

BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM

By Brenda Spina, M.S., LMFT, LPC

"He's a blockhead!" "Superhippo!" "You're so ugly who would want you!" "Is she weird or what?" What are the messages that linger in your mind? Words or behaviors expressed long ago but come back to haunt you now and then. People are cruel. People are also so afraid of feeling vulnerable they would rather attack another than admit their own fear.

What to do with the long-term results is the kicker. Just when you think you have it licked something happens or someone says something and all the old feelings come rushing back. You know...sometimes I think we live as if those things are true and don't even realize we're doing it.

One exercise that may be helpful in remembering as well as remodeling the assumptions we live by is to take a look at what God thinks of us. This doesn't mean there won't be sadness or grief that surfaces. It is a part of life. This is true because there are three levels in which we take in information about who we are and our value.

The first way is what people tell us directly about who we are. Like the examples above they often include cruel statements that are false. Even if there is microscopic truth associated in some manner, it is the fact that we are not thought well of that we remember.

The second level is what we overhear others saying about us. Again, this may be good or bad. Either way these first two lead directly into the third level.

The third level has to do with what we decide about ourselves. Now, we all know that as children we are not able to reason through events like we do as adults. Even as adults this can be difficult depending on the words and behaviors thrown at us.

When we come to the Lord the battle begins as to who or what we will believe. Hebrews 10:35 states "Do not cast away your confidence which has great reward."

Not everything we have overheard, have been told, or we have assumed may be true. As it is impossible for God to lie, His definition becomes our foundation to which we look. What follows is an exercise that may help you continue rewrite the origins of how you think, feel, and act. I will insert my name for the example:

EXAMPLE:

I, Brenda, am forgiven. (What I tell myself?) Ephesians 1:7

She, Brenda is forgiven. (What I overhear?)

You, Brenda are forgiven. (What is told to me directly?)

Now take a minute and insert your name in the above as well as the following:

I, _____, am set free. (John 8:31-33)

You, _____, are set free.

He/She, _____, is set free.

I, _____, am accepted in the Beloved. (Ephesians 1:6)

You, _____, are accepted in the Beloved.

He/She _____, is accepted in the Beloved.

There are many different scriptures that hold the truth of who we are and how valuable we are as a child of God. Our confidence rests first in God's description of us. Using God's Word along with each of the three ways gradually solidifies the truth of God's definition of us. This is a life long process and one that brings the truth of God to our heart, mind, and spirit. Jesus states "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32) Be encouraged to allow the truth of God's word to sift through all the layers of words and experiences unique to you. The reward is living freely as a forgiven, loved, and growing child of God.

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