



## Overview

*On Sunday we continued our Series on 'Threats to Wholeness'. Steve followed Eric Hodgkinson's sermon on UNFORGIVENESS with an examination of SELF-IMAGE. He noted 10 things that he has learned about SELF-IMAGE over his years as a Christian and as a pastor.*



## Getting to Know You

When is the time in your life that you felt the best about yourself and who you were? What were the circumstances around that feeling? Tell others the story of what was going on in your life then and why you felt so good about who you were and what you were doing?



## Digging Deeper

1. Lots of Christians think that self-esteem is a negative word. They think that we should only esteem ourselves because of what God does for us, and not for who we are. To esteem ourselves is essentially pride or arrogance. What do you think? Do you think God loves us for who we are, or only because of what he does for us?
2. In a recent book about lies we believe about God, William Paul Young, (the author of The Shack) says that most of us believe that God loves us, but we don't believe God likes us. Do you agree with him? If so, why? If not, why not?
3. Here is the list of insights that Steve gave on Sunday morning. Pick one that resonates with you, and explain why it is significant for you.
  - Everyone has the same problem!
  - Not talking about the problem gives it all its power
  - The playing field is not level
  - I should stand with dignity because I am made in the image of God
  - There is no normal
  - There's a huge temptation to try and be more than God intended us to be
  - I can't let others determine how I feel about me
  - It's my responsibility to monitor unrealistic and accusatory self talk
  - Whatever we let in can guide how we think about ourselves
  - A timely comment can change someone's future
4. What difference does it make to your self esteem if you are a Christian? Can you think of any theological ideas or biblical verses that are particularly relevant to this issue? Tell others what they are, and how they apply.

5. It is one thing to believe certain things about how God views us, it is another thing to learn to live them – to genuinely believe that they are true. What tips have you found in your life to move the ideas about who you are in Christ from being a theoretical truth to being a lived reality?



### **Taking it Home**

One of the tools that God has given us to grow in how we see ourselves is the community that we're in. Society blasts us with such a negative self-concept and with such unattainable ideals that we as a church community need to counteract that by being incredibly encouraging and affirming to each other. The following is an exercise that youth groups often do, but adults rarely do – unfortunately. Initially it can seem corny and silly, but the words people hear through it can be incredibly sustaining. I encourage you to do it, even if it feels a bit forced and disingenuous at first.

Give everyone a sheet of paper and get them to write their name at the top of the piece of paper. Then everyone passes their paper to the person on their right. At the bottom of the sheet of paper, this new person will write an encouraging note about who the person whose name is at the top of the sheet of paper. It must be true, heartfelt, and affirming. No flippancy allowed! Then they fold up the bottom of the piece of paper so no one can read what they've written, and pass it on to the person on their right, who does the same thing. And so on. When the paper gets back to the person whose name is at the top, they can open it and read all the wonderful affirming comments that are written there. After this happens, people can share what is written on their paper if they want, but they don't have to.



### **Prayer**

Take some time to pray for each other in your group. Pray that we will see ourselves as God sees us, and that we will learn to love and like the person God made us to be.