

What am I worth? (1)

How others affect our sense of worth



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The Lord willing, I will be considering with you a series of messages on the topic of True Worth. I will be concentrating on what is true worth in this series of messages, to help us ponder over what is true value in life, and for today, we will consider "What am I worth?"

Self-esteem

In life, many of us are constantly affected by how other people think of us, and how we regard ourselves.

The term "self-esteem" has been used in many situations to refer to how we regard ourselves, and in relation to how other people regard us, and if we think through our own lives, and observe the lives of others, we recognize that this is an issue that affects us very, very deeply.

“Self-esteem” basically refers to a good opinion of oneself when it is used in a positive way. When it is used in a context where we refer to low self-esteem, we refer to a condition where we view ourselves poorly, and are distressed and insecure. The word “esteem” basically means “an estimation of worth”, or from its original meaning, “to fix a price for”. So it refers to how we regard ourselves, how we regard other people, how we esteem what something is worth.

How do you regard yourself?

How do you regard yourself?

In many situations, over many years of life, there must be many occasions where you reflect upon yourself... and there are certain impressions, feelings and thoughts that come to you.

Are you proud of yourself? Do you regard yourself highly? Do you think others should be like you? There are many who regard themselves very highly – they are capable... they have power... they can impress others... and they think they have achieved much in their lives.

On the other hand, others may not be in this category... Are you uncomfortable and embarrassed with yourself? Do you dislike yourself? Do you find it difficult to face life... thinking of all your deficiencies, all your weaknesses, all your failures... how other people view you, look at you... and you are very uncomfortable... embarrassed?

Do you wish that you were someone else... someone that you admire... someone whom you think is in a position where people would appreciate? Or, are you at ease with yourself? Are you peaceful about yourself... how you have developed so far... and you are glad to be who you are and what you are?

In reality, many of us may not always be proud, neither always uncomfortable, nor always at ease.

There are moments when we have done something which we think is good, important, valuable... and we may regard ourselves rather highly. At other times, we may have faltered... we may have failed... when others may have said things about us that are not favourable... and we may dislike ourselves... and become depressed. At other times, we are quite peaceful... we are happy to be who we are.

How others regard us

From early childhood until old age, we are often very deeply conscious with regard to various aspects of our lives, including in particular, our appearance, our abilities and our achievements. This consciousness of our own lives is usually very much related to our concern as to how others regard us in these areas.

We want others to think well of us, and many of our choices and the way we behave are very much affected by the desire to be accepted and appreciated.

This principle is important for us to recognize because it affects our lives very deeply, and we need to understand how we should respond to these influences in our lives.

While we may have some concern for what is good and meaningful – we bear this in mind, and we want to do something that is of value – yet we may find that many a time, we may be even more concerned with the image that others have of us, and this may very often determine the choices that we make.

Even at times when we know that the choice that we are making is not good... we are uneasy in our hearts... we recognize that God will not approve... yet we seem compelled to choose that path because of fear of what others would say... how they would view us.

So our perception of ourselves is often deeply affected by how we think others perceive us. In reality, whether they perceive us this way or not may not always be the same as what we think, but our perception of what they think of us very much affects the way we live our lives and how we choose.

What is our true worth?

It is good therefore for us to consider what is true worth. Our concern about what other people think of us is very much related to our understanding... our perception... or thinking... of what is of true worth.

It has to do with our concern about what we are worth: "How much am I worth?"

We could therefore consider: How is our self-esteem affected by the comments and conduct of others towards us...what they say... what they do... how they treat us? Is our self-esteem very easily affected by the comments and conduct of others?

Do we feel hurt by what others say or what they do toward us... how they regard us? When negative comments are made about us, do we feel very hurt?

Are we happy with their comments when they praise us? When they speak well of us, are we very happy because we are highly regarded?

Or are we unconcerned... we are not bothered with what others think and what others say? Maybe we think that that means that we are free from the opinions of men. But in reality, many of us who think that we are not concerned about what others say are very deeply concerned – we dare not face it, we do not want to face it, and so we do not bother, and we do not think about it, but deep in us, we are troubled and we are affected, and we live our lives with the desire to gain acceptance by others.

All of us go through various of these situations and turmoil within us, and we need to know what we are worth. Can we come to a better understanding of what we are worth – an accurate perception of ourselves that can help us to know how to live our lives well, and to be free?

The way we are affected can arise in many, many situations of life. Almost every day we are confronted with events, circumstances, situations that can affect us very deeply in these areas, and can affect the choices that we make, the way we live and respond.

Hannah's distress

Let us look at a passage in the Scriptures to ponder over this subject.

1 Samuel 1: 1-8

- 1 Now there was a certain man from Ramathaim-zophim from the hill country of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite.
- 2 And he had two wives: the name of one was Hannah and the name of the other Peninnah; and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.
- 3 Now this man would go up from his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas were priests to the LORD there.
- 4 And when the day came that Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and her daughters;
- 5 but to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, but the LORD had closed her womb.

- 6 Her rival, however, would provoke her bitterly to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb.
- 7 And it happened year after year, as often as she went up to the house of the LORD, she would provoke her, so she wept and would not eat.
- 8 Then Elkanah her husband said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep and why do you not eat and why is your heart sad? Am I not better to you than ten sons?"

This is a passage that describes a woman very distressed because of the words and conduct of another person. As far as the way the Scriptures present, Hannah seems to be a reasonably positive person, but in this situation, we see that Hannah was very deeply distressed; she was very deeply affected by the words and conduct of Peninnah. Why?

In the context we see that her great distress was, in this situation, basically related to her being barren: she was childless, and we are told that Peninnah would provoke her bitterly to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb. And so she wept and would not eat.

Her husband asked her, "Why is your heart sad? Am I not better to you than ten sons?" Hannah could not be comforted by the words of Elkanah, and we see that in her distress, Hannah prayed to God, and we are told Hannah came before God, and beseeched God for a son.

Being deeply affected by how she was viewed and treated, she prayed to God, and she made a vow to God that if God would look at her affliction, and would help her and give her a son, then she would give him to the Lord all the days of his life: she would dedicate her son to the Lord to serve God all the days of his life if God would answer her prayer.

So we see that this was the source of her distress – she had no children. Her self-esteem was affected because she had no children. Likely, it affected her sense of worth as a woman. A woman without children may give the impression that she was not fulfilling her role... she was not what she ought to be... she was not "worthy" as a woman.

And so, we read on in **1 Samuel 1: 12-18**

- 12 Now it came about, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli was watching her mouth.
- 13 As for Hannah, she was speaking in her heart, only her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard. So Eli thought she was drunk.
- 14 Then Eli said to her, "How long will you make yourself drunk? Put away your wine from you."
- 15 But Hannah answered and said, "No, my lord, I am a woman oppressed in spirit; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have poured out my soul before the LORD.
- 16 Do not consider your maidservant as a worthless woman; for I have spoken until now out of my great concern and provocation."
- 17 Then Eli answered and said, "Go in peace; and may the God of Israel grant your petition that you have asked of Him."
- 18 And she said, "Let your maidservant find favor in your sight." So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer *sad*.

When Hannah was praying, Eli mistook that she was drunk. Hannah responded: "No...I am a woman oppressed in spirit..." She was not drunk, but she was very oppressed: she was very deeply affected by the conduct of Peninnah, and by the sense of her not being what she ought to be.

When Eli made the remark, she said, "...Do not consider your maidservant as a worthless woman..." Not only Peninnah thought badly of her, but Eli also had a wrong impression of her, and she was distressed by this as well.

"...Do not consider your maidservant as a worthless woman..." Her sense of worth was affected by the way that others responded to her, and she asked Eli not to view her in that way. She explained: "...I have spoken until now out of my great concern and provocation."

She asked the Lord for a son, and she explained the situation to Eli, and when he understood, he said, "Go in peace; and may the God of Israel grant your petition that you have asked of Him." And she said, "Let your maidservant find favor in your sight." With these words, we find that Hannah was now peaceful – she went her way and ate, and her face was no longer *sad*.

What caused the change? Why was she so distressed, and why was she now no longer *sad*?

From the context, we see that she prayed to the Lord, and Eli had responded favourably, and assured her or encouraged her that God may grant her petition. She was no longer *sad* because Eli spoke favourably to her, and she was looking forward to God answering her prayer.

As a result of this incident, Samuel was born. He was dedicated to God, and Samuel became a significant prophet for God.

In this situation, we are specifically told that God closed the womb of Hannah. So it was something deliberate, in the sense that God in His sovereignty worked in that situation so that Hannah would be barren. Hannah responded to the situation in great distress, and in her distress she drew near to God.

Although being affected by people's comments can be very distressing, and we need not be so distressed in this form, very often it is in situations like that, that we may be more conscious of our need of God - we are more conscious of coming to Him, and seeking His help. And when God does help us, if our hearts are positive, we may actually grow stronger in our faith, and develop quality in our lives.

However, it may not always work this way. The comments of others may hurt us... may affect us deeply... we may become very depressed, and we may not be able to find a solution.

So how do we respond to these kinds of situations? How should we view the many aspects of our lives... how to respond in a way where we can find true freedom and meaning?

Issues that can affect our sense of worth

We can see that from childhood to old age, we are concerned about how others view us or treat us. The underlying principles are similar whether we are young or old, but there are also some differences. Let us consider some of these issues, and how they affect us.

Children

For children, whether they are regarded as clever or not, is important to them. How often have we heard a parent, a relative, a friend saying, "Clever boy!" and the child is so very happy when such a remark is made. Whether it is true or not, is not his primary concern. He likes to hear this term "Clever boy!" and the sad thing is that for many children this is more important to them than "Good boy!" If they can be clever, it may be more important to them than being good.

Others would be very much affected by whether they are regarded as good-looking. Whether boys or girls, if they are viewed as good-looking, they are very happy, and if they are regarded otherwise, it can affect them very deeply.

I recall an incident of a young girl who was taunted by her friends, and she was called "Fatty" or some term similar to that. This had a very deep effect on her. She was so distressed that she no longer wanted to live – she took her own life just because of remarks like that. Her self-esteem was so affected because she was called "Fatty".

To many people, it may be just a casual kind of remark, but it can have a very deep effect on others because it affects their own perception of themselves: they are not wanted... they are not loved... they are not appreciated... they are not recognized.

Others want to be regarded as capable: Whether playing a game... they want to win... or being able to speak well to impress people... to draw attention... in many ways, children want to be viewed as capable.

And these are areas that motivate them in the way they conduct themselves. True, there are many things they do just to enjoy themselves, but these are areas that bring enjoyment of a deeper kind, and also greater distress if they cannot have them.

At the heart of it, we can see that the underlying issue that affects them is associated with the desire to be loved and wanted. If they view that they are not loved and not wanted, they feel alone, desolate, insecure and distressed.

How about older people – women and men? What are the issues that affect us? In principle they are not very different, but there may be specific aspects that can affect us more significantly than children.

Women

For women, physical appearance and beauty is such a major issue in their lives. We all know how much money is spent on cosmetics, plastic surgery, clothes, and many other things in order to bring about physical beauty... attractiveness... It is an issue that affects women in all parts of the world.

This again is an area where many women can become very depressed when they are not good-looking. It affects their sense of worth, and because of this, they can be easily affected if someone were to comment that they are pretty... beautiful... straight away they can be very happy, and become more favourably disposed to the person who makes that remark.

The way we respond to situations can so easily be affected by what others say. A third party observing the situation would say, "That is very foolish!" And yet, in reality, how many women actually will respond in that way even though they know it is foolish.

Attention from others gives a sense of worth. Whether it be physical beauty or in other ways, if they can draw attention, especially of appreciation that they are regarded highly in some form or other, it brings a sense of worth to them, whereas negative remarks... people who disregard you... show that you are not worth listening to... can bring about a deep sense of failure... rejection.

As women grow, marriage also becomes an important issue, not necessarily because of the value and meaning of marriage but to many, it is a means to gain acceptance, and a sense of being wanted.

Many women as they grow older, and being teased that they are "left on the shelf", find it very hard to take. It is as if nobody wants them... they are rejected... they are not worth the attention of other people. So there are those who look for marriage in order to gain acceptance... to be regarded as being valued.

After marriage, they have other problems. If they have no children, they may end up like Hannah – distressed, deeply distressed, because their sense of worth again is affected. They are not "fully a woman" ... something is wrong with them... they are not able to have children. It affects their sense of worth.

So they may be desperate for children... seek various means to have children... and if not, at least adopt a child to give that sense of worth. Of course, it does not mean that all women are that way, but these are factors that affect their thinking and consideration.

What happens when they have children?

Again they are affected when their child is not recognized... the child does not perform well – it reflects on them.

So, many mothers will seek to ensure that their child does well in school. Many hours are spent giving tuition... teaching the child... sometimes doing homework on their behalf... to make sure that they perform well, because to them, it reflects on their ability... on their worth... as a mother.

So the factors that affect a child in this direction may also affect the mother, and sometimes even more so.

For mothers... women... capability in cooking and management of home is also a major aspect that affects them. How many women would be so very happy when you tell them, “Your food tastes so nice!” It is a sense of worth and ability that affects them. Whether the food is healthy or not is not the primary thing – it tastes nice... they are good cooks.

So too, they keep their house in a very good condition... good taste... things are well done at home. All these contribute to their sense of worth.

For others who may not stay at home but go to work, capability at work is important. How they are regarded, whether they are promoted or not, what kind of work is given to them, how their superiors talk to them... affect them significantly.

So in this regard, many women also work hard in order to be regarded as equally able as men: “What men can do, I can do, and I will prove it!” – because by proving it, it shows their sense of worth.

So, especially when women may be regarded as “the weaker sex” ... less able in some areas... “dependent on men”, many women work towards being independent. They want to be independent from others, and so they can become very distant from others, they can become aggressive, they can seek to exert authority when it is not appropriate.

In other aspects, they also want to achieve something that people can recognize... contributions that can be regarded as valuable. At the heart of it all, an underlying major principle is still the issue of being loved and wanted: A sense that people love them... want them... appreciate them... motivates many of the things that women do.

Men

If we consider men, we see similar principles, but manifested in different forms. For men, physical strength and their physical build is often a preoccupation for many. Hours can be spent in exercise in order to maintain a physique that would be attractive... where they can feel confident because they are able... they are strong... they are imposing.

More than that, capability and fame is a major aspect that motivates many men... in the field of sports, music, art, film, literature, science... To achieve fame, to be able in these areas, is a prize that they seek for. Whether in the field of sports where people can recognize them the world over, or to win a Nobel Prize, these are aspects that affect men deeply in their search for recognition.

For many others, power in organisations and in countries is a very deep motivating factor. Many men are prepared to work very hard to rise to the top that they may be in positions of power in organisations or in countries.

Chief executive officers, managing directors, prime ministers, kings, rulers... may have a deep sense of worth in association with their positions of power, and the way they respond to other people would often also indicate the way in which they are affected by these positions.

Ability to impress others and to draw attention to themselves is a major aspect in the way that men seek to develop a sense of worth, and increase their self-esteem.

The pursuit of knowledge... the power of speech... the ability to sway people... influence others... by facts or fiction or exaggeration... many are prepared to go to great lengths in order to impress others, and to draw attention to their abilities.

Money is a very major aspect also – financial ability and status where they can be looked up to... appreciated... depended upon. And this is often manifested not only in the clothes they wear, the houses they buy, but also the cars that they drive, and the manner in which they drive.

All these are an expression of how they regard themselves and what they seek for.

So in life, a sense of authority is very often a powerful motivating factor in people working hard, even going through many difficult hours, weeks and months and years of striving – in order that they may be able to attain to a position of authority.

Another aspect that gives a sense of worth is in the area of contributions that are regarded as valuable. This can occur in many different fields – contributions that others would regard as valuable and useful.

This also applies in the spiritual realm... we want to contribute something that is regarded as valuable. Of course, there are times when this is very important and correct and meaningful if we do contribute something that is truly valuable, but very often we may be motivated by this desire, and we actually contribute something that is not really valuable, but we may not recognize it because we are preoccupied in the wrong areas.

Achievements that can have long-lasting effects, or sometimes even momentary praises, may also be pursued, and we also know that those who are more able may very often strive towards leaving behind a name after they die: that people will remember them – still recognized after they have passed away – and many may work very hard in that direction.

Again we see the underlying principle: a desire to be loved and wanted... recognized and praised.

Elderly people

What about elderly people? What are the issues of concern to them? As they grow older, a major concern for many elderly people is the loss of influence on others because influence on others gives them a sense of worth. They are growing old: not so able... not so attractive... not so powerful... not so strong... not so able to speak... unable to do many things that they were able to before.

They are very deeply concerned about the loss of influence, and they may strive hard to seek to retain that influence... to continue to be able to affect other people. As a result, some of them may stay much longer in a position of influence when they are not able to carry on with the job.

For many, a sense of being incapable and useless may bring about a deep depression. Very often this is associated with self-pity. Many will tell you, "I'm useless... it's no point living on." And in that situation, they expect much sympathy... help... appreciation... for their lives.

Some will lament, "After all that I have done all these years, who appreciates what I have done?"

Others are increasingly affected by being regarded as a burden to others, either outwardly or without clear external words: they may be viewed as a burden – people continue to relate with them because of obligations, not because they truly appreciate them.

Underlying this, the desire to be loved and wanted is still present.

How do we respond?

So throughout our lives, there are many things that affect us, and can affect us very deeply. So then, how do we respond to the opinions of others?

We strive hard to please them? This can lead, in many situations, to disaster. We know of the story of the man, his son, and the donkey. Different people made different remarks, and in order to please them, they changed the way they travelled with the donkey: The son sat on the donkey... the father sat on the donkey... both of them sat on the donkey... in the end, they carried the donkey! Their conduct was very much affected by the comments of other people.

So it is true also of many of our lives: We strive hard to please other people though we may not say so.

We may try to tell ourselves, “No, no, I am doing this because it’s the right thing to do.” But underlying it, we know that if we do that, so-and-so and such a group of people would be pleased, and so we work in that direction – not because it is a meaningful thing but because they would be pleased, and when they are pleased, we feel good.

How then do we respond when they praise us, when they show appreciation of us, and respect toward us?

We should consider: Do their praises increase our true worth? When people praise us, does it mean that we have become better... we are more valuable in the true sense? Will their praises increase the value of our lives? Do their opinions determine our worth? What people think of us... what people say about us... does that determine our worth? How is our worth determined?

In many situations of life, we may not be very conscious of these issues, but we respond because we feel hurt... because we feel happy... because of the way that others do things. It is good for us to reflect on the way we respond to the opinions of others. Why do we respond that way? What prompts us in that direction? What is our motive? What is the meaning within our hearts?

Let us turn to **Acts 12: 1-3**.

- 1 Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church, in order to mistreat them.
- 2 And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword.
- 3 And when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread.

Here we see an example of someone in a position of authority... position of power... and yet we can see that he was dependent on the opinions of others. He had the power, and yet he was affected by the response of other people.

We see that he laid hands on some who belonged to the church, in order to mistreat them. Most likely, he enjoyed doing that... he liked it – a sense of power. But at the same time, we are told that when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. When he arrested Peter, it was not based on what was right, but what would please others: When a number of the Jews were pleased with his action, he proceeded to arrest Peter.

When we read this, it is very obvious to us that this is a very negative kind of conduct, but in principle we may also very often be doing the same thing.

We may not be as negative, but there is an underlying principle that we need to take note of: Are our choices, decisions, actions... primarily determined by what would please other people or specific groups of people or specific person? Or are our choices determined by what is truly good in the eyes of God – what is truly valuable and meaningful?

Let us consider a situation that affects Christians.

Acts 4: 32-37

- 32 And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own; but all things were common property to them.
- 33 And with great power the apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all.
- 34 For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales,
- 35 and lay them at the apostles' feet; and they would be distributed to each, as any had need.
- 36 And Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means, Son of Encouragement),
- 37 and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Here we have a description of disciples who were motivated by love to sell their possessions in order to help those in need.

This passage describes people who sought to be helpful with the right motive – they were motivated by love and concern for others. There was sincerity in their giving for the benefit of others.

Barnabas is highlighted probably because of the quality of his motive, as a person. The apostles called him Barnabas, which translated means, Son of Encouragement. This was a characteristic of his life – he sought to encourage others... to help others... and he owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. He gave in order to help... to encourage others – he had the right motive.

The failure of Ananias and Sapphira

Then we go on to **chapter 5 verses 1-11**, and see the contrast.

Acts 5: 1-11

- 1 But a certain man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property,
- 2 and kept back *some* of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet.
- 3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back *some* of the price of the land?"
- 4 "While it remained *unsold*, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God."
- 5 And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came upon all who heard of it.
- 6 And the young men arose and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him.
- 7 Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.
- 8 And Peter responded to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?" And she said, "Yes, that was the price."
- 9 Then Peter *said* to her, "Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they shall carry you out *as well*."
- 10 And she fell immediately at his feet, and breathed her last; and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.
- 11 And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard of these things.

Ananias and Sapphira were motivated by a desire to please others or to impress them or to be regarded positively by others.

It could be true that within their heart they also wanted to contribute. It could be true they also cared for the people in need, but the desire to please others... the desire to be recognized... to be highly regarded... led to their taking this course of action that led to their physical death.

Verse 1 begins with: "But a certain man..." it was in contrast with Barnabas and the others who gave sincerely... honestly... with the right motive. Ananias and his wife gave with the wrong motive.

When the apostle Peter said, "Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit..." he was not saying that Ananias had no choice... Satan controlled him, and he just lied.

It is clear from the context that Ananias allowed Satan to work in that situation: he accepted the suggestions from the evil one. It was his responsibility, and he chose to move in that direction. It was a temptation, but he allowed it.

The apostle Peter said, "While it remained *unsold*, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control?" It is clear that they had the say what they would do with their property – they could choose how they would respond.

He then went on to say, "Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God". "You have conceived this deed in your heart" shows that he was responsible even if Satan had brought the idea to him: he conceived it in that he accepted it... he moved in that direction... and he chose to lie to God.

The apostle Peter made it quite clear it was not essential for him to give. When it was unsold, it remained his own – there was no compulsion for him to sell. Even after it was sold, he could have given less – “...was it not under your control?”

However, they did not want to give less because that would imply that they were not as sacrificial as the others. If they had told the apostle in front of the others, “I sold the property for so much, I kept back some, I give this to you”, others may comment, “You are not so willing to give.”

They did not want to be regarded in that way – that is what likely motivated them to say, “This is all... I sold and I gave everything.” And husband and wife had agreed that they would project that image that they had sacrificed all when in reality they had not. So they wanted to be regarded like Barnabas and the others who gave sincerely.

How God sees us

We know that God sees the heart, and He knows the motives. Sometimes we may not realize it... we may not be so conscious. Although we know that God is omniscient, yet we may not face the issue: we live our lives thinking, “God doesn’t know” – as if God does not know. But God sees our heart, He knows our motives – why we do the things that we do.

And God manifested it by indicating to Peter the real situation, and, through Peter, God executed judgment. This outward form of judgment by God may not always take place immediately, but that does not mean that God does not see... that does not mean that there would be no consequences.

The effect on our moral and spiritual being takes place immediately. Although God's judgment on us in other ways may not be immediate, ultimately there will still be a Judgment Day when God will judge us.

So it is important for us to learn from this that ultimately if what we want to do is to please others, we may end up deeply displeasing God. What God sees is our heart – the real meaning within us. If this is not our primary concern, then we can end up in a situation where others may be pleased with us but God may be very angry with us. People may praise us but God may judge us.

However, we know that in life situations, even in the lives of Christians who are serious in their faith, this principle may often be at work.

If God were to take the same form of judgment towards all Christians in the way He did towards Ananias and Sapphira, in all likelihood, many, many Christians would have died.

But God has not done so, and He wants us to learn from it... to correct ourselves... He gives us the opportunity to repent... to change.

How often have we said we have given everything to God when in reality we have not? How often have we sought to project the image that our lives are truly lived for God when we know we are holding on – many things not given up to Him?

This is different from those who are sincere in seeking to give everything to God... they fail... they falter... but they are prepared to repent... to change... to learn...

If we truly want to follow God, and to be what He wants us to be, it will be a difficult path... there will be many failures... but God is prepared to help us if we are prepared to face the issue honestly... humbly... with contriteness... so that He can show us how to deal with our lives.

Pause and ponder

So as we think of what is true worth, it is good for us for the time being to pause, and consider **Galatians 6: 7-8**.

- 7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.
- 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life.

Let us bear in mind that ultimately it is not what people say that is important... it is not what impression we give that is important... it is not how others treat us that is important... it is what we are... what we will become... how God would view us... how He would respond to us.

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked...” Why did the apostle Paul say, “God is not mocked”? That is because there are those who think that God can be mocked – they can get away with it; they can do what is wrong, and still get away with it.

But the apostle Paul says, “No, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap...” The consequence will take place, it definitely will take place, no matter what other people say or do not say, no matter how other people treat you or do not treat you – the meaning will be there.

The outcome of your life is the result of the meaning in your life; what will happen is something that inevitably will take place – it definitely will take place.

If we sow to our flesh, we shall from the flesh reap corruption. If we live self-centred lives... if we seek for our own personal gain... we want to have high self-esteem that is not based on true meaning, we will reap corruption: We will be deceived... we will move in the wrong direction... we will seek to please men... and ultimately our lives will degenerate... the character within us will be negative.... the outcome will be disastrous.

But the apostle Paul says, "...but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life." True meaning, true value, true quality will come about when we sow to the Spirit.

When we live according to what is good before God, when we live according to what is right and meaningful, the outcome will be certain: from the Spirit, we will reap eternal life.

No matter what other people say, no matter how they treat us, no matter what they think, if we truly sow to the Spirit, we shall from the Spirit reap eternal life. And eternal life is the life of God – God's life given to us to transform us... that we can be like Him... that we can grow in the quality of our being.

So as we ponder the subject, "What am I worth?" it is good for us to reflect on what are the things in life that motivate us, that draw us in the direction of working hard... seeking to achieve... wanting to be. How are we motivated?

Ultimately, we have to consider what is truly important to us.

The Lord willing, we will consider further what we should be seeking for... how we can attain to what we ought to be.

Today, we have sought to ponder about our perception of ourselves associated with the perception of other people affecting us very deeply... and how we can learn to respond in a wholesome way where ultimately we will find true freedom in our hearts... that we can live lives that are meaningful... with peace in our hearts... with a positive direction that we can be confident of... that ultimately there will be meaning and worth that will last in eternity.

Let us then ask Him to help us to evaluate our lives in the light of what He has shown us in the Scriptures, so that we may choose according to what He teaches us.