

Conference Teaching Plan Self Image

What is a self image?

Self-image is how you see yourself in relation to others. It may range from how you see yourself physically to being more about the perception you have of yourself (personality, interests and attitudes), which could also be called self concept. It is very important as it affects your self-esteem and confidence.

Self image includes:

- What you think you look like **physically**.
- How your **personality** comes across.
- What kind of person you think you are.
- What you think **others** think of you.
- How much you like yourself or you think others like you.

Why a conference on Building a Biblical Self Image?

A Biblical Self Image isn't based on the subjectivity of our own perceptions or the perceptions of others, but is based on the **absolute truth** of God's word. If a person accepts that whatever God's word says about him is true, then he is very unlikely to suffer from low self-esteem and fall victim to its destructive characteristics.

(Powerpoint)

Here's the rub:

Only **4%** of Christian students believe the Bible is the infallible word of God and only **9%** of those students believe in absolute truth. An absolute truth being a truth that is true for all people at all times.

Some facts: ⁽¹⁾

Teens who do not believe in absolute truth are:

- 36 % more likely to lie to a friend
- 48% more likely to cheat on an exam
- 200% more likely to steal
- 300%** more likely to use illegal drugs
- 600%** more likely to commit suicide
- 216% more likely to be resentful
- 200% more likely to physically hurt someone
- 200% more likely to watch a pornographic film
- 200%** more likely to be disappointed in life
- 210%** more likely to lack purpose
- 225%** more likely to be angry with life

⁽¹⁾ ("The Churched Youth Survey," Dallas: Josh McDowell Ministry, 1994)

These statistics certainly indicate how students perceive God, the Bible, and truth, but they also indicate how students perceive themselves. It is obvious that when students are left to determine their self-worth free of any absolute standard, they are then subject

to **all standards** and their “self” perceptions will unavoidably fall short in multiple categories of comparisons.

Even with a Biblical self-image, people are prone to make value judgments about their self worth based on social pressures and the communicated (verbal and non-verbal) perceptions of others.

Let’s take a look at one of the most significant social pressures of American culture: Appearance.

(Powerpoint)

1. The average American woman wears a size 10 or larger (not a 2 or 3, like your average model).
2. Twenty years ago, the average model weighed 8% less than the average woman; today, models weigh **23%** less.
3. **400-600** advertisements bombard us everyday in magazines, on billboards, on TV, and in newspapers. One in eleven has a direct message about beauty...and that's not even counting the indirect messages.
4. 60% of high school girls with eating disorders or related symptoms do not believe they need counseling.
5. **Eighty** percent of 10-year-old American girls diet.
6. Between 1996 and 1998, teenage cosmetic surgeries nearly doubled, from 13,699 to 24,623. (Source: American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons)
7. One **million** teenage boys have eating disorders, and as many as 400,000 are steroid users.

These pressures, along with cultural fluctuations on how to achieve personal importance, what constitutes an attractive personality, how can a person be sexually fulfilled, etc., all take their toll. They can be especially destructive forces in the lives of teens which are desperately searching for self-identity.

As Christian parents, then, how do we help our students develop a Biblical self-image? And how do we reinforce the Bible’s message and create support structures for our children?

The Big Question: What does the Bible say?

1 John 3:1 says, “Look at how great a love the Father has given us, that we should be called God's children. And we are!” (HCSB)

This scripture is saying that the relationship God desires and designed us for is the loving relationship between a father and his children. Once we understand the depth of His love and the security of His commitment to us, we begin to fully comprehend our worth. We are God’s children!

One of the finest pictures of that love and commitment is found in Psalm 139. Dr. Bruce Narramore, Ph. D., President of the Narramore Christian Foundation, says there are four central ingredients in our self-image:

1. **A sense of worth** – This is the basic attitude we hold about our significance or value. We believe we are valuable and have a right to live.

2. **Love** -- If we are to be happy and go through life with a minimum of problems, we need an assurance that we are loved and accepted and that we belong.
3. **Confidence** -- Confidence, which implies a basic level of trust in our own abilities and a sense of inner strength, is the quality that enables us to reach out and try new tasks or tackle new challenges.
4. **Security** -- Closely tied to a feeling of confidence is our need for a feeling of security. Whereas confidence is more of an **internal** matter ("I can do it!"), security is more **external** ("Others can be trusted" or "The world is safe."). Security relates to our environment and our relationship to it. It reflects our assurance that the world "out there" is sufficiently safe and ultimate harm will not come upon us.

Let's examine Psalm 139, looking for these key components.

1. A sense of worth – (vss. 1-6) By using this exhaustive list, the Psalmist indicates that God places a high value on his life. The verses describe God's intimate knowledge of him and his passionate interest in him. David realizes that God knows him (David) better than he knows himself. The thought of that is too wonderful for David to comprehend. It is incredibly validating (to a person's self worth) that the God of the universe would be so involved in his life.
2. Love – (vss. 7-12, 23) Nothing quite communicates love like **pursuit**. David realizes that there is no escaping God's presence. There is no place one can hide. There is no condition which shields us from His recognition. Not even the darkness that cloaks our lives at times will keep His right hand from rescuing us. That devotion, that care, that attentiveness are all just extensions of His love. God would not for a minute want us to think that we were not his prized possession.
3. Confidence – (vss. 13-14) When the scripture says that God formed us and wove us, it is communicating the great care with which God crafts an individual. When David acknowledges God's hand in his own formation, it causes him to burst out with thankfulness. Some of the most powerful words in scripture are in verse 14, "I will praise You, because I have been remarkably and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful, and I know this very well." (HCSB) When David says that God's works are wonderful and also says that he has been "wonderfully made," he is saying, "I am wonderful, because God made me. There are no limits to His possibilities in me."
4. Security – (vss. 15-16) If security is that feeling or sense of assurance that things will be alright, what could be more reassuring than knowing your days and breath are in God's hands? From your beginning He has marked them. World events, **cultural trends**, emotional trials, none of these will default God's predetermined plan. I can live securely knowing that God's hand and His hand alone controls all things.

God has accounted for each of our human needs. Having a Biblical self-image means we understand ourselves according to God's unalterable standard of acceptance. His word is the best mirror we could ever use. Bill Gillham is the President of Lifetime Guarantee Ministries. Bill has put together a list of scriptures which reveal the true identity of a child of God.

(Handout)

What are some practical steps to building a Biblical self-image in my child.
(Powerpoint)

Recognize your level of **influence**.

- "...the human child is 'talked into talking' and 'loved into loving.'" "...related into believing." Karen Robert, "Becoming Attached: Unfolding the Mystery of the Infant-Mother Bond and its Impact on Later Life," (New York: Warner Book, 1994). Allan N. Shore, "Affect Dysregulation and Disorders of the Self," (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2003).
- "Out of 14 influences listed by teens as having 'a lot' of influence' on how they think and act, only one was listed by more than 50% of teens: **PARENTS**" George Barna, "Third Millenium Teens: Research on the Minds, Hearts, and Souls of America's Teenagers, 1999 The Barna Research Group
- "78% of teens acknowledge that parents have a major impact on their thoughts and deeds." George Barna, "Third Millenium Teens: Research on the Minds, Hearts, and Souls of America's Teenagers, 1999 The Barna Research Group
- "In terms of faith, parents were named 3 times as often (47%) as the next most prolific source of faith influence (16% - church)"
- 4 out of 5 said that their parents were their greatest influencers
- "We must produce in our homes and community '**living models**' of the very biblical truth we want to see incorporated in our kids or they will eventually reject that truth and walk away." Josh D. McDowell

Teach them what the **Bible** says.

- Use the scriptures on the "True Identity" handout, from Psalm 139, and any others you may find to affirm your child's sense of worth, to let him know he is loved, and to give him a sense of confidence and security.
 - (Powerpoint) Children's conceptions of God stem from day-to-day experiences with their parents. Ana-Maria Rizzuto, "The Birth of the Living God: A Psychoanalytic Study," (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979). A. Vannesse/P. DeNeuter, "The Semantic Differential Parenting Scale," in "Parental Figures and the Representation of God."

Practice encouragement, **guidance**, and support by:

- **Appreciating** your child
- Telling your child that you love them
- Spending time with your child
 - The average born-again church kid spends an average of only **4½ minutes** a day in meaningful conversation with their father.
 - The average born-again church kid spends an average of only **8½ minutes** a day in meaningful conversation with their mother.
- Encouraging your child to make choices
- Fostering independence in your children
- Giving genuine importance to your child's **opinion** and listening
- Taking the time to explain **reasons**
- Feeding your child with positive encouragement

- Encouraging your child to try new and challenging activities
- Promoting healthy **friendships**

Avoid damaging **negativity** by:

- Curtailing **criticism**
- Refraining from using guilt motivation
- Resisting over-**protection**
- Refusing to impose **unrealistic** regulations

Listen to Dr. Narramore. “The failure to let children gradually mature is one of the greatest causes of teenage rebellion in Christian homes. Because we are God’s representatives, we sometimes try to play God to our children. *We* set all the standards. *We* make all the decisions. And *we* let children know their place. Each of these parent behaviors undermines a child’s identity.”

How do I discipline my child without destroying their self-image?

Hebrews 12:9-11 says, “Furthermore, we had natural fathers discipline us, and we respected them. Shouldn’t we submit even more to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time based on what seemed good to them, but He does it for our benefit, so that we can share His holiness. No discipline seems enjoyable at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it yields the fruit of peace and righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” (HCSB)

The author of Hebrews is comparing and contrasting the discipline of earthly fathers and our heavenly Father. The earthly father disciplines according to what “seems good.” (That which will change our **behavior**) God disciplines us for our benefit, that we may share in His holiness. That which will change our **heart**) The Greek word translated “benefit or good” is a word which means “to bring together.” While an earthly father’s discipline brings respect, God’s discipline brings us together with Him. I may respect my father, but never be close to him. God does not allow for that option. His discipline is intended to help us understand Him and participate in His Holiness. Like all discipline, God’s version is not “fun,” but it leads us to a right way of life.

When we discipline our children, our ultimate goal should be a changed heart.

At the same time, “we cannot allow children to ignore their sinful behavior. But neither should we destroy their self-esteem. We must maintain a healthy balance. A proper teaching on sin should include the following five elements:

1. It should teach **God’s standards** of holy living. (Galatians 5:19-26)
2. It should show a child how we all **fall short** of these standards. (Romans 3:23)
3. It should show a child how valuable he is to God and distinguish between one’s being a **sinner** and being a **worthless person**. (1 Corinthians 1:1-9)
4. It should lead the child to **Christ**, the answer to his sin. (John 3:16; 1:12)
5. It should encourage the child to be obedient out of the motivation of **love**, not of **guilt**. (Ephesians 5:1, 2; 1 John 4:11-18)

“Help! I’m a Parent,” Dr. Bruce Narramore, Zondervan Publishing, 1972, pgs. 126-127

Building a Biblical self-image in your child is the process of helping them develop their sense of self based on God's word. It is helping them to resist the vacillating messages of culture and the opinions of others, and focus on the reality of God's design and the exciting purpose for which they were created.