



Be Yourself!
Bible Study Workbook
(A companion to BY! Master Curriculum Guide)

"Embrace whom you are uniquely created to be!"

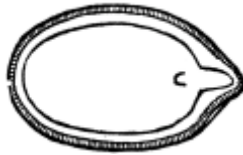
Table of Contents

Table of Contents	1
Lesson 1	3
Lesson 2	8
Lesson 3	15
Lesson 4	22
Lesson 5	29
Bonus Bible Study Lesson	33
Additional Biblical Resource	38
"A Biblical View of Human Worth" (English)	39

Be Yourself!

Name: _____ Date _____

"Be yourself, everyone else is already taken" ~ Oscar Wilde
(Use this page to illustrate your garden.)



Lesson 1

Key Scripture: Key Scripture: Psalm 139:13-16: *For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.*

Be sure to read If Only I Had a Green Nose by Max Lucado.
Bible Study:

How do we know that we are unique and valued?

What we **believe** about our worth should be founded in the truth of God's Word as written in the Bible and revealed to us through His Holy Spirit. If we are to **act** according to what is God's good and pleasing will for us, we must know and believe what that is. Our beliefs determine our attitudes and feelings, which in turn lead to our actions. Beliefs lead to attitudes, attitudes to feelings, and feelings to actions. So, let's begin with our foundational beliefs. **Draw four stacked bricks in this space and label them "Beliefs", "Attitudes", "Feelings", "Actions".**

We are uniquely created.

Genesis 1:26-27

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

This passage forms a foundational truth of Christianity. Upon it we base our understanding of the natural and essential value of all human life. While God loves his creation and appears to delight in the smallest creatures and the largest planets, only mankind is made in God's "image" and "likeness" and given the incredible responsibility of dominion over all of God's creation.

Using a dictionary, define "image" or "likeness" as it is used in **Genesis 1:26**:

Copy the verse here:

What responsibility do you think you have to God knowing you are made in His likeness?

While all mankind is created in the likeness of God and shares some characteristics with Him, we are each created **unique**. Like the flower at the beginning of the lesson, we are the same but different. Perhaps the picture of the Trinity gives a deeper understanding of being the same but different. The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit are all One, a truth that is hard for most of us to fully grasp. Yet, accepting this, we understand that each Person of the Trinity is also unique. The Father and the Son are one and the same (**John 10:30**), yet the Son submitted to the Father's will and gave his life on the cross. The Holy Spirit comes from the Father and bears witness here on earth to Jesus (**John 15:26**). All three **uniquely** testify to God and His Kingdom. In the same way, we are each **uniquely** created to testify to God with our lives. Each of us was created to be a **unique** expression of God's beauty and wonder.

Write out these verses:

John 10:30

John 15:26

"I am created to be a unique expression of God's character, beauty, and wonder."

David wrote,

Psalm 139: 13-16

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

If God knit you together in your mother's womb, list some of your God-given qualities:

How are you the same as your family members?

How are you different?

Read Psalm 139 again. It describes a God who knows us intimately, who participates in our very formation within the womb, and who knows our **unique** destiny. Is it possible that God, the Creator of everything, could know and care about each one of us so personally? It's hard to believe, but it is true.

We are valued.

Write Matthew 10:29-31 here:

This passage show us how tenderly God cares for us, and how much we are **valued**. What do you do with **valuable** things? You take care of them, right? The higher the **value**, the better the care because they are precious.

What is your **value** to God?

There *is* a price tag on your head.

The **value** put on you is a ransom price that has been paid by someone else. You were held hostage to sin, but Jesus paid IN FULL your ransom price. In God's mind you are very **valuable**!

Draw a price tag here and write out the verse **1 Peter 1:18-21** on the tag.

Write **John 3:16**:

Define the meaning of "the world" used in this verse:

Do you think God *loves you* but may not love other people? Why or why not?

Do you think God loves *other people* but may not love you? Why or why not?

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still _____ (fill in the blank), Christ died for us.

Is there any one for whom Christ did not die?

Do you believe that God knows every hair on your head? Now state that:

I believe _____

Do you believe that you are worth more than many sparrows? Now state that:

I believe _____

Do you believe that God sent His Son to die for you personally? Now state that:

I believe _____

Do you believe that you are uniquely created by God and valued? Now state that:

I believe _____

Believe it or not, it is true. Wouldn't it be wise to believe the truth instead of a falsehood? Who wants to believe a lie anyway? This is why it is important to base your beliefs on what the Bible says about you and not on what others say.

God knows us completely. He knows that we need our mind renewed in our thinking so we can live His good and perfect will. He has given us his Scriptures to teach us this.

Write **Romans 12: 2**:

Write **2 Timothy 3:16**:

Prayer:

Take a minute in quiet prayer and before God confess and **turn from** any false beliefs you have held about yourself that are contrary to these Scriptures, and **turn back to God** asking Him to open your heart and spirit to believe His truth about you: that you are **unique** and **valuable**.

And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

John 8:32

In closing:

"Can we trust God and really be who we are? The Bible tells us God is love! (**1 John 4:8**). This is an amazing statement and another foundational building block of Christian faith. God loves humanity enough to make the greatest sacrifice He could make in order to see His children free and restored back to a wholesome, loving relationship with Him - **back to our true identity**. He gave his one and ONLY Son, and He did this for people in all times and places on earth."

"Furthermore, our capacity to know God and love others begins with His love for us. In fact, the reason we have the capacity to love at all is because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). What a special relationship mankind has with God." "It is upon this very simple yet profound truth of God's love for mankind that we can extend love and acceptance to everyone without discrimination. He created each of us as **unique and valuable**."

Write out these verses:

1 John 4:8

1 John 4:19

Lesson 2

Key Scripture: Romans 12:2 *Do not be conformed to this world^(a) but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*



Notes from the Opening Exercise: Jot down some notes about the influences on you as you made your decision about how many candies are in the jar.

In order to “become a better self,” you must understand some influences that affect your choices. Define these terms as you discuss them in class:

Pressure

Peer

Peer pressure

Positive peer pressure

Negative peer pressure

Now fill in the blanks below with the correct terms from above:

_____ is the feeling that you are being pushed toward making a certain choice - good or bad.

_____ is someone in your own age group.

_____ is the feeling that someone your own age is pushing you toward making a certain choice, good or bad.

_____ is when you are being pushed to do something worthwhile, have healthy values, positive attitudes, and positive actions. It uses encouraging words and expressions.

_____ is when someone is pushed to do something that may be harmful, gets someone in trouble, causes bad attitudes, or alienates other kids.

Refer back to If Only I Had a Green Nose and come up with examples of positive and negative peer pressure. Write examples here:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

(For previous YAS program participants, remember some of the peer pressures in You Are Special that Punchinello faced such as Lucia being a positive influence but the stars and dots given out as negative pressure.)

Understanding the content of the story:

We see from the opening exercise the natural tendency is to “conform” to what others say, especially in a group of peers. Sometimes this is good, sometimes it is bad, and sometimes it’s neutral and not good or bad.

Give an example of a situation where it would be good to conform to the group’s will and not just your own.

Give an example of a situation where it is NOT good to conform to what the group says.

Give an example of a situation where it doesn’t really matter if you conform to the group or not.

Recognize negative peer pressure:

In the story If Only I Had a Green Nose, we see that Punchinello was pressured by his friends and his community to conform to having a green nose. Several types of “peer pressure” were used. Take a few minutes to go back through the story and see if you can point out examples of each of these negative pressures from the list on the next page and discuss with the group.

Types of Peer Pressure:

Rejection - Threatening to leave someone out or end a friendship

The Put Down - Insulting or calling names to make someone feel bad

Reasoning - Giving reasons to do something or why it would be OK to do it

The Huddle - A group standing together talking or laughing with their backs out to others

The Look - Kids thinking they're cool giving a look that means, "We're cool and you're not."

The Example - Popular kids simply buying, wearing, or doing something, and others wanting to follow because of the popular kids' example

Now, **below each type of negative pressure, give an example** from your own life. Give either examples of your own experience of being pressured or having applied this type of pressure to others.

Bible Study:

Write Romans 12:2-3:

Regardless of how old or young, how rich or poor, each of us experiences relentless pressure to conform to another image. It may be pressure to have something we think we want, to do something we think we should do, or to be like someone else. It seems the world is designed to bombard us with messages that would have us conform to images that are not necessarily our true self. Just like Punchinello in the story, sometimes we give in to these pressures, and we are taken farther away from our God-given identity.

List some pressures to be like someone else that you may experience in your life:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

4.

5.

Put a ★ star next to the one to which you feel especially worried about giving in.

Being a believer in Jesus doesn't make you free from outside pressures. However, it can and should strengthen you in your faith so you can love and accept who you are, just as you are, and trust God for what you need and want.

It is important to base your love of yourself on what the Bible says about you and not what the world says about you. The world sees only ordinary human experience without true spiritual insight.

Write 1Corinthians 2:14:

God sees what the world does not.

Write 1 Samuel 16:7:

Look at some examples of negative peer pressure in the Bible:

How was Jesus REJECTED in John 1:11?

What were some examples of REASONING that Satan used with Jesus in the wilderness in Matthew 4?

What kind of PUT DOWN did Jesus experience in Mark 15:16-20?

What HUDDLE experience did Jesus encounter in Luke 15:2?

Who probably gave "THE LOOK" to Jesus and under what circumstances in Luke 13:13-14?

What EXAMPLE did Jesus not follow in Matthew 21:13?

We see that even Jesus was exposed to pressure to conform. He experienced all that we have experienced, yet without sin.

What about positive peer pressure?

Can you think of an example in your life of positive peer pressure?

Where in the story did Punchinello experience positive peer pressure to have a green nose?

If it's felt as *pressure*, is it good? Why or why not?

Be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

Write Romans 12:2-3:

Here are actions we need to take:

Do not conform. Define *conform*: _____

Be transformed. Define *transform*: _____

You will test. Define *test*: _____

and approve. Define *approve*: _____

Using your own words, rewrite this passage from Romans 12:2-3 in the space here:

According to this passage, what three words describe God's will for you?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

If God's will for you is described as so positive, why do you think you resist and try to conform to another image? Write your answer here:

Prayer:

If you have applied negative pressure to others, now is a good time to ask God for forgiveness, and/or, if you have given in to negative peer pressure and recognize your error, take a minute to **confess** this to God, **turn back** to him, and he is faithful to forgive. Receive his forgiveness and move on to new behavior.

In Closing:

Temptations are real. We are all tempted to conform to another image, especially if we have weaknesses, and everyone has weaknesses. Take comfort from this Scripture:

Write out **Hebrews 4:15**

It is important to know that Jesus can sympathize with our weaknesses. Not only that, but he gives us a way out.

1 Corinthians 10:13

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

Verse 14 goes on to say, "*Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry.*"

"Idolatry" from a biblical perspective is "The worship of manmade objects," or "putting anything above God."

When we put someone else's idea of who we should be above God's idea, then we have created an idol - a false god. We certainly do not want to worship things created by man and that includes false images of our self.

In the next lesson we will look at **motives** for giving in to pressure.

Lesson 3

Key Scripture: 1 John 2:15-17 *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.*

Notes from Opening Exercise:



Remember what you learned in the previous lesson about negative and positive pressures. Turn to a neighbor and define “peer pressure.” Spend a few minutes listing some reasons **“Why People Give in to Negative Pressures”**:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Refer to [If Only I Had a Green Nose](#) and come up with reasons that Punchinello had his nose painted green:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Learning:

How important do you think fashion is in determining one’s self worth?

Advertisers get people to buy their product by using words like “greatest”, “best”, will “make you popular”, will “make you cool”, and by getting celebrities to endorse their products, etc. These techniques are all a type of peer pressure.

Next we will look at the things that motivate us to give in to peer pressure.

Bible Study:

Read 1 John 2:15-17.

The passage talks about “lusts.” We define lust as a passionate and overwhelming desire. To have desires or wants is not necessarily bad. In fact, there are many good desires to have like the desire to succeed, the desire to have friends, the desire to be married, etc. Nor is it bad to be passionate about something; for example, being passionate about doing the right thing, passionate about God, etc. But lust in this passage is an *overwhelming hunger* for something the world offers, overwhelming to the point of being willing to give up and compromise your true self for it. For example, in the story of Jacob and Esau, Esau was willing to give up his birthright, his inheritance as the first-born son, just for a bowl of warm porridge.

READ Genesis 25: 29-34.

Esau let his physical hunger compromise his whole future (read **Hebrews 12:16-17**). It’s a pretty frightening thought that we could do the same for something so ordinary as cereal, but each time we give in to negative pressure and compromise our true self, we do just that, give up the real inheritance that God has for us.

In **Matthew 4**, Jesus gives us the best example of living out this directive above in 1 John 2. In the story Satan confronts Jesus with very real and earthly temptations.

READ Matthew 4.

Jesus shows us in this chapter how he resisted pressure when confronted with temptation. Even though he was God, he was fully human and still had to wrestle with fleshly needs. In his response to Satan we see the keys to overcoming temptations. The Keys are...



Jesus

- knew who he was
- knew the Word of God
- knew his mission was to glorify God the Father

Because of this, he could resist the pressure to satisfy his real and natural needs as well as resist Satan’s offer of power and dominion.

In the same way, we resist temptation to be other than whom God created us to be when we:

- know who we are
- know our value as stated in the Word of God
- know what is our mission or purpose

Use this space to draw 3 keys and label them Acceptance, Value, Purpose. Leave room for notes next to each key.

1.

2.

3.

Knowing who we are:

Usually the reason for giving in to pressure has to do with one of three needs: the need for **acceptance**, the need for **value**, or the need for **purpose**. These three qualities make up a void or empty place in our heart that can only be filled by God. If we don't feel fully *accepted* by God, we will seek acceptance in all the wrong places, through the wrong things, or with the wrong people in the wrong relationships. As one songwriter wrote, we will be "looking for love in all the wrong places." If we don't feel *valued*, we may constantly strive for perfection, or operate with false pride, or depend on material wealth to give us value, all of which can crumble in one quick moment. If we have no *purpose*, we can fall into depression and hopelessness, or grow angry and bitter, and separate ourselves from people who love us. It is common to be vulnerable in any or all of these areas because they are real needs that should be filled. The problem comes with how we choose to fill them.

Advertisers are especially good at identifying and targeting these areas of human weakness. Advertisements are some of the most obvious forms of manipulation that apply both seen and unseen pressures to conform to the world's standard of success, wealth, beauty, happiness, etc. Young people are especially vulnerable to these pressures as they begin to form their values and identity separate from their parents and within the context of their peers and their culture.

For that reason, it is wise to honestly examine the kinds of pressures and your motives for giving in to them. Which one of these three - needing **acceptance**, being **valued**, or having a **purpose** - do you think is your greatest weak spot?

Can you identify a brand name or company that attempts to fill this particular need for young people through their ads?

To address this issue, let's go back to our beliefs about God and about who we are to Him. Remember: **Beliefs lead to attitudes; attitudes lead to feelings; feelings lead to actions.**

In Lesson 1 we see that God made mankind in his image. From this we understand the intrinsic value of all human beings. We also know from Scripture that God formed us in our mother's womb and knows every day of our life before we lived one (Psalm 139). But does that mean we are righteous, clean, holy, and ready to stand before God? No. To be cleansed of our sins we must first believe that Jesus came to save us and receive him as Lord. When we invite him to be Lord of our life we take on a new life (**2 Corinthians 5:17**).

And this is where the road to our true IDENTITY and self takes a turn from the world's definition of self. Once we are His, we are a totally new creation. The old has passed away. Who we are is totally defined by us now living in and for Christ.

Key 1-We are ACCEPTED:

Yes, God loves everyone, and he desires that no one should perish and that all should be saved from the destruction of sin (2 Peter 3:9). In fact, this is why Jesus came to earth - for the purpose of taking upon himself the full punishment for sin and purchasing all for eternal life (John 3:16). He did this in order that mankind could live free to enjoy full fellowship with God just as Adam and Eve did in the Garden. And he did this EVEN though we were sinners.

Write Romans 3:23-24:

Take a minute and think or discuss with a group. Can you name an ad or brand that appeals to the need to be **accepted**?

Write John 1:12-13



Jesus **accepts** us! And we are made new. When we are created new, we have a new identity.

Key 2- We are VALUED:

If we fully understand Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross, we must accept that God VALUED us enough to give His one and only Son in exchange for our life.

Write 2 Corinthians 5:21:

According to this passage, for whose sake was Jesus made to be sin?
What was the gift he purchased for us?



If a price tag could be put on Jesus' life, what would it be? Fill in the price.

If the Father's will was to exchange Jesus' life for yours, how valuable are you?

Stop and think or **discuss with a group.**

Can you name an ad or brand that appeals to the need to feel **valuable**?

Read 1Peter 1:18-21:

For you know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

We cannot emphasize this enough. Your **value** is not based on your good works, your good deeds, what you earn, or how important you are. Your **value** is based on **God's love of you just as you are.**

Key 3-We have a PURPOSE:

What about purpose? So many people today are seeking real purpose in their lives. Purpose is defined as the “reason something is done, or created or exists.” Why were we created; why do we exist? To have a God-defined purpose is an aching cry in the human heart (**Ecclesiastes 3:11**).

Without this, we attempt to satisfy our hearts with all kinds of meaningless things. Can a new phone or computer give us purpose? Will having a husband or wife or even having children satisfy your need for purpose? Be careful! While relationships are important, without God in the mix, relationships will only temporarily satisfy. All things that appear shiny at first will eventually tarnish and fade away unless God has brought life and purpose to them.

Can you name an ad or a brand that tries to appeal to the need for **purpose**?

Through Christ we are restored back to God’s household just like the son in the Parable of the Lost Son (**Luke 15**). In being restored back into the Family of God, we are given an inheritance to all the Father’s promises (**1 John 3:1-2; Romans 8:17; 2 Peter 1:4**).

Look up these verses and briefly write the promises mentioned in them:

- 2 Peter 1:4 _____
- Philippians 4:19 _____
- 1 John 3:1 _____
- Psalm 84:11 _____

If all of these promises *and more* are yours in Christ, how could that affect your response to peer pressure? Take some time to write your response.

Prayer:

If you have an unmet need for acceptance, to be valued, or to have purpose, you are not alone. But if you think one of these or all of these needs are pushing you to do something that you know is unhealthy, unwholesome, dangerous, or even illegal, STOP now and pray. Pray for God to reveal his TRUTH to you that **you are accepted, valued, and have purpose**. Ask God to help you see, and believe, and turn away from these things.

In Closing:

We want to examine our motives, to see whether we are in the faith. Do we have a real and living relationship with Jesus (**2 Corinthians 13:5**)?

Otherwise, we will constantly be looking for approval from other sources and be vulnerable to pressures of the world to conform to false images.

God has a plan for you. This is really exciting. He has known you since before time, and he has something for you to do.

Write Ephesians 2:10:

He made each of us for a purpose that he prepared in advance.

In BIG letters write out the 3 things that Jesus knew and that we need to know about ourselves:

1.

2.

3.

Now you can resist peer pressure just as Jesus did in the wilderness.

Write Ephesians 1:7-10:

Lesson 4

Key Scripture: Galatians 6:7 *Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.*

Read the fable:



Once upon a time there was a farmer who needed to sell his ox. The ox was a strong and healthy ox so he knew anyone would be lucky to get this ox. A neighboring farmer owned three oxen but wanted a fourth to pull his large wagon and plow. He went to look at the oxen for sale. He asked the farmer if he could take the ox to his farm for a week before he decided. The farmer selling the ox thought that was a strange request since his ox was obviously strong and healthy, but he agreed. The next week the neighboring farmer returned with the ox and said, "I am sorry but I cannot buy your ox. He is not a good ox." The selling farmer didn't understand and asked for an explanation. "Well," said the neighboring farmer, "I have three oxen already. Two of them are well behaved but one of them tries to push the others out and takes their food. He can be stubborn. When I put your ox in the pen with the oxen, he immediately went to be with my ox that causes trouble. He stayed close to this ox the whole week and ignored the two well-behaved oxen."

Write out the moral of this fable:

Choices lead to consequences. Good choices result in good consequences, and bad choices result in bad consequences.

Reread Green Nose story to find examples of consequences that Punchinello and the Wemmicks faced by going along with having their noses painted. Write them down in the space below and be prepared to **discuss in groups**.

Punchinello asks Eli, "Does a green nose make them smarter? Does a green nose make them stronger? Does it make them faster? **Write Eli's answer here:**

Giving in to negative pressure can cause many problems socially, academically, legally, physically, and emotionally.

Exercise: For "Better or For Worse?"

Complete the handout, "For Better or Worse?" found at the end of this lesson. You may mark both positive and negative for some.

Bible Study:
Write 1 Corinthians 15:33:

We are not expected to live in isolation from everyone who is not a Christian. In fact, how will anyone ever learn of Jesus unless we fellowship with people who have not yet heard about him? However, it is wise to examine what kind of influences rub off on you when you are around people who have a different focus in life. Bad influences can corrupt good character. The reverse is true also. But be aware! To have the influence go the right direction, you need to be strong in what you believe.

The law of "sowing and reaping" (Galatians 6:7) applies to life choices, too. Choices have consequences, and bad choices lead to death in some form or another, whether great or small. This is because each time we make a "bad" choice, one contrary to God's will, our heart becomes a little more closed, a little bit more calloused and hard. If we continue to make bad choices, we will not feel our true selves any longer. Yes, we have a wonderful gift of free choice, and God has given us great freedom, but God always advocates for us to choose life as he gives us that freedom to choose (Deuteronomy 30:19; John 10:10). He has outlined those life choices in the Bible. **DRAW a HARD HEART here:**

Write out Deuteronomy 30:19 under the heart.

God will reward every life-giving choice we make. This is God's law of sowing and reaping.

Read Galatians 6:7: *Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.*

The books of Psalms and Proverbs are especially full of wisdom on how to make wise choices.

According to **Psalm 111:10** wisdom comes from_____.

Even non-believers can possess some wisdom when they live in reverence and respect of the One True God (Acts 10:1). In addition, God has given every person a conscience (Romans 2:15), and through the conscience, we appeal to all people to "do the right thing" believing that their conscience knows what that is.

Write Psalm 1:1-2:

Explain, "walk in step with the wicked":

Explain, "stand in the way that sinners take":

Explain, "sit in the company of mockers":

Write down any real-life examples you can think of for the three definitions above:

What were some of the consequences?

Don't be fooled; bad influence is hard to resist unless you are strong in your faith.

There are numerous Biblical examples of people who appeared strong at first but who gave in to worldly pressures.

Take notes in each column from the lesson as it pertains to each person here:

Peter (Mark 14)	Solomon (1 Kings 11)	David (1Chronicles 21)

Discuss in groups:

- How did Peter's denial affect him and others?
- How did Solomon's choice affect him and others?
- How did David's choice affect him and others?

In every case, we see strong men of faith cave in to pressures with devastating results that affected more than just their own lives; it affected future generations as well.

Notice however, Peter and David later repented and became godly examples showing us that, even when we make mistakes, God can redeem them.

Fill in each column with the **GOOD** choices and consequences you find for these Biblical characters from the passages below:

Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego (Dan. 3:10-30)	Rahab (Joshua 4:1-7; 6:17; 22-23; Mat.1:5)	Ananias (Acts 9:1-9)
Good Choices	Good Choices	Good Choices
Consequences	Consequences	Consequences

We see from all of these examples of both good and bad choices that choices have consequences beyond us. Negative peer pressure is not a meaningless thing. It can have serious effects on our health, our home, and our future. Be wise as it says in **Proverbs 13:20**, *Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm.*

Prayer:

Now is the time to pray for release from negative pressures. God came to give us life and life abundantly (John 10:10). Take a minute now and ask God for the strength to turn from negative pressures and to find the grace to make life-giving choices.

In Closing:

Receive these words, not just as a challenge, but also as an encouragement. Galatians 6:7-9 *Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.*

Read 3 John 1:11:

Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God.

We become like that which we admire and that to which we give our attention.

Read Philippians 4: 8-9:

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. ⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

God has a different way of defining or measuring wisdom or success. When we do right and good, we have peace with God. Knowing that, peace is a precious promise available to all believers; however, that peace is found in God and not in the world.

Read Proverbs 13:20 which is so beautiful:

Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.



Look to God to satisfy your needs and make healthy choices.

For Better or Worse

Decide if the following decisions would have positive or negative consequences. Some might have both.

Decisions	Positive	Negative
Eat healthy		
Wear only brand name clothes		
Exercise		
Not study for a test		
Play video games		
Tease		
Spread rumors		
Listen to music		
Skip school		
Drink alcohol		
Smoke cigarettes		
Be kind to a new participant		
Enjoy a hobby		
Choose friends who get in trouble		
Do something so you'll be popular		
Desire to be "cool"		
Play on a sports team		
Take painting lessons		
Judge yourself based on what you own		
Attend a party		
Share the message from <i>Green Nose</i>		
Learn a foreign language		
Buy a new outfit		
Cheat on a test		
Walk away from dangerous situations		
Be Yourself		

Be prepared to discuss your answers with the group.

Lesson 5

Key Scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:13 *No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.*

Notes from Activity: Game of "Ways to Say No Bingo."



Discuss: Why didn't Lucia give in to pressure? Write down some reasons here:

Perhaps Punchinello could have avoided his negative consequences if he had used some **refusal skills and knew the Biblical foundation for them.**

Bible Study: Refusal Skills

As you read through the verses under each refusal skill, pick one of the verses that especially appeals to you. If you are working in a group, have each group member take a verse to read out loud and then pick the one that most appeals to you. Write the verse out under that skill. You will have the truth of God to support your reason for refusing peer pressure.

Exercise Control-Know the reasons you don't want to give in and remain confident. *Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 6:14-18; Psalm 139:13-14; Proverbs 25:28; Psalm 34:12-14; Proverbs 14:30; Romans 15:13*

Stay Surrounded by Positive People-Surround yourself with positive friends and people who respect your choices. *Psalm: 1; 1 Corinthians 15:33; Hebrews 6:12; Proverbs 13:20; Ephesians 5:8-11; Proverbs 13:14*

Walk Away-You owe no explanation. Remove yourself from the situation. *Proverbs 29:8; Proverbs 13:20; Proverbs 15:1; Proverbs 3:34-35; Proverbs 3:5-6; Proverbs 29:11; John 8:36*

Think Ahead-Practice some refusal words or what you would do when faced with a negative pressure. *Proverbs 15:28; 2 Timothy 1:7; Proverbs 12:18; Proverbs 17:28; Ephesians 4:15; Ephesians 4:29; Proverbs 16:24; Proverbs 15:4; 1 Corinthians 13:5*

Be Your Own Cheerleader-Speak positively and encouragingly to yourself. *Ephesians 2:10; 1 John 2:16-17; 1 Samuel 16:7; James 1:12; Psalm 37:4; James 4:1-3; 1 John 4:18*

Make Another Choice-Think of something else you can do. *James 3:16-18; James 1:12; James 4:1-2; James 4:6-7; Luke 6:37-38; Proverbs 3:35*

Be Assertive-Stand straight, make eye contact, and say how you feel. *2 Timothy 1:7; Philippians 4:13; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Ephesians 4:24-25; Matthew 7:12; Ephesians 4:32*

Do you have any other favorite Scriptures that give you strength? Share them here:

In small groups, read through the points in "How to Appreciate Yourself" at the end of this lesson and discuss each. Read all the verses later as part of your own personal devotional time.

Prayer:

Take a moment and pray with someone in your group. Allow yourself to share where you really need prayer in light of these lessons. If you are on your own, pray through each of the points in the "How to Appreciate Yourself" section. Confess, turn back to God, and receive forgiveness and insight into new ways to do things.

In Closing:

In this last lesson you have discussed ways to resist negative peer pressure and ways to appreciate yourself. It is important to be able to do these two things so you can stand strong and be yourself! Remember from lesson 3:

We resist negative peer pressure when we:

- **know who we are**...*that comes from knowing God more intimately*
- **know the Word of God**...*by being in the Word regularly*
- **know what is your mission or purpose**...*by drawing close to God and waiting on him*

We must believe we are loved, accepted, valued, and have purpose. The Bible is clear. Now we must make a choice about what to believe. Will we believe the world around us or will we believe God? The answer is clear, but because it is clear does not mean it's easy. Believing God takes knowledge, courage, and strength. But be encouraged; God is for you!

Write Psalm 118: 6 here:

Rejoice in who you are;
Befriend people who can rejoice with you;
Be Yourself!

"How to Appreciate Yourself"

(You can use these points as a prayer focus as well.)

1. Be careful about comparing yourself to other people. Sometimes that can make you feel good or even inspire you to improve in some way, but sometimes it can make you overlook what's truly good about yourself and cause you to feel bad. Psalm 139:13-14; Ephesians 2:10; 1 Timothy 4:12; Galatians 1:10; Romans 12:3
2. Think about times when you've done something good. Include those times when you've made a difference to somebody else by being helpful, kind, or thoughtful. Ephesians 4:15; Ephesians 4:29; Proverbs 16:24; Proverbs 15:4; 1 Corinthians 13:5; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Proverbs 25:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:11
3. Take part in activities that make you feel good such as hobbies, reading, sports, or spending time with good friends. Proverbs 18:24; Philippians 4:8-9; Luke 16:10-12; 1 Corinthians 10:31
4. Don't be so afraid of failing that you are not willing to try something new. New experiences can help you grow and discover wonderful new things about yourself. 1 John 1:9-10; 1 Peter 4:8; James 1:2-4; Philippians 4:13; Philippians 2:13; Psalm 37:4-5
5. When you do fail at something, don't get down on yourself. Think about what you can learn from the experience and how you can do better next time. Romans 8:28-30; Proverbs 3:6; 1 Peter 5:6-7; Romans 8:1; John 3:17; Romans 8:34
6. Think about things you do well. Take pride in your successes. Psalm 37:4; James 4:10; Proverbs 16:3; Luke 16:10-11; Jeremiah 29:11; 2 Timothy 3:17; Proverbs 3:1-4; Philippians 4:13
7. Remember, the most important thing about people is what we're like inside, not what we own or what we've accomplished. Proverbs 20:5; Proverbs 4:23; Colossians 3:10; 1 Samuel 16:7; Matthew 7:1-5; Proverbs 31:30; Colossians 3:17

Bonus Bible Study Lesson

(Title) _____

Key Scripture: Matthew 22:39

And a second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Listen carefully to the directions for completing this Bible Study.

C.O.M.A. Bible Study Part I **"Lover of Self"**

Key Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:1-5

A simple method that is commonly used to begin Bible reading and study is a method called **C.O.M.A.** These 4 simple words give you an outline for how to read the text.

Step 1: Choose the text.

Step 2: Read the text together (possibly more than once).

Now, apply **C.O.M.A.**

CONTEXT

What is the context of this passage? You can find this out by asking a few questions.

- Who wrote this scripture?
- Who were they writing to?
- Why did they write this?

OBSERVATION

What are some of the things you can observe about the writing? You could look for some of these things:

- Are there any phrases or words that stand out or are repeated?
- What are the main points the text is making?

MEANING

Now it's time to figure out what this text means! It's pointless to read scripture if you don't wrestle with what it actually means. All of scripture is written to reveal to us who God is, so that we may know him and enjoy Him.

- What does this passage teach you about God?

- What does this passage teach you about yourself?

- What does this passage teach you about having a close relationship with God?

APPLICATION

- What is your response to this passage?

C.O.M.A. Bible Study Part II **"Loving Yourself"** Key Scripture Matthew 22:36-40

A simple method that is commonly used to begin Bible reading and study is a method called **C.O.M.A.** These 4 simple words give you an outline for how to read the text.

Step 1: Choose the text.

Step 2: Read the text together (possibly more than once).

Now, apply **C.O.M.A.**

CONTEXT

What is the context of this passage? You can find this out by asking a few questions.

- Who wrote this scripture?

- Who were they writing to?
-
- Why did they write this?
-

OBSERVATION

What are some of the things you can observe about the writing? You could look for some of these things:

- Are there any phrases or words that stand out or are repeated?
- What are the main points the text is making?

MEANING

Now it's time to figure out what this text means! It's pointless to read scripture if you don't wrestle with what it actually means. All of scripture is written to reveal to us who God is, so that we may know him and enjoy Him.

- What does this passage teach you about God?
- What does this passage teach you about yourself?

- What does this passage teach you about having a close relationship with God?

APPLICATION

- What is your response to this passage?

C.O.M.A. Conclusion: Which option between being a “lover of self” and “loving yourself” is the God-honoring, life-giving, and healthy way to relate to oneself?

Bible Study Continued: The Greatest Commandment is one of the most referenced portions of scripture. However, we see that an expanded view is needed to appreciate all that God is trying to teach us through this exchange between Jesus and the lawyer. Most people only process two things that Jesus is telling them to do (loving God and loving others), when really there are three instructions to follow (love God, love yourself, love others). In knowing that, we become clear on WHAT to do, but not on HOW to do it. That leaves us asking God for wisdom in the following ways:

1. God, where can I get this love that you have commanded me to offer you, others, and myself?
2. God, what does it look like for me to love myself?

Thankfully the first question is answered quite easily as you read 1 John 4:7 (see verses 7-21 for more context). We are able to love God because he loves us. It's NOT a chicken and egg scenario where you wonder what comes first. God loves us, and only then are we able to love. God has deposited in us/given us what He requires of us.

The second question can be a bit more challenging. If loving others is essentially treating them the way we would like to be treated, perhaps loving yourself is similar to how God would have you love others.

To love someone do you need to put him or her at the center of your universe?

To love someone do you have their needs and desires take precedent over all the needs and desires of others around you?

To love someone, do his or her feelings need to set the tone of your day?

The answers are no, no, no.

Loving yourself is NOT about putting yourself at the center of the universe. (That's God's place!) Neither is loving yourself about meeting your needs at the expense of others or about over-emphasizing your emotions.

So often we are told to treat others as you want to be treated (the essence of loving others as you love yourself). However, some of us tend to treat others with way more kindness, graciousness, and health than we treat ourselves. In this case, maybe a reversal of the adage is needed: treat yourself as you would treat others!

Prayer: Spend time praying that you would not follow in the world's way of being a lover of self but that you would experience joy and glory for God as you love yourself with the love He provides!

In Closing: We have two clear options, one God-honoring and life giving, the other the exact opposite. God calls us to love Him first and out of that love, to love others as we love ourselves. There are three recipients of love. We cannot fully love others unless we have a healthy and holy love for ourselves.



Additional Biblical Resource

"A Biblical View of Human Worth" (English)

The purpose of this document is to communicate the Christian view of the worth of all people. This document has three major sections. Section 1 discusses the worth of all people, including those who are not Christians and have had no opportunity to hear the gospel. Section 2 asks how one can find a common basis to uphold the value of human life with those who do not hold a Christian worldview. This section is particularly written for Christians who work together with non-religious organizations. Section 3 shares the Biblical teaching on the worth of the Christian. The following are the major headings of this document:

Section 1: A Christian view of the worth of all people

Section 2: Advocating the worth of all people with those who do not accept a Christian world view

Section 3: The worth of the Christian

Part A: Where does their worth come from?

Part B: Moving God's truth from the mind to the spirit

Part C: But isn't the self sinful, wicked, and worthless?

Section 1: A Christian view of the worth of all people

The Bible teaches the great value of all people, regardless of their relationship to God or their awareness of the gospel. God deems all people to be of great worth primarily because He has created them in His image.

Genesis 1:26-27 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

God repeatedly states how deeply He loves all people, regardless of their awareness of Him.

Jonah 4:11 But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?

Matthew 9:36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

God expresses love for those who are in the midst of rebellion against him.

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is...patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Luke 23:34 Jesus said of those who were crucifying him, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

All peoples of the world are so valuable to God the Father that he would allow His Son Jesus to die on their behalf.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

While God will execute judgment on all who do not know Christ, this judgment is not something that brings him joy.

Ezekiel 33:11 As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is...patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

God values all people regardless of their gender, age, wealth, race, talent, and exposure to His church and His Word. God loves children.

Matthew 18:10 See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.

Matthew 19:14 Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.

God loves women as well as men.

John 11:5 Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

God equally loves people of all races.

Acts 10:34-35 God does not show favoritism, but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.

Revelation 5:9 You were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

God loves the poor as well as the rich.

Luke 6:20 Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Luke 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

What has been shared so far indicates the great worth God places on the life of each person. However, a holistic view of mankind requires that one also understands how deeply sin has touched each person. One must understand the judgment of God that resides upon all people because of sin.

Romans 3:19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.

Romans 3:23 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

John 3:36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.

Romans 1:18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men.

This in no way keeps the Christian from acting in loving ways toward all men, even those who do not know God. God Himself acts in loving ways toward non-Christians and commands that Christians do the same.

Matthew 5:44-45 Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Galatians 6:10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Section 2: Advocating the worth of all people with those who do not accept a Christian world view

Many Christians work in corporate, academic, and non-profit entities that do not hold to a Christian worldview. People at these organizations or in government may not have a belief in God, the Bible, or even the immortal souls of men. The Christian passionately says to everyone, "You are loved and valuable," based on a biblical worldview. How can a Christian advocate the worth of all people to those who do not accept Christian teaching as an authority?

There are ways a Christian can advocate the worth of all people and they have more to do with experience and emotion than with propositional logic. Everyone has an innate sense that all people have significance. That innate sense is not equally strong in everyone. People are all conditioned by their cultures, families of origin, experiences, and sin. As a result, some people struggle to find worth with certain ethnic groups, children, women, the physically disabled, the poor, perceived enemies,

and so on. Yet there is a sense that, even for an ethnic group that is perceived as an enemy, their own families and countrymen will find value in them.

Christians can appeal to this innate sense of value by sharing their own love for those perceived to be of little worth. Pictures and videos are tools that can evoke positive emotional responses. Sometimes those who have little in the way of emotional attachment to people have developed a strong bond with a pet. They understand their animal has accomplished nothing in the way of education, work, or personal attainment; yet, they have developed a strong emotional bond with their pet. Love for God's creation at any level can become a springboard that leads to love for people.

Sometimes the goal of a Christian organization is to receive permission or funding to do a particular charitable work. Some parties involved may not see the value of human life, but there may be political or economic advantages for them to allow the charitable work to happen. Many governments and businesses realize that caring for the needy gives them a good public image. While this is not all that the Christian hopes for, such passive acknowledgment of human significance may be enough to allow them to accomplish their intended ministries.

One powerful way to proclaim the value of human life is charitable works by Christians. When Christian people voluntarily serve complete strangers that have nothing to offer them, they send a powerful message to non-Christians who are watching. Their generosity does not fit inside the mindset of anyone whose life values are materialism or power. That's why Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." The selfless love of Christians for undesirable people raises a huge question mark in the hearts of onlookers. They will naturally wonder the reason for the generosity, which then leaves the door open for the believer to share about the unconditional love of God.

Section 3: The worth of the Christian

The Bible speaks of the worth of all people, which was addressed in Section 1. Because of the Fall and the entrance of sin into the world, mankind has fallen under the judgment of God. The image of God is still a part of all people, but it has been marred by sin. All people have great worth in the eyes of God, but all people also are under the judgment of God because of sin.

This is not true for the Christian who has been forgiven and made new in Christ. The Bible has far more to say about the worth of the Christian than it has to say about the worth of mankind in general. There is abundant reason, based on biblical truth, for every Christian to understand their worth before God and to have a healthy self-concept.

Because this section is longer, it is divided into three parts. **Part A** asks where one's sense of worth ought to come from. **Part B** discusses how one can transform

these truths into personal experience. **Part C** asks, "Isn't the self evil and sinful? Shouldn't one put the self to death instead of discussing its worth?"

Part A: Where does one's worth come from?

Everyone searches for worth and meaning in life based on something. What they choose to value will determine whether they are able to attain a sense of worth. If they believe that human worth is determined by beauty, intelligence, wealth, or status, they will believe they have worth to the extent they have those things. To the extent they do not have those things, they will feel worthless and insignificant.

The battleground for significance is in the *mind*. What one *believes* determines what they *value*, and what they *value* determines what they *feel* about themselves and others. The Bible stresses that a person's beliefs determine their values:

John 8:32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

Romans 12:2-3 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will. For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

To truly understand one's worth, a person must value the things God values. They must see themselves through his eyes.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 This is what the LORD says, "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD.

1 Samuel 16:7 The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.

2 Corinthians 10:12 We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.

Having an understanding of one's significance in Christ does not result in pride. Rather, one learns that fellow Christians are as loved and valued by God as they are. God's goal is not that one becomes lifted up in pride or that one despises himself. His goal is that one loves oneself the same as they love others.

Matthew 23:39 Love your neighbor as yourself.

Ephesians 5:28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

The Christian should not believe that they are more important than others or that others are more important than them. Jesus commands everyone to love others *as* they love themselves. Understanding one's significance in Christ helps one to understand the value of others' lives as well as their own.

Part B: Moving God's truth from the mind to the spirit

One does not need to be a Christian very long to know that God loves them. The Bible repeatedly confirms God's vast love for Christians. No Christian would dispute this love. Yet many Christians do not have a sense of feeling loved by God. Some Christians have hearts filled with guilt and shame because of their sins and failures. Others see God the Father as a great philanthropist who generously gives eternal life but may not particularly *like* them. One may be ready to acknowledge the love of God in their minds but may not have come to the point where it creates a sense of feeling loved in their hearts.

God *wants* the Christian to be deeply aware of his passionate emotional love for them. In Ephesians 3:16-19, Paul prayed:

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Paul is writing to a group of people who are already believers. Paul wants the Ephesians—and all the saints—to grasp the love of Christ in a manner that surpasses head knowledge. God wants all Christians everywhere to experience God's love in their hearts. The Apostle John expresses the same thing:

1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

When many Christians think of entering into God's presence, they do not imagine joyfully coming before a loving Father. They have hearts full of fear, shame, and inadequacy. Why? John says these Christians have not been made perfect in love. It has already been clarified that these Christians are completely forgiven, adopted into the family of God, and passionately loved by the Father. Yet their hearts are dominated by fear, not by joy and peace.

Why are many Christians full of fear and shame? Because they are more emotionally in touch with their own flaws than they are the truth of whom they are

in Christ. God wants Christians to experience His love in a way that surpasses their experiences of pain and loss.

God tells Christians His intensely passionate love for them is not something they will experience once they improve themselves, but something they will experience just as they are today. God was speaking about the Prodigal Son, not the compliant brother, when He said in Luke 15:20 and 15:10:

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.... there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

This is how God and His angels feel about someone who has made a complete mess of his life. God's passionate love is not earned by the diligent work of the obedient Christian; it is the birthright of every child of God.

So how can one take the truths that are in their mind and move them 18 inches south into their heart? Jesus said in John 15:9, "Abide in My love." If one's Christian experience is only composed of hard work, they will only experience God's love on a rational level. Warmth and compassion in marriage is maintained by regular, consistent expression of affection for one another. Maintaining the warmth of that relationship requires time and affection from both persons. God extends his passionate love to Christians every day. Christians must make it a priority to abide in Christ's love. This means inviting the love of God to fill those areas of life where the deepest hurt and loss are felt. Experiencing God's love in one's heart is not a one-time event. Like a healthy marriage, it is something that is able to grow in stages over time.

Part C: But isn't the self sinful, wicked, and worthless?

Some object to an emphasis on the worth of the Christian because of what the Bible teaches about the sinfulness of human nature. There are passages that can be mistaken to say that human beings are worthless because of their rebellion against God. Some have concluded that it is the duty of the Christian to eradicate the self, not to find the value of the self. The following are some passages that speak clearly about the wickedness of the human heart:

Romans 7:18 I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature.

Romans 7:23-25 I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Mark 10:18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone."

Mark 8:35 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.

Luke 14:26 If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.

Colossians 3:5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature.

Some Christians misunderstand passages like these to say that their self is by nature valueless and needs to be eradicated. They believe that somehow God and themselves (or possibly just God alone) work together to destroy "me" so that a new, Christ-centered being can come into existence.

It feels awkward to embrace the worth of the believer while at the same time comprehending the wickedness of human nature as taught by the verses above. It feels as if both cannot be true.

It is helpful to understand four chronological stages of human nature. First is the **innocent** self, the way God created Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Second is the **fallen** self. This refers to the condition of mankind after the Fall and continues to describe all non-Christians today. Third is the **redeemed** self. This refers to all born-again Christians in this life. Christians have a reborn, transformed nature yet still struggle with that fallen side of themselves that still lives within. Fourth is the **glorified** self, the Christian in heaven who is perfected and no longer has any inclination toward sin. The following will look at each of these one by one:

1. The innocent self: This refers to the way Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden before sin entered the world.

Genesis 1:26-27 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Despite the Fall, the image of God remains in all people. This leads Christians to affirm the value of all human life, as was discussed in Section One.

2. The *fallen self*: The sin of Adam and Eve brought corruption and death to all of their descendants. Mankind stands separated from God because of sin and its effects.

Ephesians 4:17-18 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

Romans 3:9-10 What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one."

Because of the Fall, all people have hearts that are inclined away from God. They are not able to please God. This fallen self is at war with God, and this self must be put to death to enter into a right relationship with God.

Romans 8:7-9 The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature, but by the Spirit if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

3. The *redeemed self*: When a person comes to faith in Christ, he is reborn—born again. God gives birth to a new nature that did not exist prior to salvation. The qualities of a believer, listed below, are true of every redeemed person whether they have been believers for days or years, whether they are living in or out of fellowship with God.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

Galatians 5:24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

Romans 6:2-4 We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

The redeemed self is no longer controlled by sin, Satan, and death. However, in this life the redeemed Christian still has the evil desires of the fallen self within. There is a lifelong battle against the sinful desires of the evil nature and the godly desires of the redeemed nature. This results in Christians being torn between two passions and two allegiances. It feels like an internal civil war.

Galatians 5:17 For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

Romans 7:18-19 I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.

When one affirms the worth of the Christian, they are referring to the *redeemed* self. It is very correct to say that the *fallen* self is in rebellion against God and must be put to death. As a result, one must hold to two complementary views of the nature of the Christian. On the one hand, every Christian has a *redeemed* nature that is of great value. At the same time, every Christian also has a *fallen* nature that is in opposition to God and must be resisted, as was just seen.

Many hold to an imbalanced view of the believer that emphasizes one part of his nature over the other. Those who de-emphasize the *fallen* nature can hold to a view of Christianity that does not compel the Christian to righteous living. Those who de-emphasize the *redeemed* nature can have a self-loathing faith that sees Christian growth as a constant process of hating and eradicating one's self. A healthy, holistic view of the Christian is acutely aware of both sides of his nature.

Part 4: The glorified self: This will be the state of every Christian in heaven. Upon death, God will finally eradicate the fallen nature. Not only will one not sin any more, but also they will not be capable of being tempted.

1 John 3:2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

1 John 2:16-17 For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

Hebrews 12:23 You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect.