

The Christ-Centered Life (Christ-esteem)

In any culture - religious or not - self-absorption is a "sickness unto death." Self-centeredness, self-indulgence, self-promotion are always self-defeating. Self-esteem - a modern "sacred" value - is simply the faith of those without faith in Christ. For those of us who are in Christ, God is re-writing the story of our lives without our self at the center. Thus, we will be very hard pressed to find Bible verses that encourage self-focus or self-esteem. However, we will find numerous verses telling us things like, "Don't think more highly of yourself than you should..."; don't be "self-willed... self-loving... self-indulgent... self-exalting... self-pleasing" (to name a few!). We are told not to "live" for ourself, "trust" in ourself, or "preach" ourself.

The Christ-centered life is the one learning to forsake self-esteem in pursuit of Christ-esteem! (See Is 2:22) He alone is the "treasure hidden in the fields", the "pearl of great price", the "one thing needful", the one "surpassing value" (Matt 13:44-46; Lk 10:38-42; Phil 3:7-11). We do not become "more than conquerors" by considering our adversaries or ourselves but only when we "consider Jesus" (Heb 3:1). We do not come to true self knowledge by self-reflection but only when we "see Him as He is" (I Jo 3:2). We'll never purify ourselves by obsessive and compulsive fixations upon ourselves but only when our hope is "fixed on Him" (I Jo 3:3). We become like Him by esteeming Him - not ourselves!

Self-focused living and self-affirmed greatness are of the devil (see Is 14:13-15) and can land us only in darkness and bondage. Think about it: What is sulking but esteeming our own unhappy selves above Christ and others? What is bitterness but esteeming our own wounded selves above Christ and His grace? What is arrogance but esteeming our own ideas above God's? Isn't our grumbling and complaining just us esteeming our own joyless selves, our own self-directed pursuits above any other?

The cessation of such self obsession and self worship calls for Christ-esteem and its attending expressions of humility: bowing before Christ alone as our highest good, acknowledging our creaturliness and utterly depending upon Him for all that is good. It requires exalting His interests over ours and a willingness to go low before others. In such postures we are avoiding excessive self-reflection... and esteeming Christ alone as the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

We will never live Christ - "for me to live is Christ" (Phil 1:21) - by paying so much attention to ourselves.

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 **GREETINGS** 

I really enjoy small group Bible Study/ discussions. Ten to Twelve participants in a spiritual "free for all" of sorts - honest questions, thoughtful opinions, spontaneous insights - all the elements that make them so conducive to hearing God (usually much more so than monological teaching).

We were studying Romans 8 in our Alachua Group last month and, as usual, spent some time catching up on each other's lives and bemoaning the current state of political affairs in our nation. After lamenting our limited options in the upcoming elections, one of the ladies in our group said very sweetly yet reprov- ingly, "If what we read tonight is actually true then no one sitting in the White House can separate us from the love of God." (Ro 8:38-39)





Whether a Pharaoh, a Nebuchednezzar, or a Pilate; a Bush, an Obama, or a _____... none of these endanger or change the rock solid reality that is the birthright of every one of God's children. We are His always being loved sons and daughters. That alone is all we need to keep any fear at bay (I Jo 4:18), put any panic to rest (Ps 27:1-3), overcome any darkness (Jo 1:4-5).

Let's lay aside all the grumbling, moaning, and dismay - this is our Father's World and Jesus Christ is its Lord. Their perfect love for us will go right on... and that will be enough!

 **CALENDAR** 

<u>SEPTEMBER</u>	
4,11,25	CCF
6	Alachua Study (**DATE CHANGE!)
9-10	CCF - Dating & Preparation for Marriage Seminar
16-23	Bozeman, MT
27	Ocala Study
<u>OCTOBER</u>	
7-9	Binghamton, NY (607-239-5006)

 **PRAISE and PRAYER** 

-  God's perfect love
-  Our new creation self in Christ
-  To esteem Christ above all
-  Healing for wounded souls