
   b. Try to make sense out of your feelings, learn where they are coming from and how you unconsciously maintain them, and thereby discover the sensory steps you need to reduce or change painful feelings.

8. Processing feelings is possible when people view their feelings as indicators that they need to pay attention to some deprivation in their lives.
   a. Christians often evaluate negative feelings as wrong, sinful, immoral, or a measure of their worthlessness.
   b. Self-condemnation prevents them from exploring the source and meaning of their feelings and frustrates their completing the process.

9. PREJUDGING feelings inhibits processing and leads to self-hate and self-punishment rather than to confession, repentance, and restoration.

**THE FEELING-PROCESS CYCLE**

1. AWARENESS – “What am I emotionally FEELING at this moment?”
2. ACCEPTANCE – “Am I ACCEPTING these feelings as a legitimate experience, or am I judging myself?”
3. EXPRESSION – “What physical sensations am I aware of?”
4. COMPLETION – “Am I completing my feelings, or do I need to process them again?”

D. Changing our Feelings
If terrible feelings are the product of what we SAY to ourselves, how we LOOK at ourselves, and how we ACT toward ourselves, then **focus on uncovering** what we are SAYING, SEEING, and DOING **BEFORE** these terrible feelings occurred.

**Work BACK from the feelings** by asking yourself what you are aware of before you felt terrible about yourself.

**Challenge the negative appraisal of your own behavior.**

a. If you are unable to reframe the experience as an oversight rather than a commentary on your character, you will continue to feel terrible.

b. Learn to challenge the internal critical parent.
   (1) “I made a MISTAKE, but does this mean I am a horrible person?”
   (2) “What am I expecting of myself, perfection?”
   (3) “Is it realistic to never, ever forget something?”
   (4) “One mistake does not make me a bad person.”
   (5) “My behavior is only part of me.”
   (6) “My friend has forgiven me, so I can forgive myself.”
   (7) “She still sees me as okay, so I can look at myself the same way.”

1. **Challenge your negative SELF-TALK**
   a. Be AWARE of your internal dialogue
   b. ACCEPT that you tell yourself negative things
   c. EXPRESS the negative, but IMMEDIATELY REPLACE the lies with TRUTH.
   d. Have someone to be accountable to, that you can trust.
   e. STOP each negative self-talk statement
   f. REFUTE it, and state a FACT in its place
   g. Do NOT give up. Years of telling yourself lies will not give up or go away easily. BUT, it CAN be done. We can change our internal dialogue
   h. Remember, God wants us to be free to walk and live in TRUTH, even in our innermost parts.

2. **Challenge your negative SELF-IMAGE**
   a. Be AWARE of your own self-image
   b. How do YOU see yourself?
   c. Is it reality based? Or based on the internal lies you’ve believed?
   d. Once you have dealt with your negative self-talk, it will be much easier to change your self-image.
   e. ACCEPTING truth about yourself, and repeatedly telling yourself the truth will automatically start changing the way you SEE yourself.
   f. EXPRESS your thankfulness to God for your health, body, hair, eyes, talents, abilities, smile, attributes, etc.

3. **Challenge your negative BEHAVIORS**
   a. Be AWARE of your negative behaviors
   b. As you change your self-talk and self-image, your behavior will follow suit
   c. It is difficult to act negatively if you are TELLING yourself positive things and are SEEING yourself as a valuable, capable, lovable person.

4. **Nurture yourself** through positive self-talk, self-picturing, self-feeling, and self-
behaving.

5. **SELF-NURTURING** is necessary to maintain healthy self-esteem.

6. **Tell yourself** what you have wanted to hear from your parents all these years.

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**EXPERIENCING GOD as a NURTURING PARENT**

I. **Negative relationships with our parents influence the quality of our relationship with God.**

A. **Our human tendency is to SEE GOD in much the SAME WAY as we see our parents, especially our father.**

1. Many people are not able to see God as a nurturing parent **until** they experience nurturing from a safe, trustworthy individual. (*God with skin on.*)
   a. Cognitively, people may be able to comprehend that God loves them, BUT emotionally the “good news” will sound like empty, nice-sounding phrases until they have HUMAN experiences of being UNDERSTOOD, LOVED, and CARED for UNCONDITIONALLY.

2. When individuals recognize God as the most significant other in their lives and accept Him as their heavenly Father, He becomes a resource for nurture that supplements and substitutes for what was lacking their human parenting.

3. The realization that our Maker can become our perfect parent -
   - Faithful in LOVE and CARE
   - GENEROUS and THOUGHTFUL
   - INTERESTED in ALL we do
   - RESPECTING our individuality
   - Skilful in training us
   - Wise in guidance
   - ALWAYS available
   - Helping us find ourselves in MATURITY, INTEGRITY, and UPRIGHTNESS – …is a thought which can have meaning for everybody!

   “Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, **I will NOT FORGET YOU!**  
   *See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.*** - Isa. 49:15

B. **God as a Nurturing Parent**

1. God loves you unconditionally!

2. Jesus is your **advocate**, NOT your accuser

3. God is an **accepter** not an adversary.

4. Jesus is your **Savior**, not your Judge.
5. God is your **commander** and **commander**, not your condemner.

6. God is **FOR you**, NOT AGAINST you!

7. NOTHING can separate you from God’s love!

8. God is your **comforter**, not your criticizer.

9. **Human worth is a product of God’s creative activity.** **He determines and assigns VALUE** because He is the potter and humans are the clay.
   a. People do not create their own existence
   b. The source of our life is God
   c. Our worth is beyond human measure.
   d. We are God’s gift to himself.

10. **You are LOVED unconditionally** on the **basis of God’s act**, **NOT on the basis of your behavior or intentions.**

11. We can build our self-esteem through **HEARING** God’s message, **SEEING** God’s action, and **FEELING** God’s touch.

   God does not love us because we are valuable; we are valuable because God loves us.

   God’s grace teaches us that we are worthwhile **because** Christ redeemed us.

12. Our worth is also dependent on God’s creative activity. **He determines and assigns our VALUE by creating us in His image and by PAYING the HIGHEST PRICE for our salvation, the death of His only Son.**
   a. Unfortunately, many individuals seem to have this predisposition to establish their own worth through **how well they DO, how good they LOOK, and how POWERFUL they are.**
   b. People tend to judge their value by their PERFORMANCE, APPEARANCE, and “IMPORTANCE.”
      (1) These are fleeting and unreliable bases for establishing or maintaining self-esteem.

13. Our value, from God’s viewpoint, is not based on being perfect or on achieving some difficult feat.
   a. **Our value is a birthday gift which comes with our existence because God created us.**

C. The **ultimate answer** is to look to Jesus Christ as He is LOVE in its fullness and **ONLY HE can TOTALLY SATISFY the LONGINGS of our hearts.** **Then**, and only then, can we realize **real love** for ourselves and for others.

   1. God says, "**Beneath all your emotional hang-ups, all your insecurities, all the stuff you don't want anybody else to know, I see a princess/prince.**" **Beneath all the sins, all the things you've done wrong in life, I really see the potential in you. You can be something great. You can be what I made you to be.** Not what you are now, but what I made you to be."

   2. God does His deepest work in your life when He deals with **your identity: who** you are, the way you see yourself, your self-perception. **You will always tend to act**
according to the way you think about yourself. So God does His deepest changes in your life by changing the way you see yourself.

3. He says, "Let me show you how I see you." When you see yourself the way God sees you, it's going to change your life. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV).

Our WORTH is determined by our CREATOR, NOT by our ABUSER, and no one can take that away from us. God loves us unconditionally. We don’t have to clean up our act before we come to him or receive his love. He says, “Come, just as you are.”

“I am not free until I believe in me.” - Dr Robert Schuller

4. How we LOOK, how we ACT, how we THINK, what we SAY and what we DO – these are important to God AFTER we have accepted His love and forgiveness.

Trying to play God to ourselves, we are largely out of control of ourselves and also out of touch with ourselves, or at least with a great deal of ourselves, including what is central to our real selves.

5. To establish genuine, healthy SELF-ESTEEM, we must look at ourselves from God’s point of view.
   a. When we look at ourselves from God’s point of view, we look CLEAN, FRESH, NEW, WHITE as snow
   b. People who experience God’s love in the context of a SS class, Bible study, support group, or other wholesome relationships, GROW toward wholeness in their views of themselves and God.
   c. FEELING God’s love is seldom experienced apart from the presence of loving people in our lives.

6. HEARING an interpretation, SEEING an insight, and FEELING an emotion are necessary steps to ACTING on the truth if behavioral change is to be integrated into a person’s life.

In spite of the fact that, as sinful human beings, we HEAR life through cracked speakers (dull ears), SEE life through foggy lenses (dim eyes), FEEL life through broken hearts, and ACT OUT life through inconsistent behavior, God is our nurturing parent who NEVER LEAVES us or forsakes us.

II. Let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. - (Romans 12:2a NLT)

A. People really don’t forget anything.
   1. Stored somewhere in your mind, you’ll find the date of your anniversary, the score of the Super Bowl when you were ten, and the day your child lost his first tooth.
      a. You may not recall those events, but the memories are there.
The GOOD news is, your brain stores everything. 
The BAD news is, your brain stores everything.

2. Your brain can’t distinguish between what’s imaginary and what’s real, TRUTH or LIES.
   a. You have stored all kind of garbage in your brain.
   b. And, often it’s that garbage that you’re basing your decisions upon.

3. When you were a child, adults said things to you that you believed without question because they were adults and authority figures.
   For example:
   - You’re not very coordinated.
   - You’ll never be good at math.
   - You’ll always struggle with your weight.
   - Nobody really likes you.
   - You’re shy.
   - You don’t really have much to offer.
   - You’ll never be as good as your brother.
   - I’m embarrassed by you.
   a. They were LIES then, and they’re LIES now.
   b. But, you believe them!

4. You need to change the tape that’s playing in your mind.
   a. Instead of playing tapes full of lies, you need to play the TRUTH of God’s Word.
   b. You need to hide the truth of God’s Word in your heart.
   c. Romans 12:2 says, “Let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think” (NLT).

   a. Ask God to heal your memories. Tell God, “I need you to heal these memories of rejection, sin, resentment, guilt, and abuse. They hurt. Please heal me.”
   b. Fill your mind with God’s Word.
      (1) The more truth you put in your mind, the more lies you push out.
      (2) It’s a replacement strategy.

B. For years psychologists have told us that our self-esteem comes from what you think the MOST IMPORTANT PERSON in your life thinks about you.

Make Jesus the most important person in your life, and it will change EVERYTHING.

1. God’s Word says you’re LOVABLE (John 3:16)  
   CAPABLE (2 Peter 1:3)  
   VALUABLE (Luke 12:6)
Let that tape become the soundtrack of your life, and you will never be the same!

"We must stop operating in immature things like being offended and holding grudges. It's childish. It's time to rise above that kind of stuff. It's time to rise... above a poor self image. People who have said humiliating things to you are not responsible for your poor self image; you are, because you are still believing it, and that's not the truth of what Jesus sees in you. It's time to make war on negativity and bring it into subjection in Jesus. Negativity is a stronghold that needs to be pulled down!"
- Graham Cooke

“As people experience that they are loved and valued regardless of their behavior, thoughts, and feelings, they can then OWN their weaknesses,

ACCEPT their defenses,
ACKNOWLEDGE their sinfulness, and
ACCOMPLISH what seems so elusive to themselves -
CHANGE their SELF-TALK, SELF-IMAGE, SELF-ACTIONS, and SELF-FEELINGS.

They can then become whom God calls and creates, the representations of GOD’S IMAGE.”

"You need to get rid of all your negativity, inadequacy, insecurity and fear. It's not who you are now. Don't travel with it anymore. If we're developing a new you, your new you is not fearful, not inadequate, and definitely not insecure. The new you is happy, joyful, intrigued, excited and has a sense of wonder about what you're moving into next!"
- Graham Cooke