



**Freedom from inner prisons**

**Self-esteem - Leaders version**

**For a one hour study, just do the starred \* questions**

**Please read the leaders notes before you run this study, particularly the notes on self-esteem.**

**Check in** – with the group sitting in a semi-circle go round and ask everyone, including leaders, how they are and how they're feeling about studying the Bible today.

**\*1. STICKERS** What do you think self-esteem is?

*NB you're not trying to find out what an individual's self-esteem is at the moment, you're trying to define the concept of self-esteem. Read through the answers and then explain that self-esteem is the value that an individual places on himself or herself. Self-esteem can vary over time and according to circumstances.*

**\*2. SHOUT-OUT** What kinds of things do you think would affect someone's self-esteem, for good and for bad?

*Make two columns, one with good things e.g. getting a job, having a visit, being praised, and one with bad things e.g. relationship break-up, being bullied, losing.*

**\*3. STICKERS** How would you rate your own self-esteem?

*Turn the flip-chart around, so the group can do this anonymously. Ask the group to write a number between 1 and 10 on their sticker that represents how they value themselves as a person today (1=very poor, 10=very good i.e. normal (if anyone says they rate themselves greater than 10, let them pick a number, but make sure they understand that 10 is normal, and they are therefore saying that they think are worth more than anyone else)), and then come and put their sticker on the flip-chart. Read out the numbers, but don't make any comments about them.*

## **What does the passage say and mean?**

60 minutes

Read John 4:4-19.

\*4. In Jesus' day, women probably went together to the well to collect water early in the morning before the sun got too hot. Why do you think this woman is alone at the well in the middle of the day? How do you think she feels and what number do you think she would have rated her self-esteem?

*(The sixth hour in Jewish timekeeping is the sixth hour from 6am, thus noon). She seems to be avoiding contact with the rest of the women, or knows that she would not be welcome to join them (probably because of v17-18). She may have felt shamed, lonely, sad, rejected and may not have had much self-esteem.*

\*5. Read v9. Why did this woman say that she should not be talking to Jesus?

*1. She was a Samaritan – Samaritans and Jews did not get on, (since the return from the exile when the Northern Kingdom was repopulated with mixed races who became known as the Samaritans. The Jews remained pure-bred Jews and lived in and around Jerusalem), so much so that even a cup handled by a Samaritan was ceremonially unclean for a Jew. 2. She was a woman, and women in their culture could not speak to men in a setting like this without losing their reputation.*

\*6. Can you see from the passage what the root of her poor self-esteem might have been and why do you think this issue affected her self-esteem?

*She's had 5 husbands, we don't know what happened to them but the man she lives with now is not her husband. The word used for man in the original language can mean 'man' or 'husband', so she may have been divorced / widowed 5 times or had 5 lovers plus the current relationship.*

*Think together about why this series of temporary relationships could have affected her self-esteem over the years – feeling rejected, unloved, unlovable, repeatedly failing to hold down a relationship, maybe constantly aware of guilt for adultery, blaming herself for all these things etc.*

*It's also possible that she had low self-esteem even before the first relationship started, and ended up in a series of wrong relationships because she kept going for the wrong man (NB in her culture this could only have happened if it was a series of affairs, as women didn't have a choice in who they married).*

\*7. Why do you think Jesus speaks to her, when he too knows the rules about Jews and Samaritans not mixing and men not talking to women in this sort of setting, and he knows all about her sin?

*None of these things matter to Jesus. Jesus sees the person, not the rules. Jesus knows that all people are equal before God and that all people are equally valued by God, including this woman. And Jesus came for sinners, so he had come for people like her.*

\*8. What does Jesus tell her in v14 and how does this offer overcome her poor self-esteem?

*That he will provide eternal life (living water), if she will accept it. Jesus is offering relationship with God – she has not been in a lasting, unconditional relationship with a man, but God offers it to her as a gift.*

9. Read John 4:42. What happened after this conversation?

*The woman believed what Jesus had said, and went and told many people from her town. They came to Jesus, and they believed Jesus too – they recognised that Jesus is the Saviour of the world!*

10. Read Ephesians 1:4-5. What does this verse tell you about how much God is interested in you?

*Try not to get into a free-will / predestination debate!! These verses are meant to encourage the believer, not to discourage the unbeliever. Paul is telling us that God chose us before the creation of the world – God had planned to redeem us before we even sinned.*

11. What does the fact that God chose to adopt us in (through) Jesus Christ in accordance with his pleasure and good will tell us about how much God loves us?

*God loves us infinitely, and has freely invited us into his family because he wants us in his family and loves us. God chose to adopt us even though he knew we were sinful and deserve judgement rather than adoption.*

Questions 12-13 are **SELF-DIRECTED QUESTIONS**. You need to write them on flip-chart sheets for the group to work on in pairs.

\*12. **SDL** Sometimes our self-esteem is low because people have told us that we are not worth anything to them. Look up these verses. What does God say about how much you are worth to him?

Psalm 6:4 *God's love for us is unfailing – it won't stop, whatever we do.*

Psalm 18:19 *God delights in us – and not just when we are delightful! He loves us so much that he rescues us.*

Psalm 103:8 *God is compassionate, full of grace, slow to anger and rich in love. All these attributes are seen in the way that God treats us and demonstrate how much he loves us.*

Psalm 103:10 *God does not treat us as our sins deserve! God is merciful because he loves us, even though we rebel.*

Psalm 103:11 *He has compassion on those who fear (i.e. love, recognise, respect) him.*

Psalm 103:12 *He loves us so much that he has removed our sins from us.*

Psalm 139:13 *God made us – talk about what that tells us about how much we are worth to him.*

\*13. **SDL** Read Mark 10:45. What does this verse tell you about what God has done, because of the depth of his love for us?

*God sent his only Son to serve us and to die in our place, as a ransom for many. Death is the penalty for sin, and someone has to die for the sin of each one of us. Jesus, the sinless one, came on a rescue mission, to die in the place of sinners. He took our punishment for us, although he was the only person who didn't deserve it. (The 'many' are those who trust and believe in Jesus' sacrifice in their place).*

14. Read Isaiah 43:4. How does God describe the people he is talking to?

*The context is God talking to the people of Israel in exile, but the sentiment is true whatever the circumstances. We are precious to God, we are honoured in his sight, and he loves us! This doesn't just apply to some of us, it applies to all of us, even if we don't think we're worthy of God feeling like this about us. Explain that how we feel about ourselves doesn't affect how God feels about us.*

15. Read Isaiah 49:16. What does it mean to you to know that your name is engraved on God's hands?

16. Read Zephaniah 3:17. How does God feel about you?

*He delights in you! He loves you, and will give you peace. He is rejoicing over you! Don't miss what this is saying – God rejoices over us and sings over us!! Just as we worship him in song, he is singing songs of love over us!*

\*17. Why did God send his Son to die in our place?

*If you haven't already done this in this study, quickly overview the gospel. The death of his Son on the cross for us was the ultimate demonstration of God's love and our value to him.*

### **How can I live according to these truths in my life?**

#### 20 minutes

\*1. What number would you like to be able to rate your self-esteem? What do you think needs to happen in order for your rating to go up?

*Keep the conversation focussed on the possible – you can't change the past now. Focus on God's promises that you have looked at in the study.*

\*2. Can you identify specific situations or times that your self-esteem is particularly low?

Which of the verses that we have looked at today would be most helpful to remember next time you are in this situation?

*Try to help individuals to identify triggers to low self-esteem and ways to combat it before it takes hold. Low self-esteem may be a problem that someone has all the time, but certain things can make it even lower. Identifying these things and having an action plan can help to preserve confidence.*

3. How does the way that Jesus treated the woman at the well give us a pattern of how to treat other people, particularly people who have a poor sense of self-esteem?

*Think about helping other people – take the focus away from 'me'. Think about Jesus' love and acceptance of the woman, even though she probably didn't love and accept herself, and how we can offer love and acceptance and positive comments to other people.*

**Check out** – with the group sitting in a semi-circle go round and ask everyone, including leaders, how they found the study and if they are safe to go back to the cell.



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### **Self-esteem**

1. **STICKERS** What do you think self-esteem is?
  
2. **SHOUT-OUT** What kinds of things do you think would affect someone's self-esteem, for good and for bad?
  
3. **STICKERS** How would you rate your own self-esteem?

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5. Read v9. Why did this woman say that she should not be talking to Jesus?
  
6. Can you see from the passage what the root of her poor self-esteem might have been and why do you think this issue affected her self-esteem?

7. Why do you think Jesus speaks to her, when he too knows the rules about Jews and Samaritans not mixing and men not talking to women in this sort of setting, and he knows all about her sin?

8. What does Jesus tell her in v14 and how does this offer overcome her poor self-esteem?

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11. What does the fact that God chose to adopt us in (through) Jesus Christ in accordance with his pleasure and good will tell us about how much God loves us?

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Psalms 18:19

Psalms 103:8

Psalms 103:10

Psalms 103:11

Psalms 103:12

Psalm 139:13

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14. Read Isaiah 43:4. How does God describe the people he is talking to?

15. Read Isaiah 49:16. What does it mean to you to know that your name is engraved on God's hands?

16. Read Zephaniah 3:17. What does God do when he looks at you?

17. Why did God send his Son to die in our place?

**How can I live according to these truths in my life?**

1. What number would you like to be able to rate your self-esteem? What do you think needs to happen in order for your rating to go up?

2. Can you identify specific situations or times that your self-esteem is particularly low? Which of the verses that we have looked at today would be most helpful to remember next time you are in this situation?

3. How does the way that Jesus treated the woman at the well give us a pattern of how to treat other people, particularly people who have a poor sense of self-esteem?