

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this teaching series you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Two teachers will teach from the Bible what is a disciple of Jesus Christ. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. Today's teaching is in the area of character building. In discipleship training we learn to know Jesus Christ and to fellowship with Jesus Christ, to grow to maturity in Jesus Christ and to serve Jesus Christ. A very important area of Christian maturity is Christian character. Today's teaching is: **A DISCIPLE DEVELOPS THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER OF SELF-ESTEEM**.

(S) **POINT 1. SELF-ESTEEM IS WHAT PEOPLE THINK OF THEMSELVES**

"Self-esteem" is *the estimation of your own value*. It is the positive thoughts and feelings you have about yourself. It is the way you look at yourself. God wants you to have a positive self-esteem. However, in the world, many people have a wrong self-esteem. They either think too small about themselves or they think too big about themselves. People who think too small about themselves say, "I don't like myself." or "My life has no value." But people who think too big about themselves say, "I don't like other people." or "I think other people are useless." Ask yourself the question right now, "How valuable do you regard yourself?" "Do you feel that your life has a purpose or not?" Let us look at the Bible and discover what it teaches about self-esteem.

(T) **POINT 2. A HEALTHY SELF-ESTEEM FOCUSSUS ON GOD OR ON JESUS CHRIST**

First, we will show you how many people develop a wrong self-esteem. Thereafter, we will show you how you can develop a positive self-esteem.

When people develop a wrong self-esteem, it usually begins by *comparing themselves with other people*. When you compare yourself to another person, you take three steps downwards to develop a negative self-esteem. We will describe these three steps downwards. Then in step four, we will explain how you can change. And finally in three more steps, we will teach how you can develop a positive self-esteem.

(S) **Step 1. I compare myself to another person.**

You and I meet other people every day. Almost automatically we compare ourselves with that person. We compare ourselves to their outward looks, their status or position in society, and their abilities and skills. In our modern materialistic society we also compare how much money we can make and how much possessions we can gather. We compare outward things, like the clothes we wear, the way we do our hair, how our faces and bodies look like and the way we behave, talk and walk. We also compare our abilities, like how much we have studied and which degrees and diplomas we have gained; how well we socialise and which interesting things we can talk about; or how strong we are and how many activities we are engaged in.

However, when we meet other people and compare ourselves to them, then something happens inside our thoughts and feelings. We get negative thoughts and feelings, either about ourselves or about the other person. We either feel inferior and less than the other person or we feel superior and better than the other person. Let us consider some of these negative thoughts and feelings we get when we compare ourselves to another person.

(T) **If we think that we are less than the other person**, then we get the following inferior thoughts and feelings.

When we compare ourselves to the other person's outward appearance, then we get negative thoughts and feelings about how we are created. We may say things like, "I don't like myself." "I am dissatisfied in the way God has made me. I don't like my big nose or flat feet.

When we focus on the other person's possessions and opportunities, then we get negative thoughts and feelings about our possessions and opportunities. We may say things like, "I feel dissatisfied with the little possessions I have." "I don't like myself in these clothes, because they look too plain." "Why do I have these parents and not more rich parents?"

When we focus on the other person's abilities, then we get negative thoughts and feelings about our own abilities. Then we may say things like, "I don't have an educational diploma and I feel stupid." "I cannot cook a meal." "I am not good at doing this."

And when we focus on the other person's social skills, then we get negative thoughts and feelings about our own social skills. We may say things like, "I don't know how to start a conversation" "I am not a good host." We avoid people, because we are afraid that they will reject or hurt us. All these above thoughts and feelings are examples of a low self-esteem.

(S) **If we think that we are better than the other person**, then we get the opposite kind of negative thoughts and feelings. When we compare ourselves to the other person's outward appearance, then we get negative thoughts and feelings about how the other person looks. We may say things like, "I don't like this person." "I am much more beautiful than her" "She is ugly". We tend to be proud and vain and like all other people to look at us.

When we focus on the other person's possessions, we get negative thoughts and feelings about his possessions. We look down upon his old-fashioned clothes and we may say, "He has no taste in the way he dresses." We belittle his small house and the fact that he makes so little money. At the same time, we show off our wealth and brag about our success in business.

When we focus on the other person's abilities, then we get negative thoughts and feelings about his abilities. We may make sarcastic remarks or criticise him. We say things like, "He is hopeless and useless. He can't do anything!" We laugh when he tries and fails.

When we focus on the other person's social skills, then we get negative thoughts and feelings about his social skills. We may make sneering remarks like, "He can't even tell a joke!" "She can only talk about her children." We become arrogant and domineering in every group of people. All these above thoughts and feelings are examples of a wrong self-esteem.

(T) With all such kind of negative thoughts and feelings, I dislike myself or I dislike the other person. I am dissatisfied how God made me or I am proud about my looks. I am jealous about the other's possessions or I brag about my wealth. I feel ashamed of my poverty or I show off my wealth. I fear what the other person might think of me or I don't care what he thinks of me. I'm critical of my own shortcomings and put myself down or I am critical of the other person's shortcomings and put him down. I despise my failures or I gloat over the other person's failures. I avoid the other person, because I am afraid that he will reject and hurt me or I am insensitive and tactless and don't care if I reject and hurt the other person. I try to please the other person, so that he will accept me or I despise the other person and expect that he should please me. There are so many different ways in which we react when we meet another person and compare ourselves to that person.

(S) Step 2. I become worse every time I meet this person.

When we meet a person once, we already get negative thoughts and feelings about ourselves or about the other person. We either feel insecure, fearful and worthless or we feel over-confident, arrogant and proud.

The next time we meet that same person we get the same negative thoughts and feelings. Only this time they are stronger. Every time we meet this same person, our negative thoughts and feelings become stronger and stronger. We either feel more and more insecure, fearful and worthless or more and more confident, arrogant and proud. We cover more before people and become more and more a man-pleaser. Or we become more and more overbearing and authoritarian. Because we continue to compare ourselves to the other person and focus on him, our negative thoughts and feelings go from bad to worse.

(T) Step 3. My character becomes exactly like I think and feel.

Galatians 6:7-8 says, "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life."

What principle develops our character? What causes our personality and character to become what we are? Galatians 6:7-8 teaches us that the principle is: "*You reap what you sow.*" *When I continually sow certain thoughts, feelings and behaviour-patterns in my life, then I will reap that kind of character!*

On the one hand, if I continually sow inferior thoughts, feelings and behaviour-patterns, I will reap inferior attitudes. If I continually sow fear, I will become a fearful person. If I continually sow the thought that I am worthless, I will become worthless. I will despise myself and fear other people. I will become a person with a low self-esteem.

On the other hand, if I continually sow superior thoughts, feelings and behaviour-patterns, I will reap superior attitudes. If I continually sow pride and arrogance, I will become a proud and arrogant person. If I continually sow insensitive words, I will become a tactless and obnoxious character. I will despise and dominate other people. I will become a person with a wrong or inflated self-esteem.

(S) Step 4. I change my focus.

The things we say and do when we have a low self-esteem or an inflated self-esteem are wrong and destructive. Attitudes like jealousy and pride, speech like criticism and insensitive judgement, behaviour like pleasing others for the wrong reasons and authoritarian dominance of others are called "sins" in the Bible. Despising yourself or others, rejecting yourself or others and hurting yourself or others are not pleasing to God. We not only do sins, but *our character has become sinful*. We have reaped what we have sowed.

How do these things develop? They develop because we focus on another human person and compare ourselves to him! Our eyes are focused on how he looks and what clothes he wears. Our mind is focused on his social and intellectual abilities. Our hearts is focused on everything he has and we lack. A negative character develops, because *we focus on the wrong things*. Remember, "You reap what you sow!" *When you sow sinful thoughts, feelings and behaviour, then you will reap a sinful character!*

How can I change from the wrong focus to the right focus? What must I do? 1 John 1:8-9 says, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." When I confess my sin and ask Christ to cleanse me, then he will forgive me and cleanse me. As soon as I confess my sins, Christ sets me free from the wrong focus. He sets me free to have a new focus in my life.

The following three steps teach how we can develop a character with a healthy self-esteem.

(T) Step 5. I concentrate on Jesus Christ and no more on the world.

According to the Bible, what should our focus be? Colossians 3:1-4,23-24 says, "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life,

appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.” “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”

My focus should be “Jesus Christ”. The Bible says that I must stop to focus on people and things on earth and instead focus on Jesus Christ in heaven. I must begin to live and work for Jesus Christ, because I know that my future destiny is to appear with Jesus Christ in glory and to receive the eternal kingdom as an inheritance.

Every time we meet another person, we must decide not to compare ourselves to this person and so become focused on this person. If we do, we should confess immediately to Jesus Christ and again focus on Jesus Christ.

(S) Step 6. I gain self-esteem by growing in Jesus Christ.

There are three disciplines that will help us to grow in a healthy and positive self-esteem.

The first discipline is to believe God’s evaluation about yourself and about your life. Isaiah 43:4 says, “Since you are precious and honoured in my sight and because I love you, I will give men in exchange for you, and people in exchange for your life.” God’s evaluation of you is that you are very valuable for God. God honours you and loves you. And Jeremiah 29:11 says, “For I know the plans I have for you”, declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” God’s evaluation of your future is that he has a wonderful plan for your life! A plan that will make your life meaningful and give you hope! God created you and you are precious for him and your life is meaningful for him. When you believe what God says about you and your life, then your evaluation of yourself will change positively.

The second discipline is to grow to have a secure relationship of love with Christ and to do meaningful service for Christ. Colossians 2:6-7 says, “So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, overflowing with thankfulness.” By growing to maturity in Jesus Christ, your evaluation of yourself will change positively.

The third discipline is to meet regularly with other believers and stimulate one another to love and good works.

Hebrews 10:24-25 says, “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” By regularly meeting with other Christians to build one another up, your evaluation of yourself will change positively.

(T) Step 7. My character becomes more and more Christlike.

2 Corinthians 3:18 says, “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” When I turn the mirror of my soul upwards to look at Jesus Christ and to reflect Jesus Christ, then I will change and become more and more like Jesus Christ.

And Ephesians 5:1-2 says, “Be imitators of God, therefore as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” By continuing to reflect Jesus Christ and to imitate Jesus Christ, I am continually changed and become more and more like Jesus Christ. By imitating the love of Jesus Christ, I too will begin to live a life of love as he does.

(S) Conclusion. Do not any longer compare yourself to other persons on earth, but begin to focus on Jesus Christ in heaven! Then you will develop a very attractive character. You will develop a healthy and positive self-esteem and you will no longer show the negative and sinful attitudes that go together with comparing yourself to another person. Ask the Lord to give you his grace again and again, so that you may be able to do this.

(T) POINT 6. ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. Whenever you feel insecure and unworthy, repeat God’s evaluation of you: “I am precious in God’s eyes. God has a meaningful plan for my life.” And whenever you meet a person, ask yourself, “What is God doing in this person and how can I help?”

Second. See the workbooks “Go and make disciples” and Internet on www. etc.

Third. Listen on short wave radio every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY to “Discipleship training on the air”.