

SELF-WORTH VS. SELF-ESTEEM

From Bodies and Boundaries



Teaching the Way of Love

Parenting With the Heart of Christ

For all parents
with young adults.

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. The same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes.

~1 Corinthians 12:4-6, 11



Young adults seem to question everything in life because they are in pursuit of the truth. Specifically, they are seeking answers to these two questions; who am I and why am I here.

Before the teen years, adolescents spend minimal time contemplating the reason for their existence. But, as soon as they begin to transform into adults, they become introspective and begin asking deeper questions about their purpose in the world.

When youth start searching for answers to these big questions, parents are called to guide them towards the truth about themselves. In the past, parents would identify their child's unique talents and gifts through observation. Just by watching their child in action, parents would learn where the child's natural abilities lie. At the same time, parents would see where their child struggled. Pinpointing both the strengths and weaknesses helped parents direct their child towards opportunities that would fortify the gifts and improve the weaknesses. And, determining the balance between what one did well and what one didn't do so well gave the youth a clearer answer to life's big questions.

In recent years, a new spin on a child's abilities has found its way into our culture. This new theory states that all youth are equally talented and gifted. Therefore, all youth are capable of doing anything that they attempt. Following this philosophy, abilities come from a personal desire (I can do whatever I want to do) and not an inherent gift (a talent that comes from God). Parents are no longer expected to observe their child and provide an honest assessment of talents. Rather, parents are obliged to provide their child with every possible opportunity to excel. They are expected to make their youth feel successful and good no matter the quality or caliber of the outcome because the failure to do so would result in a loss of value.

These are two very different approaches with two very different outcomes. The first approach is based on an authentic concept of one's value that is called self-worth. Self-worth is a

fair measurement of one's uniqueness that comes from God. It is the truthful response to the question, "who am I created to be in God's image" because it affirms that worth and dignity are inherent and unchanging. The second approach is based on self-esteem which is an emotional response to one's talents and abilities that can change. A person who believes in self-esteem will find that worthiness is attained through success and lost through failure. In this way, self-esteem is dependent on external pressures and therefore misses the mark on truthfully answering the question, "who am I created to be in God's image."

Self-worth is a measure of one's worth that comes from the inside of your child. It is the belief that she matters simply because she is a child of God. Thus, it is unconditional. Self-esteem, in contrast, is a measure of worth that comes from the outside of your child. It is based on one's ability to perform in ways that are valued by others. In this way, self-esteem is conditional; it is a moving target.

Self-worth is the firm foundation for all emerging adults because it is the one that comes from God. The Bible tells us in the book of Jeremiah that God knew us before he formed us in the womb. It also tells us in 1 Corinthians that no one person has been given all of the gifts. This distribution of gifts is part of God's plan. Each person is meant to be part of a loving community where all persons serve each other. This service can only happen when people have unique talents that they are willing to share with one another.

Self-worth is meant to be a constant reminder of one's connection to God and His divine plan of service to others. It is the lived reality that "God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him. In this is love brought to perfection among us." (1 John 4:16-17) Self-worth makes it possible for youth to accurately assess their strengths and weaknesses and confidently use these unique talents in service of others. It, unlike self-esteem, is lasting and stable. It is the solid footing upon which an emerging adult can understand who she is and why she is here.

From the DVD (WATCH THE CLIP THAT CORRESPONDS WITH THIS SEGMENT.)

Self-worth comes from _____ of your child. And self-esteem comes from _____ of your child.

Self-concept is self-_____. It gives you an _____ vision of yourself.

Affirm your child's _____ rather than their _____.

Be _____ about your child's abilities. Send the message that unique gifts come from _____.

No one person is good at _____. That is why we _____ each other.

A person cannot fully find herself, except through a sincere _____ of self.

Continue the Discussion

Read and reflect on the following questions and examples.

1. Why does self-worth provide a more accurate picture of your abilities than self-esteem? Give examples.
2. Is it possible to think too highly of yourself? Explain.
3. How do people who find value in *what they do* differ from people who find value in *who they are*?
4. Which young adult is better equipped to resist risk behaviors; the one who has self-worth or the one who has self-esteem? Explain.
5. How do young adults benefit from knowing both their strengths and weaknesses? How might they suffer when they only know their strengths?

Make a Plan

For The Parent

Everyone has natural talents which are inherited from their parents. These could include talents like being out-going or shy, a leader or a follower, agreeable or argumentative. And, every person has spiritual gifts that are given to them by God through Baptism and Confirmation. The most recognized of these gifts are called the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Look at the two lists below and consider your child. The list on the left includes groups of natural talents and the list on the right includes spiritual gifts with an example of how they are demonstrated. Read through each list and circle the natural talents and the spiritual gifts that you see in your emerging adult. When you are finished, answer the questions below the lists. Finally, compare your worksheet with that of your child. Discuss the similarities and the differences.

Natural Talents from Parents	Spiritual Gifts from the Holy Spirit
Inventive - Curious - Creative	Wisdom/Perfect Judgment
Consistent - Cautious - Perfectionist	Understanding/Perceptive
Efficient - Organized - Planner	Counsel/Right Action
Easy Going - Casual - Flexible	Fortitude/Courage Under Fire
Out-going - Energetic - Networking	Knowledge/Intelligent Reflection
Reserved - Private - Remote	Piety/Joyful Devotion
Friendly - Compassionate - Responsive	Fear of the Lord/Submission to God
Teacher - Leader - Responsible	
Secure - Confident - Assertive	
Vulnerable - Timid - Humble	
Rule Keeper - Compliant - Traditional	

Which of these natural talent groupings is the most obvious in your child? Explain.

Which spiritual gift is most obvious in your child? Explain.

How can you help your child develop the most obvious talent and gift in his or her life?

Make a Plan

For The Student

Everyone has natural talents which are inherited from their parents. These include talents like being out-going or shy, a leader or a follower, agreeable or argumentative. And every person has spiritual gifts that are given to them by God through Baptism and Confirmation. The most recognized of these gifts are called the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Look at the two lists below and think about yourself. The list on the left includes groups of natural talents and the list on the right includes spiritual gifts with examples of how they are demonstrated. Read through each list and circle the natural talents and spiritual gifts that you see in yourself. When you are finished, answer the questions below the lists. Finally, compare your worksheet with that of your parent(s). Discuss the similarities and the differences.

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Rule Keeper - Compliant - Traditional	

Which of these natural talent groupings is your most obvious talent? Explain.

Which spiritual gift is your most obvious gift? Explain.

How can you develop the top talents and gift in your life?

Imprimatur: †Most Rev. William P. Cullahan, OFM Conv.
Bishop of LaCrosse
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