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Jesus Christ: Self-Denial or Self-Esteem

By Johnny Kicklighter

A Review & Critique of Dr. David Tyler's book, "Jesus Christ: Self-Denial or Self-Esteem."

If one didn't look at the title of Dr. Tyler's book, "Jesus Christ: Self-Denial or Self-Esteem," they might think they were reading a book about the life of Christ instead of a refutation of the self-esteem movement. Dr. Tyler takes a different approach that's characteristic of some of the other books on critiquing self-esteem. He doesn't exclusively argue that the self-esteem position is defective from a humanistic psychological approach as Paul Vitz does. Nor does he attempt to contrast each heretical thought and compare it to an exhaustive look at scripture references. Instead, he compares the notion of selfism to the life and practices of Jesus Christ. By so doing, he demonstrates that self-esteem flies directly in the face of what Christ was teaching others, especially His very own disciples.

In the introduction, Dr. Tyler makes the case that the new pop culture words, self-image, self-esteem and self-worth have one central focus: self. This being a recent phenomena (within the past 25 years), it has had a significant influence on the church and its teachings. He quotes Robert Schuller who says that a new reformation is needed and that being one centering on self-esteem. (It's ironic that Schuller uses the word reformation. "The Reformation," nearly 500 years ago, affirmed the utter ruin and insufficiency of man's condition and reinforced the complete sufficiency of scripture, grace, faith and Christ—a complete and utter opposition of what Schuller wants.) Dr. Tyler seeks to declare that the Bible's emphasis is on self-denial, a concept that is apparently anathema to modern day authors. And where are, Dr. Tyler asks, the words of Jesus when he supposedly tells his followers to "love themselves, esteem themselves, accept themselves, believe in themselves, develop a healthy self-image, or nurture feelings of significance and worth?" Dr. Tyler looks for them in the next three chapters of his book as he explores the words, works, and parables of Christ.

Dr. Tyler explores Christ's encounter with various people. Jesus was always other-oriented in that He was continually about His father's business. His baptism, the cleansing of the temple and the meeting with the Samaritan women are just a few examples that Dr. Tyler cites as proof. The most striking evidence appears in Christ's Sermon on the Mount where Jesus tells the crowd how to obtain blessedness (happiness). One would expect to find here Christ giving exhortation on seeking self-affirmation if the self-esteem zealots were true. However, Dr. Tyler cites five Beatitudes that Christ preached which further disappoints the selfism crowd. Christ proclaimed blessedness would occur to

those who are poor in spirit, mourn, practice meekness, are hungry and thirsty for righteousness, and are merciful.

Leaving Christ's words, Dr. Tyler explores the miracles of Jesus Christ. Jesus used miracles as proof of His divine authority, to give substance to His words, and also to demonstrate his other-oriented attitude by offering love and sympathy for mankind. Dr. Tyler gives several examples, healing of the leper and the Roman centurion's servant, the calming for the Sea of Galilee, the demon-possessed man, to name a few. This shows Christ was focused on meeting the needs of others. Dr. Tyler also leaves the self-love advocates with a question as to where was the person who cried "I hate myself, I feel inferior and inadequate; heal me Son of David;" (not in Galilee apparently).

Dr. Tyler uses the parables to further prove that Christ was other-oriented. He gives a brief

explanation on the purpose of parables. He explains the dilemma that many find as to why Christ spoke in parables, i.e., Christ intentionally hid from the disobedient and rebellious His mysteries. Dr. Tyler's quotation from G. Campbell Morgan seems out of step however as Campbell's quote muddies the water. It appears inconsistent with Matthew 13:15b. "lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

Dr. Tyler closes his book by acknowledging that undeniably self-esteemism is found in the scriptures. It's origin is in Genesis 3:6, "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." This was the beginning of mankind becoming self-oriented. It's clear to the reader that support for current selfism philosophy cannot be gleaned from the teachings or the life of Christ. Christ was certainly focused on doing His Father's business as well as relieving the suffering of others.

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Who Is Jesus? -- Why Was Jesus Born?

By Stanley T. Crawford

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Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16)

And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." (John 6:35)

For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. (I Timothy 2:5 & 6)

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. (Hebrews 2:9)

As we read the Bible, we see several names that are used to describe Jesus Christ. Each name reflects an important aspect of Christ's character. Let us take a look at some of these names.

Jesus is the Lamb of God. Jesus took away the sin of the world by sacrificing himself (John 1:29, I Timothy 2:5 & 6). He was perfect and without fault. These qualities allowed Jesus to be the ultimate sacrifice for our sins. Even so, each man and woman must make the choice to accept God through Christ, or reject him. It should be remembered, Jesus seldom forces himself on any man or woman.

Jesus is God with us, or God made man (Matthew 1:23). As a man, God through Jesus Christ was able to truly experience the emotions and feeling that men and women feel. In addition, Jesus overcame the temptation of this world because of his link/relationship with God. As a result, all men and woman who accept Christ become sons of God and gain the abilities through the shed blood of Jesus to make it through the temptations that they will face.

In conclusion, we can answer the question, "Why was Jesus Christ born?" Christ was born in order to save men and women from their sins (I John 3:5, Hebrews 2:16 & 17). He has accomplished this through the sacrifice of his life for our sins. Any man or woman has merely to step out on faith and receive God through Jesus Christ.

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