

Topic	Godly Self Esteem
Reference	John 2:23, 3:21 and 4:4-27
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Self-esteem is a word which is so crucial to our Christian walk but very-very often we just don't pay enough attention to this. It is critical to our spiritual formation and discipleship. The dictionary meaning is 'confidence in one's own worth or abilities; self-respect, pride and dignity'. We are not looking just at self-esteem; we are looking at Godly self-esteem.

Today we are going to look at two characters;

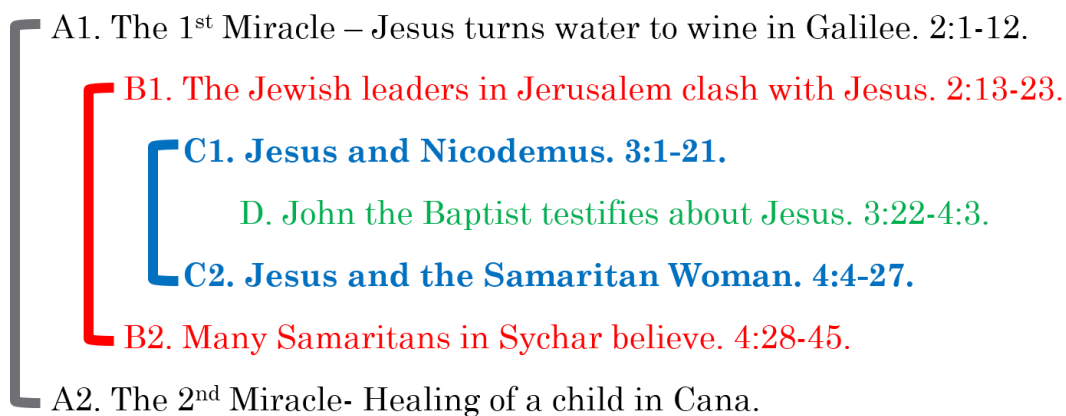
- Samaritan woman who had very **low** self-esteem
- Nicodemus who had very **high** self-esteem

We are going to look at the difference between the two.

- Self-esteem and Kingdom Values.
- Self-esteem and our true identity.
- Self-esteem and truth that transforms.

The gospel of John, truth is the key theme in the Gospel of John. In the early church, you did not exegete a text, you read them all through and John structured the text so that the two would be read side by side and here is how it is done.

Literary Structure of John 2-4



There are two miracles A1 and A2, Galilee and Cana. Between these two bookends of two miracles you move to B1 and B2 there is a meeting of two groups of people, one a Jew and one a Samaritan. C1 and C2 and it then goes down from a group of people to a particular Jew and in C2 a particular Samaritan. So the text is very carefully structured. John loves to do this, so there is an intention here to read the two side by side and then in the middle there is a filler where John the Baptist comes about.

Here is for the evidence

- Both are private conversations Jesus has with an individual. Because normally when Jesus teaches there will be Pharisees as a crowd but these are both private, not one person is around.
- Both misunderstand Jesus and take him literally in the beginning and then there is a progression.
- Both discussions center around the work of the Holy Spirit. John chapter 3 is very clear, those born of the Holy Spirit. In chapter 4, Holy Spirit is read as streams of living water that swells from within. So there is the Holy Spirit there again.
- Both discussions involve the promise of eternal life.
- Both discussions are paired with their respective communities.

So if you want to appreciate the text, you read the two side by side and you compare. Why, because more interestingly than the similarities are the contrast.

Nicodemus, a Jew	Samaritan Woman
He seeks Jesus at night . We mentioned before in the gospel of John night is the motive. It is a sign because John talks very heavily about light and darkness from chapter 1 all the way through. So when he says Nicodemus comes at night, he is giving you a symbol.	Jesus seeks her out at day . That's deliberate. So you contrast night and day and that frames the conversation.
He is a Jew.	She is a Samaritan.
Male.	Female
He is named.	She is not named.

He knows Jesus is from God. He starts off the conversation by saying, we know you are from God.	She doesn't know who Jesus is.
He comes representing others. He is a power broker, like politics. He comes representing powerful people. The text opens up with us, why, we find out later he is part of the ruling council.	She is an outcast. The text tells us that she comes alone to the well. No woman as it was then, as it is now in poorer countries, do not go to the well alone. You go in a group for security.
He is seen as righteous. He was a Pharisee, morally upright.	She is seen as morally questionable. She had five marriages and is living in with a man.
He is highly educated. In fact, Jesus calls him, you are Israel's teacher. So this guy got all the credentials.	She is uneducated.

John sets you up to see this two very belatedly. That's why the two chapters are put and match set by side and you look at this two Nicodemus, you can understand why he has high self-esteem. He has got the whole package. She is at the bottom of the pit and this is how the story then moves. John sets you up and then John very cleverly crafts the story this way.

He becomes skeptical. He says how can I man enter the womb. Jesus explains again and he says, how can this be. He doesn't get it, very intelligent man, doesn't get it.	She progresses in her understanding. She starts of by saying sir, then she calls him prophet and then at the end of it she says, the Messiah. She is not so stupid.
He gradually disappears from the discussion.	She gradually shifts to active discussion.
He does not believe.	She believes.
Story ends with no response from Nicodemus.	Story ends with her sharing the good news.

To be fair to Nicodemus later on we find when he buries Jesus and he stands against the council but at this point of writing the chapter ends, he does not believe, she believes and Jesus does something he doesn't do before. Jesus reveals himself to her that I am the messiah.

1. Self-Esteem & Kingdom Values:

There is a movement. The man who had very high self-esteem, who had everything didn't get it. The woman who was considered trash in society got it. So let's get the basis of self-esteem first and we see these similar stories with the prodigal son with Lazarus and the rich man. We see kingdom values in this. Those of us who think we have got it mate, because your business is doing well, your bank account is very big, the children are all educated, you had a good life, you are not be careful you are like the rich man and Lazarus is a beggar but Lazarus is exalted, he is not. Here is a second thing for all of you who feel life has given you a bad deal. Jesus says,

Matthew 19:30 But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.

In the end God is not concerned so much whether you have high self-esteem or low self-esteem, God's concern is whether you know him.

In the kingdom of God, salvation comes from places we do not see and we do not expect. Salvation comes from unlikely sources. This is self-esteem. When the God that is so powerful, would allow himself to be humiliated to the worse level, because of his love for us, so take courage, those of you who are struggling with self-esteem issues. In the kingdom of God, the values are different. Here is a warning to all of us who think our lives are good, be careful for that pride will cause you to fall.

2. Self-Esteem & Our True Identity

The key issue with self-esteem is an understanding of identity. Now we all say we are Christians, we are the sons and daughters of God, we use all the right rhetoric but it doesn't go into our heart. There are three reasons, because it competes with three things. The first which is the most obvious is our identity is coming from one, which is really from comparing with others. No matter how you try to avoid this, if you say you don't struggle with this you are lying to yourself. It opens up in chapter 4 when Jesus asked the Samaritan woman for a drink she says, *you are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink? (4:9)*

I am right at the bottom, you are up. There is a comparison, it is right in there. The story of the temptation of Jesus is quite interesting because the devils tempts Jesus. We find it in Luke 4 with three temptations. The first is

- *"If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."*

The devil is saying that **you are what you do** because you got talent. That talent is your identity. But Jesus answered

Jesus answered, *"It is written; Man does not live on bread alone."* Luke 4:4

Jesus is saying, one day you can be a hero, the next day you are a zero. If we put our identity into everything that our hands have built, we will overstep ourselves.

Here is the second one which the devil throws across.

- *"I will give you all their authority and splendor"*

He takes Jesus to the top of the hill, shows him everything and says, all of this I will give it to you, you just need to bow down to me. The devil is telling Jesus; I am what I have. I have a good marriage, I have three children, I have a mom and dad that loves me, I have friends that's my identity. Society impacts you in a lot of ways, you are not good enough, you are not pretty enough, you are not sporty enough. What do you have, you have nothing and Jesus replies this

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.' Luke 4:8

You don't worship these things. It is very much tied to the first one. But if you pause and stop and if you sit there and say, my life I don't feel very secure and you list down why you do feel very secure, I bet you most of your reasons will fall into these first two. That you are what you do and you are what you have and scripture is telling us, who is whispering that in your ear. It is the devil. That's what the text is telling you and here is the last one which I think is the biggest clincher because it is the longest one and wraps up the entire section. The devil tells Jesus now

- *"If you are the Son of God, he said, throw yourself down from here."*

Jesus answered, "It says: Do not put the Lord your God to the test."

This is what it is saying, I am what others think of me. How do we tie that together. One of the worst things about Chinese culture is family pressure. For us we are never good enough for our parents, not good enough in office, not good enough amongst our siblings, everyone else around us is doing better than me. When Jesus said, do not put the Lord God to test, he is referring to a case in the book of Exodus in the place where Moses name as Masa, because what happen with Israelites is they have crossed the red sea, they have just seen what God has done and they say, wow and then they got thirsty and basically in simple English they told Moses, where is your God. If God is there, he should give us water and Moses therefore says, this place is called Masa because they had tested God by saying is God really with us.

What identity is telling us is this, that either who I am as a human being is determined by what I have, what I can do.

Number 2 is what others think of me and in what the Bible is telling you, in all of this you are putting God to the test because it shows you have no faith. You expect God to be Santa Claus. In the end it really doesn't matter whether you got high-esteem or self-esteem because the high esteem guy says things,

- I am true to myself.
- I have confidence because I am better than others.
- I decide what I want in life and I go for it.
- God is guiding my life because I am successful in eyes of the world.

We are putting God as a supplement, you are king in your life. The ungodly self-esteem says

- I let others dictate who I should be.
- I have no confidence because I am worse than others.
- I am lost to what I really want in my life.
- God is not guiding my life because I am unsuccessful in eyes of the world.

You look at both, they are both as far as God is concerned saying the same thing and this is not godly self-esteem. Now we are going to find out how we can pull out Godly self-esteem. Let me give you a way of looking at this. We talked about comparing yourself. Scripture tells you, there are only two ways you compare yourself and this was very life changing for me.

A. Identity From Comparing With Others

The first, you don't compare yourself with people around you, whether they are prettier than you, better than you, smarter than you, cleverer than you. You don't compare yourself whether you have more money, whether you lost your job. You compare yourself firstly with only one thing and this is very clearly in the Book of Ephesians, **with who you were yesterday**. Because yesterday you were your old self and you are moving in your new self. That's the only thing you compare yourself with. How do I know how to move forward?

God has given you a choice. You decide in his sovereign will by the Bible, by prayer who you want to be. You want to be a loser; you will be a loser. You want to say, my life is very bad, nothing going to change you will be that. Joel Osteen said, what follows the I am in many ways to be prophetic. You say I am stupid; you will be stupid. But if you say I will, I will aspire Godliness, I will aspire servanthood, I will aspire to walk with you Lord and I will do that in my work, I will do that in personal, I will do that in church, I will do that, then you move into Godly self-esteem.

B. Identity affected by past hurts and experiences.

We call this the wall, every time you want to do something, you think of something that happened in the past, it triggers you and then you don't move forward and we all have this. A lot of this comes when we were young and the purpose of this series of message is for us to

may be come to terms with your past hurts. Some of us have darkness inside us which really break us. The moment we want to move forward; the devil just puts this in front of us.

C. Identity Trapped in Toxic Relationships:

"...you have had 5 husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. " (4:17b)

You had 5 and you still haven't learned and you still have a man, you are in bondage and lot of us here are much more bigger bondages then we care to admit. The Samaritan woman suffers from a need to be accepted. So she moves from one husband to another husband, she is thirsty that's what the text is saying.

We have things we hold on to and most of the times these are things that define us. There are relationships we have either with people that damage us, there are relationships we have in church ministries that define us, there are relationships we have with habits, they define us and you say I can't let go, but what you are doing is trapping you and God is saying, let go, but It is not easy to let go.

The first way out of toxic relationships. The theory is my identity isn't from what I do, what I have from comparison with others, my identity isn't formed because of bad things that happen to me. My identity isn't formed by bad relationships that suppress me, my identity is forged and formed in my relationship with Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

2-Cor 5:17 therefore if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone, the new is here!

3. Self-Esteem and Truth That Transforms

We are going to look at the conversations between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. Truth that transforms, now if you know the gospel of John enough truth is the key element in the gospel. It occurs much more than the three other gospels. The first is Jesus goes out the way to engage her. He went across territory to psyche her, in the middle of nowhere to meet this woman. It shows you the heart of God. He didn't go to meet the king, he didn't go to meet an important person, God went to meet a woman who was broken. That's very important. Jesus sees beyond her status, her gender. Here is a key thing, he gives her self-esteem.

Jesus asked from her a drink and he talks with her. He becomes her friend, but that's not enough, he takes this to another level. He exposes her sin but here is the key thing, he does not focus on the flaws and failures. There is a truth that builds you up and there is a truth that tears you down and here is the problem in my view between the polarity between the charismatic church and the evangelical church. One, over simplifies sin that's the charismatic church. It waters it down and they make everything like into pop psychology, because it is all about feel good. It is about meeting a need. The evangelical church overblows sin, simplifies the complexities of life.

Jesus exposes her sin, but doesn't condemn her. The spotlight effect freezes you but Jesus doesn't do that. Jesus exposes her sin and she likes most of us try to shifts away the discussion from her sin, because she is uncomfortable. Here is something about us,

God is in the business of making you uncomfortable, but God is not in the business of making you dwell in an uncomfortableness. She shifts the discussion to a controversial discussion. She says, let's not talk about me, I am very boring. Let's talk about, you Jews worship in Jerusalem, we worship in Mount Gerizim because she wants to get into the controversy to shift attention away. What Jesus does next is very telling because here is how we help the hurting. Jesus engages her, Jesus gives her space and this is so important for us. Jesus is giving her dignity; Jesus is giving her respect. Jesus knows that if he continues on digging up this five husband thing, she is going to break. There is a lesson for all of us. Jesus takes the discussion of worship and links it back to her self-esteem issue. That to me was very-very telling. How do we know that, because at the end of the discussion, the woman goes back to her sins. Jesus told her, you are thirsty. The reason why you are moving from husband to husband to husband, is you are looking for acceptance and Jesus then tells her two very important things.

Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. 4:23

This is the word that triggers her. Because she knew this man came all the way, out of nowhere a Jew and sought her out and says give me water. She knows and here is the word, they are the kind of worshippers the father seeks. God is looking out for us, God is searching out for us, and God is telling you two things. She begins to see herself the way God sees her.

She saw two things, worship, you don't need to go to Mount Gerizim or Jerusalem, I am going to be crucified soon, you can come to me anytime. God is not concerned about the form; God is concerned about the heart. God is concerned on your attitude towards him.

Secondly, it is truth and later on in chapter 8 he tells you with regard to sin, truth shall set you free. Free from this longing, this sinful longing. What Jesus is telling her is, you don't need to move from man to man to man to find acceptance. You don't need to move from this to that, you come to me and I will give you living waters and it will well up from inside, you come to me because I am spirit and I am everywhere and I have your heart and you come to me with that same heart and that truth will set you free. She said yes, you are right but when Messiah comes he will reveal, because she doesn't know who he is and then Jesus says something he has not done in 4 chapters, I am that messiah and she begins to change. Now how do we know that?

Because the chapter ends with a very simple symbolism. She drops her water and she runs off to tell others. That symbolism is telling me, yes that is water that's what I need, that's my bad habit, that's the thing I desire but I found something better, I can't wait to tell everyone else and when she goes out to tell everyone else, she says come and see the man who has told me

everything I have done. She had a big true from shame. She is a woman who startled off hiding herself from God, now she is going to the world and she says I have five husbands, so I am a sinner, I am going to change. Don't judge me because of that. It is a very powerful illustration.

Sheila Wash was a Christian singer. She lived like a lot of us, half lies, went through depression and in the end she says

All my guilt is gone! What a powerful statement. You can spend your whole life longing to go back and change a moment or decision, but you can't change the past. What God offers you is grace and forgiveness in the present and hope for the future.

Look up before you look inside. In the end both stories say the same thing. John 3:16 God so loved that he gave his one and only son for whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

The text is telling me and you, you can change. The Samaritan woman had an encounter with God and it moved to change.