

TRUTH, LIES, AND YOUR SELF-WORTH

DON'T LET THE WORLD TELL YOU WHEN
TO FEEL GOOD ABOUT YOURSELF.

A new year brings feelings of a fresh start and new hopes, but it also brings a wave of worldly messages telling you that a new year requires a new you. These messages say that you can only be happy if you lose weight, get new clothes, find more friends, and so on. You hear these messages in the media, at school, and sometimes from those closest to you. The problem with these messages is that they're not true. If you examine them closely, you'll discover that the true motive behind the messages is usually to convince you to buy into something either with your money or your time. But you don't have to!

Changing your physical appearance or material possessions may make you feel better for a little while, but it doesn't really do anything to

change your worth or your eternal happiness. That's because your worth is already established. President Thomas S. Monson has taught: "Your Heavenly Father loves you—each of you. That love never changes. It is not influenced by your appearance, by your possessions, or by the amount of money you have in your bank account. It is not changed by your talents and abilities. . . . God's love is there for you whether or not you feel you deserve love. It is simply always there" ("We Never Walk Alone," *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 123–24). You are a child of God. You already have infinite worth, and that does not change. So it's important to understand how you can recognize these false messages about self-esteem and combat them with gospel truth.



WORLD'S LIES — vs. — GOSPEL TRUTHS

Lie

YOUR WORTH IS DETERMINED BY LOOKING AND ACTING IN THE WORLD'S WAY.

Believing this lie means that you're letting worldly influences determine when you will feel good about yourself. You then have to constantly change to conform with worldly ideals, which are inconsistent and temporary. Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has warned: "When we choose to define ourselves or to present ourselves by some characteristic that is temporary or trivial in eternal terms, we de-emphasize what is most important about us and we overemphasize what is relatively unimportant. This can lead us down the wrong path and hinder our eternal progress" ("How to Define Yourself," *New Era*, June 2013, 48).

Truth

FOLLOWING THE LORD'S WAY BUILDS A SENSE OF ETERNAL WORTH.

The Lord taught that His ways are not the same as the world's ways and that "my ways [are] higher than your ways" (Isaiah 55:8–9). Following the Lord's ways allows you to receive eternal blessings and to have the Holy Ghost with you, which can help you feel good about yourself more deeply and consistently than anything the world has to offer. Instead of trying to be what the world wants you to be, try living your life by the standards the Lord has set. His ways never change, and you will never be unpopular to Him.

Lie

YOUR WORTH COMES FROM HOW YOU COMPARE TO OTHERS.

As a teenager, you're probably well aware of how you compare to your peers. You want to fit in and be your best, which often means you want to be like someone else. When someone seems better at something than you, you may feel like you're not good enough and that you need to be better in order to be accepted. One problem with this lie is that by tying your self-worth to other people, you're often comparing another person's strength to one of your weaknesses (see President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, "Forget Me Not," *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 120). This can also lead to envy and pride, especially if you put down other people to try and make yourself appear better.

Truth

EVERYONE HAS DIFFERENT GIFTS. YOU CAN FEEL GOOD ABOUT YOURSELF AND BE GRATEFUL NO MATTER WHAT YOUR TALENTS ARE.

The Lord wants you to be yourself, not someone else. He knows that you and everyone on this earth have strengths and weaknesses. Comparing yourself to someone else doesn't help you be better. Of course, it's important to improve yourself and to make goals, but they should be based on doing *your* best, not someone else's.

If you want to feel better about yourself, try being grateful for what you have. "Comparing blessings is almost certain to drive out joy," says Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. "We cannot be grateful and envious at the same time. If we truly want to have the Spirit of the Lord and experience joy and happiness, we should rejoice in our blessings and be grateful" ("Rejoice!" *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 30).

(For more on this topic, see "Soar Like an Eagle" on page 18.)



Lie

SELF-ESTEEM COMES FROM WORLDLY SUCCESS.

This lie is related to the one about comparing yourself to others. Who determines what success is? Everyone's definition may be a little different. And when you base your self-worth on achievements, you're only telling yourself that you're as good as your latest achievement. That's simply not true.

Truth

GOD'S VIEW AND EXPECTATIONS ARE WHAT MATTER.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf has taught, "Disciples of Jesus Christ understand that compared to eternity, our existence in this mortal sphere is only 'a small moment' in space and time (D&C 121:7). They know that a person's true value has little to do with what the world holds in high esteem. . . . The Lord uses a scale very different from the world's to weigh the worth of a soul" ("You Matter to Him," *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 20, 22).

Once again, you can overcome this lie by following the Lord's way and being more concerned about His definition of success than the world's. If you can consistently feel the companionship of the Spirit in your life, then it means you're living the way the Lord wants. And if you do feel like you've failed in the Lord's eyes, remember that you can come back through repentance and the Atonement.

Lie

GOOD SELF-ESTEEM IS ALL ABOUT BUILDING ME.

When people encourage you to focus on building self-esteem (rather than recognizing eternal self-worth), you may be tempted to think you'll be happier with yourself if you focus on building you. That's the tricky thing about this lie. It seems so logical that self-esteem should be all about you, but that's how the adversary tricks you. If he can get you so obsessed with "improving" yourself (typically with the outward things the world values) that you're totally focused on *you*, then it will distract you from all the people around you whom you could be helping.

Truth

YOU'LL FIND JOY IN SERVING GOD AND OTHERS.

The Lord commanded His disciples to "esteem [your] brother as [yourself]" (D&C 38:24–25). Those who truly love themselves don't rely on others' attention and praise. They're comfortable enough with their own worth that they can have good relationships with others and are able to serve them without ulterior motives. Think about it: When you're serving others and forgetting about yourself, does it make you feel better? Of course it does, because you're doing something worthwhile. And as you serve God's children, you draw closer to Him, thus improving yourself at the same time.

YOUR TRUE SELF

In the end, loving yourself is not about tooting your own horn or conforming to the world's view of self-esteem. It's about being who you are—a unique child of God—and knowing that who you are is

a good thing. When you understand your eternal worth and you live in a way consistent with your divine heritage, you will gain a lasting self-esteem that is better than anything the world can offer. **NE**