

Finding the Swan in You . . .

Do you go through life fearing what others think?

Some people look in the mirror and see The Ugly Duckling, a very unhappy little bird in the child's fairy tale. He felt miserably rejected by all the barnyard fowls because of his unattractive looks and awkwardness.¹ Sadly, many attractive people suffer from self-rejection . . . they feel they possess little personal value. Part of the blame can be placed on poor vision. Like the duckling who didn't see a beautiful swan inside, they look to external features for self-acceptance, failing to see their inner God-given worth.

*"The LORD sees not as man sees:
man looks on the outward appearance,
but the LORD looks on the heart."
(1 Samuel 16:7)*

Q: "Is it appropriate to have self-esteem?"

Self-esteem has two different meanings.

The first is an objective regard of your value. This esteem is based on humility that is rooted in the recognition of your sin and your need for the Savior and on the fact that Christ established your worth by dying for you.

*"This is the one to whom I will look:
he who is humble and contrite in spirit
and trembles at my word."
(Isaiah 66:2)*

The second kind of self-esteem is an exaggerated regard of your value. This arrogant self-esteem is rooted in pride. The Bible presents two character traits in sharp contrast to one another.

*"God opposes the proud
but gives grace to the humble."
(1 Peter 5:5)*

Rejection from Others

Many adults are unaware that childhood criticisms and accusations often cause serious problems later in life. Is your self-worth based on negative childhood experiences, or have you learned to see yourself through the eyes of God?

- Parents and Authority Figures
 - overly critical
 - too permissive
- Siblings and Peers
 - discouraging
 - competitive
- Society
 - materialistic
 - academic or physical limitations

- **Myth:** “Because of the way I’ve been treated, I can never feel competent.”

Truth: Since people fail people, God never intended your sufficiency to come from other people. As you continue to yield your life to the Lord, your competency, your sufficiency, will come from Him.

“Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God.”
(2 Corinthians 3:5)

Rejection from Ourselves

Comparing ourselves with others and falling short in . . . *appearance—ability—accomplishments—affluence*

Setting up unrealistic standards and expectations for ourselves

Overgeneralizing negatives: “I’ve failed—that makes me a failure.”

Absorbing and magnifying the sympathy of others

Thinking it is spiritual to feel inferior to others

Harboring false guilt

- **Myth:** “I can’t seem to stop comparing myself to others.”

Truth: God says one who compares himself to others is unwise.

Key Verse to Memorize

“Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?”
(Matthew 6:26)

Key Passage to Read and Reread

Psalm 139

Seven Steps to Self-Acceptance

Do you know some people who have unusual names for their cars? Many grow so fond of their vehicles—even with all their idiosyncrasies—that they give them distinctive or humorous names: Alfred, Gunner, MayBelle, Rover. Ironically, the more time spent with their cars—despite all the dents and scratches—the more attached they feel. They love their cars and accept their limitations. What do you need to accept?

1. I accept God’s Word that I was created in His image. (Genesis 1:27)
2. I accept myself as acceptable to Christ. (Romans 15:7)
3. I accept what I cannot change about myself. (Romans 9:20–21)
4. I accept the fact that I will make mistakes. (Philippians 3:12–14)
5. I accept criticism and the responsibility for failure. (Psalm 32:5)
6. I accept the fact that I will not be liked or loved by everyone. (John 15:18, 20)
7. I accept the unchangeable circumstances in my life. (Romans 8:28)

“I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”
(Philippians 1:6)

A Vision for God-Given Worth

To fully realize how worthy you are, embrace the following:

Work on eliminating negative attitudes and beliefs.
(Philippians 4:8)

Obtain a scriptural understanding of having love for yourself. (Galatians 5:14)

Refuse to compare yourself with others.
(2 Corinthians 10:12)

Thank God for His unconditional love for you.
(Psalm 48:9)

Hope in God's promise to mold you to be like Christ. (Romans 8:29)

Yield your talents and abilities to helping others.
(Romans 12:6–8)

*“Walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.”
(Ephesians 4:1)*

Related Topics . . .

- Codependency:
Moving from Bondage to Balance
- Identity: Who Are You?
Do You Know Who You Really Are?
- Perfectionism:
The Push to Perform
- Purpose in Life:
Pinpointing Your Priorities
- Success through Failure:
From Stumbling Stones to Stepping Stones

1. Hans Christian Andersen, *The Ugly Duckling* (1844); http://hca.gilead.org.il/ugly_duc.html.

HOPE FOR THE HEART's *Biblical Counseling Library Quick Reference* provides immediate, concise, biblical truths for today's problems.

For more comprehensive help, refer to our *Biblical Counseling Keys . . .*

Self-Worth:

Discerning Your God-Given Value

If you would like more information, call 1-800-488-HOPE (4673) or visit www.hopefortheheart.org.

For prayer encouragement and biblical counsel call 1-866-570-HOPE (4673).



HOPE
for the Heart

*Together . . . Changing Minds.
Changing Hearts. Changing Lives.*

P.O. Box 7, Dallas, TX 75221

Scripture taken from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*.
Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.