

The Only Opinion That Matters

The human ego is fragile. It is human nature that we want to look good in the eyes of others. Actually, looking good isn't enough. We want to be the best. We are constantly comparing ourselves with others with the goal of being the best. It is pride, and in effect, is a form of boasting. C.S. Lewis wrote that "Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next person. We say that people are proud of being rich, or clever, or good-looking, but they are not. They are proud of being richer, or cleverer, or better-looking than others. If everyone else became equally rich, or clever, or good-looking there would be nothing to be proud about." Rev. Timothy Keller followed up with a quote of his own: "We are only proud of being more successful, more intelligent or more good-looking than the next person, and when we are in the presence of someone who is more successful, intelligent and good-looking than we are, we lose all pleasure in what we had. " It really wasn't a desire for pleasure, but of pride.



We talk often about self-esteem, with extremes often referred to as a superiority or inferiority complex. According to Keller, "a superiority complex and an inferiority complex are basically the same. The person with the superiority complex is overinflated and in danger of being deflated; the person with an inferiority complex is deflated already." The balloon that has been, or is in danger of being deflated, is in the hands of public opinion. Our ego is at stake.

Paul, the apostle, said he does not care what others think about him. Paul's identity was not based on what other people said about him. Paul also didn't want to set his own arbitrary standards, just to feel the sense of accomplishment. The temptation is to set low standards for ourselves and position ourselves as "judge," a role only appropriate for God. So, setting our own standards isn't the answer for high self-esteem. Paul, who was one of the most successful theologians to ever live, had a completely different perspective. Paul said in 1 Timothy, "*Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief (1 Timothy 1:15)*". Paul didn't allow his awareness of his shortcomings (sins) to stop him from doing the things he was called to do. How did he do that?

Rev. Keller used the term "a gospel-humble person" to describe Paul. It refers to a person whose ego is "not puffed up but filled up." Paul focused on the needs of others and put his own aside. He became "selfless" to his own needs. The gospel-humble person does not do things for self-satisfaction and does not seek recognition or affirmation from others. The gospel-humble person does not base his self-esteem on what others think, but what God thinks. The Lord is the only one who judges. "It is only His opinion that counts."

God said about Jesus, "*This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased (Matthew 3:17)*". In Romans 8:1 we read, "*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*" As people of God, we are adopted into God's family He could say the same thing about us. We don't need the approval of others. Therefore, as a child of God our identity is not based on our performance. God accepts us merely because of our faith. Then, because of our faith we want to serve Him. We are who we are because of "whose" we are. When we are "one with the Father" we will seek to do the will of God (see John 5:30).

Criticism from people doesn't matter. Jesus took the condemnation we deserve. He faced the trial that should be ours. "We simply need to ask God to accept us because of what the Lord Jesus has done." Therefore, "the only person whose opinion counts is God's." "Like Paul, we can say, 'I don't care what you think. I don't even care what I think. I only care about what the Lord thinks.'"

Closing Prayer: Dear Lord. We pray that we can focus solely on you. It doesn't matter what others think or say. You know us and are the only One who can judge us. We look forward to you saying to us, "This is my child in whom I am well pleased." Amen.

Quotes and the concept of this devotion are from [The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness](#), by Rev. Timothy Keller.