

You Are God's V.I.P.

ENO ON MAI were the letters printed on a slip of paper found in the room of a suicide victim in Chicago. Investigators could find no other clue as to why this woman was dead. Finally someone saw the letters reflected in a mirror. They read, I AM NO ONE. Her final message to her world was "I AM NO ONE!" She felt worthless and of no value. She ended her life instead of making the most of it.

If you could have talked to her before she committed suicide what would you have said? I think I would have shared with her the same message I gave a young man I counseled when I was preaching in Marion, Ohio. I was called to his house a few minutes after he slashed his wrists in a suicide attempt. As the EMTs were treating him I said, "Bob, you are a VIP - a very important person. You are a unique and valuable individual. You have unlimited potential and opportunity. You are a creative person with a mind that can think, reason, dream, create, plan, and solve problems." This is the same message I want to give you. We can all help people feel better about themselves instead of wanting to write suicide notes.

Self-esteem is an essential nutrient for personal and spiritual health just as vitamins are essential for physical health. Achievement, happiness, relationships, learning, and personal well being largely depend on how we feel about ourselves. What we think, believe, and feel about ourselves has a powerful influence on every part of our lives. It affects our personal life and work. Developing a healthy self-image is critical for people to achieve more of their potential and reach peak performance.

Jesus assures us that God places high value on us. He said in **Luke 12:6-7**, "Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows." In spite of God's reassuring love, many people feel worthless and of no value.

What causes the problem of low or unhealthy self-esteem?

Sarcastic humor - Humor issued at the expense of others is always destructive.

Put downs - So many modern TV programs are based on constantly making others look bad.

Destructive comments to children - Parents often say more negative and critical things to their children than positive things. Lou Holtz delivered a powerful message on **Affecting the Self-image**.

Dr. Maxwell Maltz told the story of the son whose father never let him catch the 10th ball.

The average person each day receives 75% negative information. 86 % of the conversation in the teachers' lounge in the public schools is negative according to Kettering Foundation research with hidden microphones.

My personal story. My Dad was married, divorced, and remarried four times before I was out of high school. People still have personal responsibility and accountability for their choices and actions. I determined that I did not want my sons to experience what I had to go through as a child.

My uncle's nickname for me was "Ugly". So I felt ugly at times.

I had a low self-image and was so shy as a young person.

I still score as an extreme Introvert on the Myers Briggs Type Indicator.

In Mr. Wagner's 8th Grade General Science class he asked us what we wanted to be when we grew up. I remember saying that I wanted to be a hermit.

In Mr. Johnson's 9th Grade Career class we had to choose a career. I chose to be a Forest Ranger because I preferred being outdoors rather than being around people. That was a stretch for me. No one in my family had graduated from High School. My dad was a truck driver and my uncle was a deputy sheriff.

High School was stressful for me because I was so shy. I would try to avoid people walking down the hallway or in the locker room. I was elected Junior Class President because I was too shy to speak up and decline the nomination. I literally got sick when conducting class meetings with my 17 classmates.

There is hope and healing. A low self-image can be improved.

When I was eleven years old my 93 year old Great Grandpa Meeker gave me a book, The Presidents of the United States. He said that he wanted me to become a President or a Preacher.

While I was at Michigan State University majoring in forestry my freshman year, Del Winegar was the preacher in East Lansing. He encouraged me to become a preacher and Dr. Ritchey, a deacon there, helped me to transfer to Michigan Christian College to major in Bible.

For the last 50 years the boy who wanted to be a hermit has done unbelievable things because of others who believed in him when he did not believe in himself. I never thought that I would preach and speak to hundreds of people at a time and speak at national conferences and teach at colleges and universities. I still have a streak of shyness and I still am an introvert. But by the grace of God and support of people who care I stand before you today.

Who are VIPs - Very Important People?

Not just CEOs and top leaders with the biggest corner office with the best window view with their name inscribed on a bronze plate on a closed office door on mahogany row.

The receptionists, secretaries, custodians, and customer service people are the VIPs.

In school it is not just the cheerleaders, star athletes, team captains, class officers, and school administrators. The teachers who are dedicated to helping students learn and the students who are committed to learning are the VIPs.

Many TV shows like American Idol and competitive so called reality shows set it up so there are winners and losers. God sees all of you as winners!

You are a VIP - a Very Important Person.

You are a unique and valuable individual created in the image and likeness of God.

You have unlimited potential and opportunity.

You are a creative person with a mind that can think, reason, dream, create, plan, and solve problems.

You can do things that no other living creature can do.

You are the 1st wonder of the world. You are the greatest marvel of the universe.

Psalms 139:14 says "I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

It's not only because your heart beats over 30 million times a year, driving your bloodstream a distance of over 60,000 miles annually. It's because of the unique quality of your mind and because you can walk and talk with God. You are a living soul. Your value comes from God! Read **Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7**.

Visualize - See yourself as God sees you.

- Create a mental image of personal self-worth.
- See yourself as an individual of value and worth.
- Remind yourself of your past successes and relive them in your mind.
- Imagine you have already achieved, accomplished, attained, obtained, or become that which you desire.
- Picture a successful you in your mind.
- Look upon every person as valuable and worthwhile.

Use positive self-talk to change the way you feel about yourself.

Achievement affirmations are powerful statements that affect how you feel about yourself and others.

"This is the day the Lord has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it!" **Psalms 118:24**.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." - **Philippians 4:13**.

"I feel healthy. I feel happy. I feel terrific!" "I like people. People like me!" "I'm OK. You're OK!" "I am a VIP!"
Don't trash talk yourself or others.

VIP treatment brings the best out of people.

In the Fall of 1975 when I was preaching in Bowling Green, Ohio I conducted a Christian growth workshop for the church members. One of the women in the group had every reason to feel good about herself. She and her husband were active in the church and had 3 beautiful children. However, in the very first session of the workshop, she revealed her low self-image by saying that she felt like a great big zero. With wet eyes she expressed her feelings of worthlessness. Her self-worth developed during the next nine weeks. In our final session she told the group that she didn't feel like 100% yet, but she wasn't a zero anymore.

While speaking to a group in December of 1977, I kept telling them that they were VIPs - Very Important People. A young lady had brought her boy friend to hear me speak. The next day his friends asked what the meeting was like and what he heard. He replied, "I don't know but the speaker kept calling us a bunch of vips. Don't you miss my point here. I am telling you that you are a Very Important Person.

We should all treat others as Very Important People. Read **Philippians 2:3-4.**

Maintain self-esteem when something does not go well. This preserves self-worth.

You can maintain self-esteem when you

- focus on the situation or problem, not the person
- focus on the solutions more than the problem
- avoid actions or statements that hurt how people feel about themselves
- express confidence in the person.

Enhance self-esteem when things go well. This increases self-worth.

You can enhance self-esteem verbally or in writing when you

- praise achievements
- say thank you
- express appreciation when things are done well
- compliment effective or improved performance
- acknowledge or recognize ideas or suggestions
- reinforce what is done well with positive comments about specific behavior
- affirm confidence in ability to learn and succeed
- call people by name.

You can also enhance self-esteem when you

- listen to people
- show interest in others
- treat people as competent individuals
- ask for help
- seek opinions of others
- reward desired behavior
- share the credit with others
- smile – A smile is a curve that can set a lot of things straight.

People really are valuable.

Abraham Lincoln said that "Gold is good in its place but living, brave, patriotic men are better than gold."

Andrew Carnegie said that "You can take my steel mills, my banks, my money, but leave me my men and I will build it all again."

You are not cheap! In the 16th century a Christian scholar name Muretus became ill while on a trip. The doctors who were called in to treat him did not know him. He looked so ordinary that they said, "Let's try an experiment on him for he looks of no importance." In the next room Muretus heard them and called to the doctors, "Call not any man cheap for whom Christ died."

Affecting the Self-Image by Lou Holtz

Dad, I got two A's the little boy cried, his voice was filled with glee.
His father very harshly said, but why didn't you get three?

Mom, I've got the dishes done, the girl called from the door.
Mother very sternly said, but did you sweep the floor?

Mom, I got the grass cut and put the mower away.
Mother very harshly said, but did you clean off the clay?

Now the children in the house next door seemed happy and content.
The same thing happened over there, but this is how it went.

Dad, I got two A's the little boy cried, his voice was filled with glee.
His father very proudly said, I'm glad you live with me!

Mom, I've got the dishes done, the girl called from the door.
The mother very softly said, each day I love you more!

Mom, I got the grass cut and put the mower away.
The mother said I love you each and every day!

If people are to be happy and content with the tasks you ask them to do,
remember their self-image depends largely upon you.

Celebrate You - Author unknown

You are worth celebrating.
You are created one of a kind.
You are unique.

In all the world, there is only one you.
There is only one person with your talents,
your experience, your gift.
No one can take your place!

You have immense potential to love,
to care, to create, to grow, to sacrifice,
if you believe in yourself.

It doesn't matter your age, or your color,
or whether your parents loved you or not.
(Maybe they wanted to, but didn't know how.)
Let that go. It belongs to the past.
You belong to the now.

It doesn't matter what you've been, the wrongs you've done,
the mistakes you've made, the people you've hurt.
You are forgiven. You are accepted. You're OK!

Celebrate you!

Begin now. Start now. Give yourself a new birth. Today.
You are you, and that is all you need to be.
You are temporary. Here today and gone tomorrow.
But today, today can be a new beginning, a new thing, a new life.

You deserve this new life.
It is freely given.
You are a miracle.
So celebrate the miracle and celebrate you!

Remember that that you are a VIP.

You are a VIP to me and you are a very important person to God.

1 Peter 5:7 says that "God cares for you."

John 3:16 says "For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

1 John 3:1 says "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" You are a very important person because you are a child of God.

Galatians 3:26-27 tells us how to become a child of God. "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."