

SESSION 1.6 – The Respected Self

Objectives:

- To stress the importance of participants to respect themselves
- To discuss the issues connected with a proper understanding of self-respect
- To understanding the characteristics of a self-respecting person
- To make the participants aware of the hidden danger of disrespectfulness in our eagerness to help and serve others

Introduction:

As humans, all of us want to be respected for who we really are. But sometimes, we are our own worst enemies. We may find it hard to accept certain things about ourselves and this may result in a loss of self-respect. A loss of self-respect often also results in the loss of self-dignity, esteem and worth. We may find it very difficult to function to the best of our ability. And yet, on the other hand, doesn't indulging in respecting self amount to a preoccupation with self and leads to pride which is against the Christian norm of humility? Are we not told to respect others? And yet sometimes the very things we do to help others regain their self-respect actually robs them of their dignity. How do we handle such delicate matters?

Scripture Passage: Luke 18:9-14

9 He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: ¹⁰Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax-collector. ¹¹The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, "God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax-collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income." ¹³But the tax-collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.'

Discussion Questions:

1. Even though this passage is more apt for a lesson on humility, it can be applied to self-respect. Of the two men in the parable, who had more self-respect? Why?
2. Jesus often told his disciples to lose their life for the sake of the Gospel. Was Jesus advocating a teaching that puts others first to the detriment of self? Does humbling oneself amount to loss of self-respect?
3. What do you understand by self-respect? Why is it important to respect oneself and how can you acquire self-respect?
4. What must you do to maintain self-respect without being labeled

- “proud” and “arrogant”?
5. How can you avoid disrespecting others in your service and ministry to them? When you help the poor and the disadvantaged, are you not disrespecting them by disregarding their dignity?

Reflection:

Our culture is concerned with matters of self-esteem. Self-respect, on the other hand, may hold the key to achieving the peace of mind we seek. The two concepts seem very similar but the differences between them are crucial. To esteem anything is to evaluate it positively and hold it in high regard, but evaluation gets us into trouble because while we sometimes win, we also sometimes lose. To respect something, on the other hand, is to accept it.

The person with self-respect simply likes her- or himself. This self-respect is not contingent on success because there are always failures to contend with. Neither is it a result of comparing ourselves with others because there is always someone better. These are tactics usually employed to increase self-esteem. Self-respect, however, is a given. We simply like ourselves or we don't. With self-respect, we like ourselves because of who we are and not because of what we can or cannot do.

Consider an interesting test of self-respect. If someone compliments us, what is our reaction? If we are very pleased, it would suggest a certain amount of uncertainty about our skill. Imagine that somebody whose opinion we respect told us that we were great at spelling three-letter words, or that our pronunciation of vowels was wonderful. Chances are we would not be moved. We know we can do it in the first case, and we don't care in the second. Because we were not evaluating ourselves, the compliment was unimportant. The more instances in which we don't "take the compliment," the less vulnerable we become to evaluation and insult.

Compared to those with high self-esteem who are still caught in an evaluative framework, those with self-respect are less prone to blame, guilt, regret, lies, secrets and stress.