

How much is a person worth?

Apparently, when the maths is done, we would boil down to 7 bars of soap.

It was once estimated the physical (at least the chemical) make-up of the human body was worth about \$2.50 (US) retail.

But I know, you know, we're more than just physical. People talk about self-worth, self-value. How valuable am I really?

We think of some of the great figures of history: Moses, Cleopatra, Robert Redford, Socrates, Joan of Arc, Richard III. Not one of them is like you. And no-one to come after you will be just like you.

No-one can serve others like you do, no-one can comfort the way you do, no-one can smile your smile. No-one parts their hair the way you do, no-one has the same combination of secret-inside jokes. Never think you clutter up the landscape. The fact is you are irreplaceable. If you had not come along, there would be a hole in creation.

Yet many Australians go through every day, hiding painful feelings of worthlessness, deep feelings of inadequacy. In modern society, many women in particular mistake self-image for body image with devastating results.

Consciously or unconsciously, most people ask themselves three questions:

- Who am I really?
- What am I worth?
- Do I matter to anyone?

Dorothy Briggs writes, "Self-esteem is the mainspring that slants every child for success or failure as a human being."

We see this in the 12 spies sent out by Moses to spy out the promised land, documented in chpts 13 & 14 of the book of Numbers in the Old Testament. Ten of the spies saw only giants: "we seem like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them," whereas such was Joshua and Caleb's self-concept and God-confidence they reported, "we will swallow them up (paraphrase: *eat them up for breakfast*). Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us." Unsurprisingly, it is Caleb and Joshua who enter the land when the time is right. Solomon underlined this truth in a telling Proverb: "As a person thinks in his heart (the inner picture we carry of ourselves), so is he/she" (Provbs 23.7).

Others refer to the three-legged stool of self-esteem:

- (i) We've got to feel we belong to something or someone (note the draw of gangs among some of our youth);
- (ii) We must feel loved;
- (iii) We need to feel competent in some area of life.

Take away one of the legs and the stool collapses.

Some people are hampered more than others before they can even get off the starting grid. Most psychologists agree the single greatest determinant factor in the laying down of our self-esteem is

what we perceive the most significant persons in our life think of us. Yet it is not the sole decider in how we move on in life. David was only a youth. The inference is he may have been rejected by both his parents (Ps.27.10). The prophet Samuel considered him not a patch on his brothers; surely God would have him anoint one of them king, yet David's destiny was to be king of Israel. The Philistines' champion Goliath disdained him, yet David believed in the name and fame of His God, and declared he would take his head. The rest is history, and a story known throughout the world.

Our value does not depend on things said over us, or those who first influenced us. Someone once said to me, "you are a waste of space." I'm glad I didn't believe that lie. We only ever find value by looking into the face of our Heavenly Father who loves us, who made us in His image, and then bought us back after we had strayed from Him. "The Son of God loved me and gave Himself *for me*" (Gal.2.20). One of the great purposes of the cross of Jesus was to celebrate our worth!

He loves me

I now belong to Him and to all in God's family

His Spirit has equipped me with passions, gifts and abilities, making me competent in His world.

The three legs of the stool all in tact!

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