

Love Yourself

1. Warm up question: On Sunday we talked about challenges to our self-esteem. If you were to pick an animal that represents how you feel about yourself and how you see yourself most of the time, what animal would you pick and why?
2. On Sunday, Pastor David asked us to take a few seconds to count on our fingers some things we like about ourselves and some things we don't. Did you have an easier time coming up with your positive or negative list? Tell us about something that was on your positive list and something on your negative list.
3. Self-esteem is defined as “the value we place on ourselves as a person; a feeling of having respect and confidence in oneself.” Dr. Maxwell Maltz in his book *Psycho-Cybernetics* says, “At least 95% of people have their lives blighted by feelings of inferiority to some extent, and to millions this feeling of inferiority is a serious handicap to success and happiness.”
 - a. On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate your self-esteem (with 5 being the highest)?
 - b. If self-esteem is something you've struggled with, tell us why? Where do you think that comes from?
 - c. In Matthew 7:15, Jesus says, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. In John 10:10, Jesus says, “The thief [i.e., Satan] comes only to steal and kill and destroy.” What negative message about yourself does the Evil One repeatedly try to whisper in your ear?
4. In Sunday's sermon, David suggested three spiritual tools for building our self-esteem. The first is found in the story of Zacchaeus. **Self-Esteem Toolbox Item #1: Self-reflection and quiet time with God.** Read Luke 19:1-10.
 - a. What traits of Zacchaeus mentioned in this passage may have contributed to a negative self-image? Using your imagination, how would you guess those traits had affected his life?
 - b. Knowing what we do about Zacchaeus, tell us how you imagine the dinner conversation going between him and Jesus?
 - c. Zacchaeus' conversational encounter with Jesus transformed him. Why?
 - d. David told how a friend of his who is a nun, Sister Julie, struggled with the anger and criticism her father had heaped on her as a child. To overcome the lingering effects, she had to spend lots of time processing with God in prayer. Let's share some practical wisdom with each other. What does it look like to process our negative emotions in prayer? How do you do it? Does it help – if so, how?

5. **Self-Esteem Tool Box Item #2 is: Self-Compassion.** The important role self-compassion plays in our healing is graphically illustrated in the story of Jesus healing a paralyzed man. Read Matthew 9:1-8.
- The paralyzed man comes to Jesus to be healed. How do you think he felt when the first thing Jesus said to him was “Your sins are forgiven,” rather than “Get up and walk”?
 - Why do you think Jesus started his interaction with the paralyzed man by offering him assurance that he was forgiven?
 - David suggested that the paralyzed man’s ability to embrace forgiveness – to believe that he was truly forgiven for his wrongs – was somehow critical to his healing. Many studies have shown that that kind of self-compassion (i.e., the ability to look at our mistakes with kindness and understanding and to receive forgiveness) is essential to good self-esteem. When others mess up, we’re often quick to offer compassion and forgiveness. When you yourself mess up, do you offer yourself the same gift? Why – or why not?
 - Jesus said, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Matthew 22:39. Suppose you loved your neighbor as much as you love yourself. Would your neighbor feel well loved? Why or why not?
 - When we mess up, David suggested we engage in something called “prayers of examen,” i.e., prayers of self-examination. He suggested we sit down and write about our experience from the perspective of someone (like Jesus) who cares about you and is very wise. Do you think that kind of exercise might help you? Why or why not?
6. **Self-Esteem Tool Box Item #3 is: Do for others; get your mind on someone else.** We see this principle illustrated in the story about the Rich Young Ruler. Read Matthew 19:16-22.
- In this story, the Rich Young Ruler looks inside himself and feels “lack.” (Vs. 20.) Jesus’ prescription is for the Rich Young Ruler to give his wealth to the poor – in other words, to turn the focus from himself to others. Many researchers in the field of self-esteem believe this is good advice. Think about a time you did something that really helped someone else. What happened? How did it make you feel about yourself?
 - At the end of his sermon, David showed Pink’s video “Perfect.” What thoughts or feelings did you experience watching the video?
 - Which of the three tools we’ve discussed do you think might be most helpful to you – and why?