

SELF-IMAGE AS INTERPERSONAL

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Christians sometimes object to good self-image and feeling good about ourselves as somehow bad. The problem comes from an overreaction. To get people to see their need for salvation, Christians sometimes overdo how evil unsaved people are. Furthermore, they seem to think that feeling good about themselves makes God's salvation unnecessary or it makes them feel they can save themselves. Interpersonalism keeps the balance between responsibility and dependence. We are responsible for responding on our side of the relationship, but our responses on our side of the relationship do not establish the relationship. We depend on the other Person to establish it from the other side—to accept us—because he is the offended party.

Self-image comes from living interpersonally by positive values. Being created in God's image means we are not impersonal like plants, animals, and inorganic matter; we have the interpersonal capacity. Being in God's image gives us a firm foundation for proper dignity and self-regard.

Our self-image comes largely from other people's feedback, especially from others we value like parents, peers, spouse, siblings, teachers, friends. They indicate their attitude toward us by taking time with us, doing things for us, initiating activity with us, valuing our opinion, inviting us into their lives, giving us special information, looking us in the eye.

Our self-image comes from our activity toward other people. When we **(a)** *replace law with grace*, we likewise replace works with faith and perfection with growth. Grace, faith, and growth are interpersonal operations. We give up earning and producing results by our own actions alone and rely on feedback from other people as the basis for worth. When we **(b)** *replace competition with caring*, we are replacing individualism with interpersonalism. Competition is a negative way of relating to other people by individually trying to get self-worth by being better than they are. Living interpersonally **(c)** *gives up passiveness as a manner of relating to other people*. A person takes initiative to do something rather than waiting for others to initiate. Living passively makes the other person the main actor. Living interpersonally, we **(d)** *give up self-evaluation based on materialism*. We no longer view ourselves as good or bad depending on physical, material considerations like what we own, what abilities we possess, and the physical characteristics we have. Genetic features no longer count toward self-worth because we have no control over what nature gives us.

Self-esteem differs from pride by deriving from a comparison between responsibility and how well we fulfill it. That contrasts with pride in its negative sense, which derives from comparison between us and other people.

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