

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your correspondence to the Al Denson Show and for tuning in every week to our program. My prayer for you is to be encouraged in your daily walk with God through the words of this booklet. Our hope is that in turn you will tell others of what God is doing through our ministry to youth and parents on TV. I am convinced you will not find another program on any network anywhere that deals with issues today's youth and their parents are facing, and provides answers from a Godly perspective.

Please help us with your donation. Your support will not only keep this program on the air, but will allow us to continue providing these materials on a weekly basis to thousands of people as a gift of encouragement. We need YOU to partner with us. All gifts are tax deductible. Please make your gift payable to Celebration Ministries.

May God bless you and thank you for watching!

Sincerely,



An Outreach of Celebration Ministries

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The **Rx** for
Healthy
Esteem



When Al Denson speaks to students—more than 2,000,000 face to face — he comes with his own story of struggle and tragedy. In December 1994,

Al's much publicized, near-death experience in the crash of a small aircraft led him to a rare insight about the tenuous nature of earthly life.

With eight albums behind him and a string of #1 songs and awards that includes a Dove for "Best Praise Album of the Year", Denson's songs and messages to students from junior high through college continue to touch an ever-widening audience. In addition to his own performances, Al has been featured at crusades for Dr. Billy Graham, Franklin Graham, Ralph Bell, and Dawson McAllister. His new TV show, "The Al Denson Show", is seen by millions across America. The program targets and involves youth and the issues they face every day.

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The Rx for Healthy Esteem

We hear a lot about self-esteem these days, but what is self-esteem anyway? I'm glad you asked. Self-esteem is simply what you think and feel about yourself, and teenagers usually get their sense of self-esteem from those around them. Even those among you that appear to be successful spend most of their time playing the "comparison game." Everywhere you look it seems that there are people who are smarter, funnier, more coordinated, better looking, taller, shorter, heavier, thinner or more talented.

A good example is the Miss America Pageant. This is an evening that starts with fifty or so beautiful, talented, intelligent "winners". Within a matter of minutes, there are only ten "winners" and forty "losers". A little while later there are five "winners" and forty-five "losers". By the end of the evening, there is only one "winner" and all those forty-nine beautiful, talented, intelligent, young women have been reduced to the status of "loser" in the eyes of America. Do they leave that place any less beautiful, talented or intelligent than when they arrived? Of course not. They simply become victims of the comparison game.

We all tend to compare ourselves to others who have more of what we want and not less. So, as a result we almost always lose when we

play the comparison game. The result is a very distorted self-image, and a poor self-image will affect every area of your life because

- what you think and feel about yourself AFFECTS how you respond to life
- how you respond to life AFFECTS all your relationships
- your relationships AFFECT how others respond to you
- how others respond to you AFFECTS how you think and feel about yourself.

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The cycle is a vicious one: You don't like yourself, so you respond to life negatively. A negative outlook on life always affects your relationships. No one likes a person who is negative, angry or complaining, so other people respond back to you in a negative way, and as a result you feel even worse about yourself.

Even the most horrible case of the flu can't make you feel as bad as having poor self-

esteem. Wouldn't it be great if there were a magic pill you could take that would make your self-esteem healthy? Well, God does have a prescription that will heal your sense of self-esteem if you will follow it to the letter. We'll get to that later, but first let me talk to you about where the problem really lies. It begins with a thing called your "belief system".

The way you act and the choices you make are a picture of how you really feel about yourself.

This is how it works:

- We each have a belief system.
- That belief system determines what we think about.
- What we think about determines how we feel.
- How we feel determines how we act and the choices we make.

The way you act and the choices you make are a picture of how you really feel about yourself. Your belief system is the most important thing about you, because it will determine everything in your life. You see, before you were really old enough to think for yourself, your thought processes were dictated by those around you. Other people taught you what they believed to be truth. Eventually, these “truths” became convictions about yourself, other people and the world in general. These basic convictions then became your patterns of thinking about yourself and responding to others and the world around you. Here’s how it works:

As you were growing up, the people around you taught you some important things about life:

- who you are
- who to trust
- what is good and bad
- what you are worth

This information became the basis for your own belief system through which you evaluate everything in life. You see, truth then for you is whatever you have been taught truth to be, whether it is really true or not. Here is an extreme illustration to help you understand the point:

Suppose your mother grew up being told that the earth is flat. She accepted that as “truth” so she passed what she believed to be “truth” on to you. From the time you were a baby you have been taught that the earth is flat, so this becomes “truth” to you and is incorporated into your belief system. As you grew older you did hear information that contradicted what your mother had taught you; but our parents are usually the ones who influence us the most in our formative years and the impressions made on us at an early age are the hardest to undo.

Well, suppose one day someone offers you an all-expense paid vacation. You are to sail first-class on a cruise around the world; but you have a problem because your belief system says, “The world is flat”. Your belief system determines your thoughts so you think to yourself, “If I try to sail around the world, I’ll fall off and die.” Your thoughts determine your feelings, so you begin to feel fearful about going on such a cruise. Your feelings determine your choices and actions, so you decide not to accept the offer. As a result, you miss out on the experience of a lifetime, all because of a faulty belief system.

In the same way, if it is instilled in you as you are growing up that you do not have worth and value, or that the only way to have worth is to perform well, then your belief system will tell you, “You are worthless, you have no value, you don’t deserve anything good, you deserve to be punished, you are hopeless, you cannot change.” If this is what your belief system tells you about yourself, then you will have thoughts that are always negative. Negative feelings about yourself will follow your negative thoughts, and sadly the result will be poor self-esteem.

Recognizing that you have a distorted view of yourself, others, or of the world in general all because of a belief system that is flawed is where you begin. Becoming a mature adult means determining what is really true, facing that reality, and making the changes that are necessary in your thoughts, attitudes and actions. Don’t let the incorrect messages that you were sent in your childhood continue to dominate and define your life experiences today. Remember, your present is more influenced by how you see your future than by what has happened in your past.

Now that you have heard all of this, you still may not know for sure whether your belief system is faulty. How can you know? Remember, your actions are always belated announcements of your thoughts and feelings. If you are aware of this principle, then you can begin to recognize that your actions may be revealing the self-doubts and feelings of inadequacy that are really present in your life. You can always tell what you believe not by what you say, but by how you respond to life.

Answer these questions about yourself:

- Am I a boastful person?
- Am I an insecure person?
- Am I an easily intimidated person?
- Am I a critical or negative person?
- Am I a sexually promiscuous person?
- Am I a poor listener?
- Am I an argumentative person?
- Am I a person who finds it hard to forgive?
- Am I a person who is overly impressed with titles, honors or fame?
- Am I a person who has difficulty accepting compliments?
- Am I an overly sensitive person?
- Am I a jealous person?
- Am I a poor loser in competition?

Poor self-esteem is the result of a faulty belief system

If you answered yes to any of these, then it is an indication that you are struggling with feelings of inferiority and lack of self-worth. We all want to feel good about ourselves. Unfortunately, most of us have been deceived into believing what the world says about where happiness and fulfillment are found. Here are some examples:

- If I make good grades, I will feel good about myself.
- If I have the perfect body, then I will feel good about myself.
- If I make the team, then I will feel good about myself.
- If I date the right person, then I'll feel good about myself.
- If I'm accepted by the right crowd, then I'll feel good about myself.
- If I get accepted into the right college, then I will feel good about myself.
- If I get a degree, then I will feel good about myself.
- If I get the right job and make a lot of money, then I will feel good about myself.
- If I marry the right person, then I'll feel good about myself.
- If I live in the right neighborhood and drive the right car, then I will feel good about myself.
- If I have perfect children, then I will feel good about myself.

Even if you could achieve all these things, there would always be another level to obtain. The standard would always be raised just a little so you would never be quite good enough to make it.

Are you a person who is caught in the trap of believing that you have to perform at a certain level or have certain things to feel good about yourself? How do you know? Here are nine behavior patterns that will show you if you have fallen into this trap.

- 1. Perfectionism.** A perfectionist believes that the only way to have value as a person is to be perfect, so in order to be perfect you must be right all the time.
- 2. Avoid Taking Risks.** You refuse to get involved in anything where you possibly could fail or not be the best. You find it better sometimes not to try at all rather than to try and fail.
- 3. Anger And Resentment.** You cannot handle having anyone disagree with you because you assume they think you have no value or worth if you're not perfect. So, when you are challenged you become angry and resentful.
- 4. Pride.** You base your entire self-worth on being successful, on what you have accomplished. Pride looks like self-confidence, but in reality it is only a mask for a fear of failure.

5. Anxiety And Fear. You are always worried that something is going to go wrong in your life that will make you look like a failure to the world.

6. Depression. When you fail more than you think you should, you become convinced that you are worthless, so you get depressed. Most of the time what looks like either hopelessness or anger in your life is really depression.

7. Dishonesty. You attempt to hide your failures by lying or you exaggerate the truth in order to take credit for things that you believe will make you look more successful.

8. Low Motivation. This is an unwillingness to become involved in anything or with anyone because your fear of failure has become so great. You are shutting down and giving up.

9. Alcohol and/or Drugs. This is the way you are dealing with the pain and the fear of failure that has become so overwhelming in your life. You think dulling the pain or escaping the fear is the answer.

All of these are the serious behavioral patterns of a person with low or no self-esteem. This is all really bad stuff, so where's the prescription? Let's review before we get to that:

We all have a belief system that determines what we think about. What we think about will determine how we feel, and how we feel determines our sense of self-esteem. Poor self-esteem is the result of a faulty belief system. Remember, it is impossible to have a sense of self-worth that is inconsistent with your belief system. You can tell what you believe about yourself, not by what you say, but by how you live. You will always live out what you believe, and the rest is just talk. If you are a Christian who is making poor choices and living beneath your privilege because of a faulty belief system, it is either because you don't know what God says about you, or because you have forgotten who you really are in Christ and need to be reminded.

If you have accepted Christ as your Savior, God says that you are: totally forgiven, unconditionally loved and accepted by Him, holy, righteous, blameless, pure and pleasing right now, a royal son or daughter of the King. If you believe what God says about you, then your sense of self-worth will reflect that.

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But, if your belief system is faulty and you believe the lies that say: God's love and acceptance are conditional, based on your performance, God is angry with you, or disappointed in you, you are still a guilty, dirty sinner at heart who can never change, then that is how you will think and feel about yourself, and you will continue to have a poor self-image.

A person who builds a belief system based on the truth of the Word of God will have a healthy sense of self-esteem and will be able to live a consistent, godly life. But, if that same person builds a belief system based on lies, wrong thinking will cause his or her feelings to be distorted and a poor sense of self-esteem will result.

So, here's the Rx that must be taken daily to cure an ailing self-esteem:

Romans 12:2 tells us that we are not to conform to the world's way of thinking, but that we are to have our lives transformed (changed) by the renewing (reprogramming) of our minds to God's way of thinking. If we are really going to have our thinking changed so we can make wise choices and live a consistent, godly life, then we must rehearse what God says on a daily basis.

The facts on which a Christian should build his or her belief system are:

- God is perfect in His love for me
- God is infinite in His wisdom toward me
- God is completely sovereign (in control) over me
- God is always and only good to me
- Because of Jesus, I am completely forgiven of all my sin
- Because of Jesus, I am now holy, righteous, blameless, and pure
- Because of Jesus, I am now unconditionally loved and accepted by God
- Because of Jesus, I am pleasing to God right now
- Because of Jesus, God is not angry with me or disappointed in me

If you follow God's prescription everyday to the letter (the letter to the Romans, that is!) the result will be a new belief system and a healed, healthy self-esteem.

The world in which you live may judge your worth by your looks, your I.Q., or the size of your bank account. This is a cheap and shallow way of thinking and one you don't have to accept. Developing a positive self-image is a lifelong process. The earlier in life you choose to reject the system of evaluating people that society embraces, and build a solid foundation of real and lasting values based on the Word of God, the better you will be.

A Word To Parents...

You need to know that low self-esteem is also characterized by an impaired ability to give or receive love. The number of teenagers today suffering from the effects of this problem is at an epidemic level. The profile of these teens does not always depend on the background or home that they come from, but we do know that parents are the biggest players in this issue.



The consequences of poor self-esteem are very serious and always lead to rebellion in one form or the other. Sometimes that rebellion is loud and ugly, and sometimes it is passive as the teen quietly rejects the values of his or her parents, and becomes disinterested in grades, goals or life in general. Anything that conveys to a child that he is unloved or unwanted will only deepen these negative thoughts and feelings. This can be communicated in many different ways, both overt and covert:

- When parents say things like “I wish you had never been born”, “I wanted a girl/boy”, “you were a mistake”, “you’ll never amount to anything”, “why can’t you be like...”.
- When parents show no affection toward or interest in a child.
- When parents physically, verbally or emotionally abuse a child.
- When parents love conditionally or offer acceptance that is performance based.

- When parents continually express disapproval or disappointment to a child.
- When parents place unrealistic expectations on a child because they see that child as an extension of their own identity.
- When parents are permissive. This is neglect, and a child sees a lack of discipline as a lack of love and concern.
- When parents are overprotective. A child is sent the message “you cannot do life without my help, you are not a capable person.”
- When parents do not give a child their undivided time and attention.
- When parents do not listen to a child with their ears, eyes and heart.
- When a parent abandons a child through death, divorce or suicide.
- When a father abdicates his leadership role in the family. A father who doesn’t provide strength, protection, discipline and values in the home, soon makes a child realize that he is not a priority in his father’s life.

These examples sound extreme, but unfortunately they are common occurrences in a lot of families today. Even in the best of situations most homes today are fragmented by fathers whose work separates them from their families, mothers who leave the home to work, teens who work, children who are being raised by day-care, and families who seldom even share a meal together. This trend has had a devastating effect on children and teenagers alike.



Poor self-esteem always causes a teenager to feel unloved, unacceptable, unworthy, incapable of doing life, inferior and guilty for even living. Left unchecked these feelings lead to anger, bitterness, a refusal to communicate, ambivalence, distrust and rebellion against all authority. The vast majority of teenagers today are bitterly disappointed with who and what they are. Much of the rebellion and hostility of teenagers today comes from overwhelming, uncontrollable feelings of inferiority and inadequacy that are the result of poor self-esteem. Too often parents spend enormous amounts of time and energy dealing with the symptom (rebellion), when they should be addressing the real issue which is poor self-esteem.

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