

Jacob's Well



Lesson Title: Mental Health—Self-esteem



Key Concept: Brokenness is the reason for many mental health struggles that we were not created to deal with. Self-esteem is measured by our achievements and accomplishments, but Christ-esteem is measured by our relationship with him.



Scriptures:

¹² The angel of the Lord appeared and said unto him, “The Lord is with you, courageous warrior!” ¹³ Gideon said to him, “Pardon me.”
(Judges 6: 12–13 *New English Translation*)

⁴ If someone thinks he has good reasons to put confidence in human credentials, I have more . . . ⁵ from the people of Israel and the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews. I lived according to the law as a Pharisee. . . ⁶ According to the righteousness stipulated in the law I was blameless.
(Philippians 3:4–6 *New English Translation*)

Context Scriptures: Judges 6–8; Philippians 3



Lesson Thoughts:

Self-esteem refers to a person’s beliefs about their capabilities, achievements, and perceived success in life. Some people have low self-esteem, while others have high self-esteem. Most frequently, people refer to low self-esteem, where individuals experience feelings of inadequacy, worthlessness, and a lack of self-confidence.

A biblical character who epitomizes these characteristics is Gideon. When the Lord visited Gideon and called him a “courageous warrior,” Gideon replied, “Pardon me.” He did not see in himself what the Lord saw in him. He argued with the Lord that his clan was the weakest in all of Israel and he was the youngest in his entire household. Gideon’s low self-esteem was evident as he persistently resisted the Lord’s request to free Israel from the Midianites. In his

Jacob's Well

insecurity, Gideon even demanded signs to demonstrate the Lord's support of the mission to deliver Israel. It was not until Gideon overheard an enemy conversation about his upcoming victory that he finally started trusting God's opinion of him.

In contrast to Gideon, Paul displays high self-esteem. This is evident in his writings, particularly in his letter to the Philippians, where he outlines his many achievements. He received the equivalent of a Ph.D. in theology, having studied under one of the greatest Hebrew teachers. His lineage traced back to the tribe of Benjamin, the tribe of Israel's first king—a true Hebrew of Hebrews. Paul boldly claimed that, regarding the law, he was “blameless.” He was overqualified for any role he might serve. Yet in his letter to the Philippians Paul stated that all his accomplishments, the foundation of his high self-esteem, were “dung” in comparison to knowing Christ his Savior. Paul's identity in Christ was more important than anything else.

Both Paul, with his high self-esteem, and Gideon, with his low self-esteem, were used by God to fulfill his plans. Whether we struggle with low self-esteem or take pride in high self-esteem, both become insignificant in light of knowing Christ, who cultivates in us a Christ-esteem. Christ-esteem is a Christ-centered identity that does not elevate or diminish, but transforms. It removes self from the center and enthrones Christ in its place. Our value does not come from our capabilities, achievements, successes, or lack thereof. Both low and pridefully high self-esteem reflect false perceptions of ourselves. Only through our relationship with Jesus can we replace these perceptions with true Christ-esteem.

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) How have you heard the term self-esteem used? What remedies are often suggested for low self-esteem?
- 2) What are characteristics of low self-esteem? What are characteristics of high self-esteem?
- 3) Which biblical character in this lesson do you identify with, and why?
- 4) What does Christ-esteem mean? How does that look in the real world?

Next Lesson: Trauma

Jacob's Well

Notes and Reflections

- 1) Read Judges 6 and the letter to the Philippians. Where do you feel you fall in your own self-esteem journey? Does your self-esteem come from God? If not, why?

- 2) A résumé shows your achievements and accomplishments. If God were to write a résumé for you from his perspective, what would it say?

Jacob's Well

Notes and Reflections, cont.