**INTRODUCTION**

**I. The Problem**

**Inferior Puppy Parable**

Do you consider yourself a woman par excellence! Are you a winner in the game of life? Are you a woman of high worth? Have you found success? Do you have it all together? Or sometimes do you feel like a disappointment to yourself and to God, somehow unable to measure up to what you want to be? Are you a woman whose self-esteem needs to be mended?

Most of us at some time or other have felt like the puppy in an old English tale.

According to the story, the puppy took a walk around the farm. She came to the horse corral where the towering animal looked down at her and said, "You will soon discover that I am the most important, successful animal on this farm. I do a lot of work for Farmer Brown. You are too small to be of any value."

The little dog hung her head and was about to slink away, when a cow stuck her head over the pasture fence and said, "I have the most honored position on this farm, and am therefore the most successful. I produce milk, butter, and cheese for the family. You can't do that. You have no chance of success."

A sheep ambled up and declared, "Look at me if you would discover how to succeed. I give wool to provide warmth for the whole family. You have nothing of value to offer Farmer Brown. You can't be a winner." One by one the animals told the puppy why she had no chance of success.

"You must give eggs to the farmer," the chicken said. "You have to catch mice," declared the cat. "In speed I'm the greatest. You can't do what I do, so you'll never succeed on this farm."

The puppy slunk away at last and hid herself under the steps of the porch. She laid her chin on the ground and began to feel very much a failure in life. An old dog found her there and paused to listen to her story.

"They are right," the puppy moaned. "I'm no use to Farmer Brown. I don't measure up. I'm a failure."

"True" the old dog said. "You'll never produce eggs, milk, or wool. But that doesn't mean you're a failure. Why don't you figure out what you can do and be the best little puppy you can be."

That night Farmer Brown came home from a long day's work in the hot sun. The little puppy ran to greet him, licked his feet, and jumped into his arms. They romped together on the grass. Finally, holding her close to his chest, and stroking her head, the master of the farm said, "No matter how tired I am when I come home, I feel better when you greet me. I wouldn't trade you for all the animals on the farm."

Suddenly the puppy saw herself through her master's eyes and realized that she was a success after all!

Could you see yourself in this parable? Has not Satan whispered to you at some time or other, "Look at the marvelous ability that woman has! What a speaker she is! What a singer! What a teacher! You can't do any of those things. You're not worth much."

"Look at how much that woman has achieved in life. She has her doctorate and holds an important executive position. You've missed out on success in life."1

##### Low Self-Esteem: Problem of Women Today

A recent Gallup poll discovered that 65 % of people today suffer from low self-esteem, the inferior puppy syndrome. If that is true, two out of every three women have this problem.2

That poll included both male and female responses. An all-female poll would reveal a much higher figure for low-self esteem.

In a recent study by the Minnesota Department of Education, it was discovered that in sixth grade, both male and female students had healthy self-images. By the ninth grade, however, girls were twice as likely as boys to have self-esteem problems.3

"I'm convinced that almost everyone suffers from a lack of self-esteem in some form at some time," stated one participant in Candace Schap's women's Bible study group. She looked around the room and nearly all the fifteen women in the group nodded their heads in agreement.4

According to Christian psychologist James Dobson, we are experiencing an epidemic of inferiority and self-doubt.5

Robert Schuller says, "Self-esteem...is the single greatest need facing the human race today."6

##### Symptoms of Low Self-Esteem

Michele shows symptoms of low self-esteem. She works overtime to please, impress, and placate friends and strangers because she needs their affirmation to feel good about herself—especially her appearance. She won't go to the grocery story without putting on makeup. She imagines the checker whispering to the bagger, "Look at that woman! How pale she looks!"

But Michele isn't the only one. Jan over-prepares for routine meetings because she always wants to appear competent. She is a perfectionist that spends too much time on details. Amanda won't invite a neighbor over to her home unless it's spotless. She doesn't have guests over after church unless she has a first class banquet prepared. Debbie goes overboard in preparing extravagant birthday parties for her children, not so much to make them happy as to impress their guests' parents what a terrific person she is. Margie cries if she gets a parking ticket, forgets an appointment, or burns the potatoes. She feels every mistake is a declaration of her failure as a person.7

Mary Ann L. Diorio, Ph.D., lists twenty symptoms of low self-esteem.8 They are as follows:

1. A sense of unworthiness
2. Difficulty relating to people
3. Perfectionism
4. Inappropriate emotional responses
5. Fear
6. Touchiness and irritability
7. Inordinate concern for others' opinions
8. A critical spirit
9. Dependence on others
10. Difficulty accepting compliments
11. Worry
12. Overly scrupulous conscience
13. Legalistic attitude toward God and religion
14. Use of anger as a defense mechanism
15. A lack of transparency
16. Workaholism
17. Difficulty expressing emotions
18. Finding security in material possessions
19. An attitude of passivity
20. A sense of being inferior or superior to others

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| **GROUP WORK: Participant Activities p.1 & 2 (Assignment 1)**   * Take 1 minute to work on the symptoms list silently. Check those that sometimes apply to you. * Share one of your symptoms with your group. If possible, give an example from the past couple of weeks. |

**Part of the Sin Problem**

Think for a while about the origin of low self-esteem and you cannot help but come to the conclusion that it is somehow part of the larger sin problem of our planet. God created the world perfect. He made a man and woman in His image, individuals who understood their value as a son and daughter of God. With the entrance of sin came guilt, fear, worry, failure, and low self-esteem.

Robert Schuller states in his book, *Self-Esteem,* "I contend that this unfulfilled need for self-esteem underlies every human act, both negative and positive. Every analysis of social or personal sins must recognize that the core of all sinful or unsocial behavior is a conscious or subconscious attempt to feed the person's need for self-esteem."9

James Dobson agrees. "Whenever the keys of self-esteem are seemingly out of reach for a large percentage of the people, as in twentieth century America, then widespread mental illness, neuroticism, hatred, alcoholism, drug abuse, violence, and social disorder will certainly occur. Personal worth is not something human beings are free to take or leave. We must have it, and when it is unattainable, everybody suffers."10

##### Case Study: Candace Schap

Candace Schap thought she was a failure. She felt inferior, second-class, not worth much. In her eyes she wasn't pretty enough, skinny enough, outgoing enough, smart enough, fun enough, or spiritual enough. The great fear of her life was the fear of rejection, that no one would want to be her friend. She had a classic case of low-self esteem, which she calls the "not-good-enoughs."

She already had a full-blown case of the "not-good-enoughs" when she was thirteen. She was elated when she and her best friend got to ride to youth camp with newlyweds Tom and Betty Green. They had a VW "bug" which was definitely the "in" car. Tom and Betty asked the girls lots of questions and seemed really interested in what they had to say. They laughed at their jokes and Candace felt loved and accepted. All during camp, Candace and her friend treated the Greens as best friends, sitting with them in meetings, picking blackberries for them, bringing them wildflower and hanging around them during games.

A few days after camp, their church youth group was going on another outing. Candace and her friend ran to the VW "bug" expecting to sit in the back seat again. It was already full of older youth.

"Sorry kids, but someone else is riding with us today," Patty smiled brightly. Candace turned away, tears stinging her eyes. The outing was spoiled. Tom and Patty had given proof to the one great fear that she had...if people got to know the real Candace, they wouldn't like her any more.

No one ever told her she wasn't as cute, funny, or smart as her other sisters. She just felt it. She felt she'd never be as smart, spiritual, and outgoing as her older sister. She felt people would never think her as funny and cute as her younger sister. She was the middle child and felt she was somehow inferior.

She tried clothes, working all summer for shirts, skirts, and shoes that the "in" crowd wore clothes with the right label. She still felt ignored.

When the "in" uniform didn't work she turned to an offbeat look, cutting her hair pudding bowl style that was then popular with the "Beatles", wore fishnet stockings, and wildly flowered bell bottoms with matching vests. She loved the look because it made her appear self confident and a little rebellious.

But Candace didn't lose her case of "the not-good-enoughs" when she became an adult. She had problems with relationships and blamed herself whenever there was a break up. She hadn't been pretty enough, skinny enough, independent enough, or caring enough.

When a new woman began attending the church to which Candace belonged, she felt drawn to her because they had so much in common. Candace began to cultivate her friendship, showing her around town, inviting her to lunch, calling her on the phone. But instead of the friendship growing, the new woman hit it off with someone else.

Candace felt devastated. She moped around feeling sorry for herself feeling that she was a social outcast because she wasn't pretty enough, smart enough, or funny enough.

Candace's self esteem hit an all time low after her divorce. She wasn't socially active for months. Then friends Penny and Don invited her on a fishing trip they were taking with another couple she hadn't met, Randy and Pat.

The outing went well. They fished a little, picnicked a little, and talked and laughed a lot. She felt drawn to Randy and Pat who were such a friendly, relaxed couple.

They were all sitting around talking one afternoon when Pat announced, "It's too hot out here. I'm going to the van for a nap." Shortly after that Don said, "We're low on bait."

"I'll go get some," Candace offered, jumping up. "I'd enjoy the walk to the bait shop."

Randy got up, too. "I'll go with you. A walk sounds nice."

They were hardly out of sight of the van when Randy moved closer and put an arm around Candace's waist.

Candace felt panic. Her face felt hot from shame and fear. Her stomach felt as though she had just dropped through a bottomless pit. She thought, *I'm in a bind. If I don't move his hand, he'll think I'm encouraging him. If I do, he'll be angry with me and won't like me anymore. Which is worse?* In a sudden moment of clarity she thought, *He's the one who's wrong, not you! You can't worry about his feelings.* She reached down and removed his hand.

"You're one of those," he snarled, turned and walked away. He didn't speak to Candace for the rest of the day.

That day on the beach Candace realized for the first time just how far she had gone in her desperate search for love and acceptance. From childhood into her teen years and then into a bad marriage, she had made choices largely on what she thought would gain others' approval and not on what she thought would be best for her.

Low self-esteem caused Candace to date men she didn't like or who were completely wrong for her, to volunteer for jobs she neither wanted nor was particularly qualified to perform, and to compromise her values in the hope of receiving a little approval from people she quite often didn't like that much anyway.

She writes, "Low self-esteem, insecurities, non-assertive personality—whatever you call it, the effect is the same. Fear of rejection, of not gaining others' acceptance or approval, is paralyzing. You become a people pleaser, not because you like to see others happy, but because you hope it will make them like you."

That day on the beach Candace began her journey through self-discovery toward self-acceptance. This journey took her into a deeper relationship with God. That day she took the first step in repairing her damaged self-esteem. Her book *Sometimes I Don't Like Myself* is the story of how she did it.11

You and I too can take this journey through self-discovery toward self-acceptance. We, too, through God's grace can take steps to repair our own damaged self-esteem. That's what this seminar is all about.

**II. The Solution**

Don't listen to the enemy. Don't let Him define your worth! Today I invite you, like Farmer Brown's puppy, to see yourself through your Master's eyes, to discover what He considers a worthy woman.

We will use the letters of the word "worthy" as an acrostic to help us focus on our value and the steps we can take to repair our damaged self-esteem.

**W** - Wake up to your value.

**O** - Own your potential.

**R** - Remove false standards.

**T** - Turn failure into success.

**H** - Handle your negative emotions.

**Y** - Yield yourself to God every day.

1. **Wake up to your value.** 
   1. ***You are somebody, a child of God, created in His image.***

"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." *Psalm 139:13-16, NIV*

“Before I was born the Lord called me; from my birth he has made mention of my name.” *Isaiah 49:1, NIV*

How unique you are! You were not made in Korea. There is no "Made in Brazil" label on you. You were fashioned in the darkness of your mother's womb by God's hand, created for a purpose, destined to walk onto the stage of the universe at this hour of earth's history.

While you were but a microscopic cell, God arranged your DNA and lined up your genes and chromosomes to make you the special person that you are. There is none other like you among the six billion people living on Planet Earth. No one else has your distinct thumbprint, your distinct voiceprint, your special looks, your combination of gifts, personality, and experience.12

1. ***Jesus died to assure your success.***

Jesus would have died had you been the only person to ever accept His love. Imagine! The Savior would have passed through the agony of Calvary that you might be saved in His kingdom.13 A God of love gathered all the riches of the universe and laid them down that He might gain you, a pearl of great price. He gave His only Son to die on Calvary's cross, to gain your salvation. To Him you are of great worth.14

Because of the death of Christ on Calvary the wealth of the universe is yours. You are now a child of the King, a daughter of God. Not only do you have forgiveness for past mistakes, acceptance despite your blunders, but also you have the power of Heaven on your side to assure your success. Through Christ you have direct access to the throne of God and the promise of angels to help you in your endeavors.15

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." *Philippians 4:13*

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| **GROUP WORK: Participant Activities p. 2 (Assignment 2)**   * + 1. Begin to appreciate the way God has made you unique.     2. Fill in the inventory on page 2.     3. Share with your group.     4. Praise God for the unique person He made you to be! |

1. **Own your potential.** *(10 min. Talk + 5 min. Group Activity = 15 min)*
2. ***God has a plan for your life.***

"For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. They are plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope*.*" *Jeremiah 29:11 NIV*

These words spoken to the captives in Babylon are for you and me as well. "I know the plans I have for you, (Your Name) now, when you are (Your Age) years old living in (Your Address).

I know the plans I have for you. Mary, Jennifer, Brenda, Karen...etc. (Name several women in your group). They are plans for your good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

And He has had those plans from your conception in your mother's womb.

"The Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name" *Isaiah 49:1*

"Not more surely is the place prepared for us in heavenly mansions than is the special place designated on earth where we are to work for God."16

You were created for a purpose. Have you discovered God's plan for your life... for this stage of your life? Take time to seek God in earnest. Ask Him to show you your potential. Ask Him to place His dream within you, a dream of what you can be through His grace and power.17

1. ***God sees you as a winner.***

"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." *Isaiah 60:1-3*

Wow! What a picture of success! The stage of life is set. The audience has gathered. The lights dim. The curtain of history rolls back, and there you are in center stage with the spotlight of destiny focused on you!

"For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." *Isaiah 55:9-12*

What a picture of success, of high worth, and high esteem! All nature joins in applauding what God is able to do through His people. If you are God's woman, that is a picture of *your* success! God has a very special part for you to play, a part of the script that He has planned for you from the time you were nestled in the warmth of your mother's womb. Are you ready?

* + - **In Christ you are a woman of high worth!**
    - **You were made to be a winner!**
    - **You were created for success!**

Success is stretching toward your full potential through Christ who enables you. Success is growing to be all that God has gifted you to become.18

1. ***Your potential is unlimited under the power of the Holy Spirit.***

I have a puzzle for you. How many squares do you see? (Audience response). Sixteen? Seventeen? Twenty?

Actually there are 30 squares.19 (Point out the 30 squares).

An in-depth look reveals almost twice as many as your first casual glance. That's true of the square and it's true of your life. You can do more than you ever dreamed of doing! You have tremendous possibilities God has placed within you, possibilities for success. You can be so much more than what you are now. Your potential is God-given and He is waiting to help you develop it to His glory!

Many of us are like the old man in Oklahoma. When oil was first discovered in that state, some of it was on the property of this old man. He'd lived all his life in poverty and suddenly he was immensely wealthy.

He did what many of us would do; he found a way to spend some of that money. First, he bought himself a brand new Cadillac and had it delivered to his old shack. That afternoon he dressed up and drove through town in his new car...pulled by a team of two horses.

There was nothing wrong with the car's engine. It was just that the old man had never learned how to insert the key and switch on the ignition. Inside the car was the power of a hundred horses, but the old man was content to use just two on the outside.20

The experts tell us that we actually use very little of our ability. William James, American psychologist, estimated that the average person operates at about 10 percent of capacity. More recently anthropologist Margaret Mead estimated this figure to be 6 percent. More recent still, Herbert Otto set it at an even lower 4 percent. We are all much less than we could be!

Like the old man from Oklahoma, we are content with two horse power when we could have a hundred! What a waste! 21

But it doesn't have to stay that way. *The Holy Spirit is God's gift to help us be all that He knows we can become*. Through His enabling power marvelous changes can happen in our lives.

Beverly LaHaye knows that this is true. Although a pastor's wife, she was a fearful, introverted person, afraid to speak in public, anxious about entertaining, worried about what people thought of her and her children. She had a bad case of "the not-good-enoughs."

Then one day at a church retreat she quietly knelt and surrendered her life to God. She said, "Lord, fill me with Your Holy Spirit. Take away my spirit of fear, and give me in its place the spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind. Do the impossible in my life."

In relating the experience she says: "There was no outward sign or expression except for a beautiful, quiet peace that settled in my heart and the new confidence that God was going to do something far better with my life than I had been able to do."22

Her husband, Tim LaHaye, testifies, "I have witnessed a sweet, soft-spirited worry machine that was afraid of her own shadow become transformed into a gracious, outgoing, radiant woman whom God has used to inspire thousands of women to accept Him and the abundant life He offers."23

"There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, by putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon (her) heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God."24

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| **GROUP WORK: Participant Activities p. 3-4 (Assignment 4)**   1. Make a list of Bible women who project an image of success and high self worth. 2. Beside each name describe an action that makes you think she was a woman of success, one with high self-esteem. |

1. **Remove false standards.**

Worldly success and self-esteem are based upon false standards. In her book *The Challenge of Being a Woman,* Alice Painter points out five false standards of worldly success and self-esteem: possessions, performance, position, appearance, and people.

What do I have? How well do I do? How important am I? How do I look? What do people think about me? Success, from the worldly standpoint, becomes a way of proving that I am special, that I have worth and value.25

Remember the parable of the puppy? The puppy had a problem of low self-esteem because she looked to other animals and accepted their expectations as her own.

Too often you and I do the same thing. We look at other people and try to live up to their expectations of us. Dorothy Watts, in her book *The Best You Can Be,* tells about her difficulties in trying to be a people pleaser.

1. **Parents and grandparents.** In her mother she saw the role of a woman active in her community, leading out in civic clubs, visiting the sick, and giving Bible studies. This upset her grandmother who felt Dorothy's mother should stay home and look after her husband. In her frustration, Dorothy tried to fill both roles to perfection and became very discouraged.
2. **Husband.** Soon after Dorothy's wedding to Ron, a pastor, she asked him, "What do you expect of me as your wife?" "Just be yourself," he said. But she soon discovered he had plenty of expectations. He wanted her to go visiting with him, keep a spotless house, lead out in children's meetings, and much more.
3. **Church members.** She really became frustrated as she tried to live up to the expectations of the church members. The nominating committee suggested her name as church pianist. "But I don't play the piano,” she told her husband. "You can learn," he said. So she took lessons and practiced but found the experience very stressful. She admits to being a failure as a pianist.
4. **Children.** She tried hard to please her children, but found it was an impossible job. She never seemed to be good enough, to do all they expected her to do.
5. **Culture.** What people expect of a woman in a small town in southern Ohio is quite different from what is expected in metropolitan Los Angeles. What is quite acceptable in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, is not at all the right thing to do in Bangalore, India. TV, magazines, and billboards all have their say about what we are supposed to look like and act like.26

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| **GROUP WORK: Participant Activities p. 4 (Assignment 5)**   * Share briefly a time when you got into trouble trying to live up to someone else's expectations. |

1. **God: The G Factor.** What about God's expectation's for us? Dorothy found the answer in the story of the lame man in Acts 3, and called it "The G Factor."

"One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. Now a man crippled from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them."

Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God." *(Acts 3:1-8)*

Did you notice the G Factor in verse 6? "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I have I give you."

Peter gave the beggar a gift, but it was not what he expected. They couldn't give money because they had none to give. They were broke. Instead, they gave what they possessed, the power of God to heal withered legs.

That is the G Factor—the Gift Factor. We cannot give what we do not possess. God does not expect us to give to others what He has not first given to us. Our success as Christian women is not according to the expectations of other people, but according to how the Lord has gifted us.27

If we would repair our damaged self-esteem, we need to remove the false standards of other people's expectations.

Leo Buscaglia wrote several books about the experiences he had with students in the university class he taught on love. One night, a girl said, "I know why I'm so despairing all the time. It's because I want to be loved by everybody and that's a human impossibility. I could be the most delectable, the most delicious, the most wondrous peach in the world, and I could offer it to everybody. But there are people who are allergic to peaches. They may want me to be a banana."

Leo's response was, "What a messy fruit salad. Isn't it all right to say to them, 'I'm so sorry, I cannot be a banana. I would love to be a banana for you if I could, but I'm a peach.'"

He continued, "And do you know what? If you wait long enough, you'll find a peach lover. It'll work! And then you can live your life as a peach, and you don't have to live your life as a banana."28

We need to stop looking to others for what kind of women we shall be, and begin to recognize the worth of the women God has created us to be.

Christian self-esteem begins with that sense of worth and uniqueness which comes from our position in Christ. We are already special, created in His image, and loved with an everlasting love. Success, then, becomes a striving to be all that God has already gifted me to become. Success is reaching toward my full potential in Christ Jesus. It is finding my place in His plan.

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| **GROUP WORK: Participant Activities p. 4 (Assignment 6)**   * + 1. Read the list of gifts.     2. Decide which ones you have.     3. Share with the group what you have written. |

1. **Turn failure into success.**
2. ***Turn off the failure tapes.***

"You don't have what it takes." "You'll fail again and make a fool of yourself." "Who cares about what you think." "Stupid! You are always doing such dumb things." "You're hopeless. You'd forget your head if it weren't attached!" Failure tapes, silent voices in our heads telling us that we can't succeed.

Psychologists tell us that everyone hears silent voices. Where do they come from? Some are the voices of our parents, grandparents, or teachers. They repeated their evaluation of us so many times that it became indelibly imprinted on our brains and whenever we get into the appropriate situation the tapes replay. Some of these voices are our own, telling us again what we've told ourselves so many times before in similar situations.29 And sometimes these voices come from Satan.30 And of course sometimes it is the voice of God speaking to us, the still small voice of the Holy Spirit.

The experts also tell us that we have the power to tune out the voices we don't want. We can consciously make a choice, something like pushing the buttons on the TV remote control... we can tune out the voices we don't want... and tune in the voices we do want.

If we hear voices telling us we are no good, failures, losers, and hopeless, we can be sure that those thoughts are not coming from God. We need to tune them out, and tune in to His voice of acceptance, success, hope, and great possibilities. Only we can make that decision.

"It is within the power of everyone to choose the topics that shall occupy the thoughts and shape the character." 31 Turn off the failure tapes. Switch **channels**.

"When the devil comes with his doubts and unbelief, shut the door of your heart."32 Turn off the failure tapes. Switch channels.

"Do not for a moment acknowledge Satan's temptations as being in harmony with your own mind. Turn from them as you would from the adversary himself. Satan's work is to discourage the soul. Christ's work is to inspire the heart with faith and hope. Satan seeks to unsettle our confidence. He tells us that our hopes are built upon false premises rather than upon the sure, immutable word of Him who cannot lie."33 Turn off the failure tapes. Switch channels.

Tune in to Christ's message of hope. He has made you to be a success, and He died to make your success possible. He has a plan for your life. In His eyes you are a winner, a woman of great worth.

1. ***Christ can help you turn each failure into a success.***

There are six positive things we can do with failure: acknowledge it; thank God for it, learn from it; use it as a stepping-stone to success; overcome it; or transform it into an opportunity.34

**a. Acknowledge it.** Because of sin all human beings experience failure. We fool no one when we pretend to be perfect. Confession of our failures allows for the grace of forgiveness and the opportunity for change.

**b. Thank God for it.** "The humiliation of defeat often proves a blessing by showing us our inability to do the will of God without His aid."35

**Learn from it.** "Reverses will teach caution. We learn by the things we suffer. Thus we gain experience."36

**c. Learn from it**. Successful authors know that they owe much to the editors who rejected their manuscripts. One author wrote: "The first time I had a book manuscript returned I hid it in the back of a file drawer and didn't look at it for a year. Then I got it out, tried to learn how I could improve it, redid the manuscript, and sent it back. Again it was rejected! I was devastated. I felt a failure as an author. Again I hid it for a year but eventually got it out and tried to learn where I'd gone wrong. I corrected those mistakes and sent it off again. This time it was accepted for publication. I learned much from those rejections."37

**d. Use it as a stepping-stone to success.** "Some God trains by bringing to them disappointment and apparent failure. It is His purpose that they shall learn to master difficulties. He inspires them with a determination to prove every apparent failure a success. (Women) often pray and weep because of the perplexities and obstacles that confront them. But if they will hold the beginning of their confidence steadfast unto the end, God will make their way clear. Success will come as they struggle against apparently insurmountable difficulties."*38*

A Louisiana farmer's favorite mule fell into a well. After looking the situation over, the farmer concluded that there was no way he could get that mule out, so he might as well bury him. He got a truckload of dirt, backed up to the well, and began to shovel it on top of the mule at the bottom of the well. When the dirt hit the mule, it started snorting and tramping. As it tramped, it began to work itself up on top of the dirt. So the farmer continued to pour dirt in the well until the mule snorted and tramped its way to the top. It then walked away, a dirtier but wiser mule. What was intended to bury it turned out to be its salvation.39

And what was true for the mule is true in our lives. Our failures can become the very means of helping us reach success.

A teacher I know had a similar experience. When she and her husband received their call to India she wrote to the brethren, informing them that she was a teacher and asking them what they planned for her to do.

A letter came back, "We expect nothing of you but to make your husband happy."

Based on that letter she decided there was no need to take her teaching materials. They would only be extra baggage. She threw away or gave away all her teaching materials.

She was not yet off the boat in Madras harbor when she was informed, "We have a job for you. We'd like you to teach the dozen or so expatriate children using American textbooks."

The textbooks had to be ordered and took six months to a year to arrive. Meanwhile that apparent perplexity turned into a real blessing, for it caused her to do some of the most creative teaching of her career. She says, "That experience literally transformed the way I teach. We took field trips into the community, learned to do research in *World Book Encyclopedia*, and wrote our own reading materials for first grade. The children did much more writing and exploring than they would have done with textbooks. We had a wonderful time."

Having once escaped the tyranny of the textbook, she has never been so tied to it since. Because of a situation that seemed to promise failure, she became a more creative teacher than she would have been otherwise. While struggling against failure, she found it became a stepping-stone to her success.40

**e. Overcome it.** All failure is not sin, but all sin is failure. Jesus came to earth not only to die for our sins, but to show us how to overcome them. The methods He has given us are Scripture, the Holy Spirit, prayer, song, and the ministry of angels.

When tempted by the devil in the wilderness, Jesus fought failure with Scripture verses He had learned at His mother's knee. "Thy word have I hid in my heart," said David, "that I might not sin against thee." Jesus has given us the Holy Spirit to help us "in the battle against sin."41

Did you know that angels are another source of help to the woman of worth? "When unconsciously we are in danger of exerting a wrong influence, the angels will be by our side, prompting us to a better course, choosing our words for us, and influencing our actions."42

Prayer is indispensable in obtaining victory over sin. "True prayer takes hold upon Omnipotence and gives us the victory. Upon (her) knees the Christian (woman) obtains strength to resist temptation."43

Have you ever thought of singing as a means of overcoming sin? It is one of the methods Jesus used while on earth and a powerful tool for Christian women today. 44

**f. Transform it.** It is possible to turn a defeat into victory. Sometimes all that is necessary is just a change of the way we look at things. The successful Adventist woman will see a possibility in every failure. She will seek, by God's power to transform that failure into success.

The story of Brett Livingstone Strong and the Malibu Rock is an excellent illustration of seeing the possibility in failure and transforming it into success.

A 116-ton rock perched above the Pacific Coast Highway in Malibu, California, and threatened those who lived below. Removal of the rock took four days and cost the government close to $1 million.

Brett Strong looked at that worthless failure of a rock and saw in it something of great value. He purchased it for $100 then paid $25,000 to move it to a grassy knoll near a shopping center 20 miles away. For the next 70 days he worked to transform that rock.

When he was finished he had created a remarkable likeness of John Wayne, which was purchased by a man in Scottsdale, Arizona, for $1 million. Brett Strong took a million-dollar failure and transformed it into a million-dollar success.45

By God's grace that's what we all can do with the failures in our lives.

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| **GROUP WORK: Participant Activities p. 5 (Assignment 7)**   * Share a time when you learned from failure. Or a time when you used failure as a stepping stone to success. |

1. **Handle your negative emotions.**

Another step toward repairing our damaged self-esteem is to learn how to handle our negative emotions. For a few minutes we'll consider four Biblical principles to help us deal with our feelings: God understands our feelings; contact with God transforms negative emotions; God can supply our emotional needs; and feelings follow actions.46

1. ***God understands our feelings.***

Jesus sympathizes with me. He truly can feel what I feel. Although no one else may understand my struggle, He does.

"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." *Hebrews 4:15*

"His heart of love is touched by our sorrows, and even by our utterances of them... No calamity can befall the least of His children, no anxiety harass the soul, no joy cheer, no sincere prayer escape the lips, of which our heavenly Father is unobservant, or in which He takes no immediate interest."47

Think for a moment of the experience of Hagar and Ishmael. When Isaac was three years old and Ishmael 17, Sarah became very upset with Hagar and Ishmael, demanding that they be sent away. After talking it over with the Lord, Abraham did just that. Can you imagine how Hagar must have felt? Used, bitter, angry, jealous, frightened, depressed. Her negative emotions made it impossible for her to deal with her problem. But God did not leave her alone there in the desert. He saw her tears and anguish. He was touched with her sorrows. He came to her, spoke words of hope and direction for her life. He took an immediate interest in her.

1. ***Contact with God transforms negative emotions.***

"To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." *Isaiah 61:3*

Jesus has a balm for every emotional sore spot. He can give us joy for our depression and peace for our pain. He can give love for our hatred and relief for our bitterness. He has hope for our despair and acceptance to apply to our feelings of low self-worth.

Think again of the experience of Hagar and Ishmael out there in the desert. When she made contact with God she got hope for her depression, courage for her fear, understanding for her bitterness, and direction for her helpless condition. God was there with her, speaking words of hope, giving her a promise, showing her where there was water, and helping her survive.

1. ***God can supply your emotional needs.***

"My God shall supply all your need*." Philippians 4:19*

Minirth and Meier in their book *Happiness Is a Choice* list 12 needs that we all share: **air, food, water, stimulation, sex, love, self-worth, power, self-assertion, comfort, security, and relief for psychic tension.**

God wants to meet *all* our needs, the emotional as well as the physical. He can supply us with love, acceptance, comfort, and security. He can provide us with strength to face a problem and relief from the tensions of life.

Think of Hagar and Ishmael. They had suddenly lost their position in the family of Abraham; they had lost everything. God took care of their physical need— water. He took care of their emotional needs for hope, security, and self-worth. Although Hagar had lost Abraham as a husband, God became her husband. Although Ishmael had lost a father, God became his father and provider.

Georgia, suffering the effects of a dysfunctional family, tried to fill her need for love with church work and community activities. She chaired the music committee, played the organ, helped the homeless, led the youth, and taught a Bible class. In spite of all she did she didn't feel she measured up, that she was good enough. When all of her activities didn't meet her emotional needs, she turned to drugs. For eight years she struggled with addiction while attending church every week. No one suspected her pain. It wasn't until she experienced God's unconditional love that Georgia found release from her negative emotions and the restoration of her self-esteem. Only as she experienced a relationship with Jesus was she able to accept herself and to realize her worth.48

1. ***Feelings follow actions.***

"And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah' and they were smitten." *2 Chronicles 20:22*

The Israelites must not have felt victorious when faced with the superior forces of the enemy, but they went to battle singing praises. The feeling of victory followed their action of victory.

Remember Gideon and his band of Israelites? They felt defeated, powerless, and useless, against so many Midianties. But God said, "Blow your trumpets. Smash your pitchers. Act like success is yours and it will be!

Remember Joshua and the children of Israel as they faced Jericho? They were ready to slink off and nurse their poor self-images. But God said, "Go out there and face the enemy. March with your heads held high. Blow the trumpets." Success came following the actions of faith.

The principle was true in Bible times and it is true today. Let me share the experiences of three Christian women and their battle with negative emotions: Linda, Corrie, and Carla.

**Linda** struggled with feelings of bitterness toward someone who had criticized her severely. She asked the Lord to replace that bitterness with love. However, the feeling didn't come until she stepped out in faith and acted as though she loved the woman who had wronged her. She sent her a little gift. Whenever she saw her, Linda greeted her with a warm hug and kind words. Miraculously, the bitterness was replaced with love. The positive feelings followed Linda's positive actions.49

**Corrie ten Boom** had just spoken to a large crowd and was greeting people after the meeting. Suddenly her heart seemed to freeze, for there coming toward her was the guard who had been so cruel to her at Ravensbruck prison camp. A wave of horror passed over her. She thought she had long ago forgiven him, but now she realized that she still hated him in her heart.

He stuck out his hand, "A fine message, Fraulein! How good it is to know, as you say, all our sins are at the bottom of the sea!" "You were a guard at Ravensbruck," Corrie heard herself say. "I remember you. Do you remember me?"

"I don't remember you," he replied. "There were so many. But I have become a Christian since then. I know that God has forgiven me for the cruel things I did there, but I would like to hear it from your lips as well. Fraulein, will you forgive me?"

Suddenly Corrie realized that she had no control over those emotions of anger, hatred, and bitterness. How could this man expect all those horrid memories to disappear? She looked into her heart and saw no forgiveness there.

*Jesus, help me!* She prayed silently. *I can lift my hand. I can do that much. You supply the feeling.*

Woodenly, mechanically, she thrust her hand into the one stretched out to her. And as she did, an incredible thing took place. She said, "The current started in my shoulders, raced down my arm, sprang into our joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes."

"I forgive you, brother!" She cried. "With all my heart, I forgive you."50

Carla attended a seminar similar to this one. She heard that she was a woman of worth, created by God for a purpose, that He had a plan for her life, something He wanted her to do for Him. She was challenged to step onto the stage of earth's history and play the part God had asked her to play.

"To tell you the truth, right now I don't feel like stepping into the spotlight," Carla confided. "My husband left me for another woman, and my kids are no longer in the church. I don't feel much like a success. Surely God doesn't want to use me!"51

Oh, but He does! "High and low, rich and poor, all have a work to do for the Master. Everyone is called to action."52

The facts are that Carla is a woman of high worth. She is a woman of destiny, whether she feels like one or not. She is still a daughter of the King of Kings. She is still special to Him. She still has a work to do for God, a work that no one else can do.

If she, in faith, talks and acts success, the feelings of worth will come. That is one of the psychological rules of life. Positive feelings follow positive thoughts and positive actions.

You, too, are a woman of excellence, a woman of high worth. Your feelings of the moment have nothing to do with the facts. God sees you as a success, a woman of great value. He created you for a purpose, and He died to make your success possible. Begin to act like a daughter of the King and in due time the feelings will come.

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| **GROUP WORK: Participant Activities p. 6 (Assignment 8)**   * + 1. On page 6 are ten characteristics of a woman of high self-esteem.     2. Rate yourself. Five is best.     3. Share with your group one area where you show high self-esteem.     4. Share one area where you need improvement. |

1. **Yield yourself to God every day.**

This last step may be the most important of all in repairing your damaged self-worth. You must find a time of solitude every day when you can be alone with God—to get your priorities straight, to put the incidents of life into proper perspective, to pray, study the Word, and listen to God's voice.

"The journey toward healthy self-esteem starts with God," says Candace Schap. "Every journey has to if we hope to discover the best within ourselves. Non-Christians can make the journey and, through counseling or therapy, attain a level of healing. But they will never experience the most wonderful gift of all—the unconditional love and forgiveness of God."53

If we don't take time every day for this quiet time with God we will find our springs of worth and well-being running dry.

Ann Morrow Lindburg expressed this idea so beautifully in her book, *Gift from the Sea.* "Every person, especially every woman, should be alone sometime during the year, some part of each week, and each day...How often in a large city, shaking hands with my friends, I have felt the wilderness stretching between us. Both of us were wandering in arid wastes, having lost the springs that nourished us—or having found them dry."

She continues, "(Woman) wants perpetually to spill herself away. All her instinct as a woman—the eternal nourisher of children, of men, of society—demands that she give. Her time, her energy, her creativeness drain out into these channels if there is any chance, any leak.... Eternally, woman spills herself away in driblets to the thirsty, seldom being allowed the time, the quiet, the peace, to let the pitcher fill up to the brim."

She seems to be talking to me when she writes, "With our pitchers, we attempt sometimes to water a field, not a garden. We throw ourselves indiscriminately into committees and causes. Not knowing how to feed the spirit, we try to muffle its demands in distractions. Instead of stilling the center, the axis of the wheel, we add more centrifugal activities to our lives—which tend to throw us off balance."54

We must take time to feed our spirits, to rediscover the springs of God's love that will nourish our souls.

Suzanna Wesley, mother of 19 children, still found time to spend two hours everyday in Bible study. She had a set time when she put aside household chores and went to her room to study and pray. Suzanna had the interesting habit of pulling her apron over her head when she was communing with the Lord. The children knew that when she did that she was not to be disturbed. It was her prayer time.

Ruth Bell Graham, wife of Evangelist Billy Graham, leaves an open Bible on the coffee table. That way, whenever she has a few moments, she can read a verse or two and relax. She also memorizes verses, repeating them as she drives, irons, or does other household tasks.55

Evelyn Christenson, author of *What Happens When Women Pray,* limits the television and radio she watches during the day so that outside distractions will not interfere with her ability to have a quiet time with God. She tries to seize opportunities to pray while doing housework or other routine chores that don't require full attention. As a young mother, she found night feedings a good opportunity to pray. She also has a daily time set aside to spend with the Lord, alone. During this time she tries to spend a good deal of time listening to what He has to say to her. Her books have been the result of things she has written down during her time of daily listening to God.56

Becky Tirabassi was a burned out church volunteer when she attended a youth workers' convention focused on the need for prayer. During a prayer workshop she vowed she would spend one hour every day in prayer for the rest of her life. She has been doing that faithfully since 1984 and it has changed her life.

To make it possible to spend that hour, she had to get up before anyone in her house, and that was hard for she is not a morning person. She had to watch less TV at night and get to bed earlier. In the beginning she made an appointment with God for one hour, writing it into her daily calendar. If anyone called or something came up to interrupt, she'd say, "I'm sorry. I have an appointment." She uses a prayer journal to help her spend the hour in prayer.57

Writing prayers in a journal is a way many women have found to slow down enough to really communicate with God. All you need is a blank book or a notebook and pen. Write out your prayers as a letter to God. Some prefer to do their daily prayer time on the computer, as that seems more natural than writing with a pen. If you are having trouble with prayer, you might find this works for you.

"It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ," says Ellen White. 58

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| **GROUP WORK: Participant Activities p. 7 (Assignment 9)**   1. Write out a prayer to God. 2. Discuss with Him your self-esteem problems. 3. How have you sensed He has been speaking to you so far in this seminar? What message is He giving you? 4. This is for your own eyes only. You will not be asked to share. |

On pages 8-12 are some ideas for you to use on your own to continue to develop your self-esteem.

Give yourself the gift of solitude. Go away for several hours. Take no radio or cassette player. Read, meditate on Scripture, contemplate God's handiwork in nature, and be totally silent, yielding yourself to Him. You will return with your cup filled, ready to go forth to be all that God has gifted you to be.

**III. The Challenge**

Today I challenge you to be all that God has gifted you to become. It will take courage; it will take risk. Every successful woman since time began has needed courage to fill God's plan for her life.

My list of courageous women includes intrepid pioneer missionary Narcissa Whitman and the dauntless Anne Judson. Fearless Mary Slessor of Calabar is there, and so is brave Harriet Tubman. I would include the valiant Elizabeth Fry as well as spunky Florence Nightingale. My list includes stalwart Catherine Booth and the daring Ellen G. White.

These are all women who could have chosen to travel life's main highway, where they would be comfortable and safe. Instead, they chose to hike a new trail. The path they traveled was uncomfortable at times, risky and unpredictable. Their way was uncertain, uncharted, but the scenery, exciting!

Today I challenge you to be a woman who travels new trails, a courageous woman such as Ana Stahl or Ida Scudder. I dare you to be a woman who dares to stand up for principle, a woman such as Anne Hutchinson or Georgia Burrus. I dare you to be a woman unafraid of using her talents, a woman such as gold medalist Wilma Rudolph or singer Marian Anderson.

I dare you, whoever you are, regardless of the handicaps you may face, to be all that God has gifted you to become! Joni Eareckson Tada overcame and so can you!

I dare you who are mothers to make your life a masterpiece upon which your little family can build. I dare you to be a successful parent.

I dare you who are married to make your marriage a success, to be the best possible partner anyone could have, to go the second mile, to give it 110%. I dare you to succeed in your marriage.

I dare you to look at yourself through your Master's eyes, to see your potential. I dare you to write the book you have always wanted to write, to paint the picture you know you can paint, to find the music hidden away in your soul and to get it out there to benefit others.

I dare you to ask God to give you a dream, then I dare you to find a way to accomplish it through Christ who enables you. You can be more than you ever dreamed of being, you can do more than you ever thought you could do for God. You are a woman of excellence! You are a woman of high worth!

At the age of 62, Estelle went back to school to fulfill a lifelong dream of becoming a nurse. She was a gray-haired grandmother among teenagers, but she got the highest marks in her class. She worked another 20 years, traveled the world, and became a volunteer missionary in India. She dared to discover God's plan for the sunset years of her life. She dared to run with her dream. She dared to be a woman of excellence!

Sharon was told by her college counselors, "You don't have the intelligence to become a nurse. Your test scores are too low.” But she passed with flying colors. She's a nurse today in one of our Adventist hospitals. She dared to stretch to her limits to become what she believed God wanted her to be.

Kelly worked as a cook in a roadside restaurant in Slana, Alaska. God placed it within her heart to start a church in Slana. She had very little education. She had no training, but she saw herself through her Master's eyes. She glimpsed her potential. She began to dream of what God could do through her and her family. She started a pathfinder club and a community services center. She put on a Christmas dinner for the community and fifty people came. Within a few months she had a group of 20 meeting each week for Sabbath School.

Deep down in all our hearts is the desire to be somebody, to get somewhere, to do something worthwhile with our lives for God. But so often we sit waiting for the opportunity. Opportunity does not come knocking. Those who commit their dreams to God, then step out in faith to make their dreams come true capture it.

I dare you to reach for the stars, to demonstrate to the world what a woman of worth can do for God. I am daring you to think bigger, to act bigger, and to be bigger. I am daring you to stretch yourself to the limits. You never know what success may be yours until you pursue your dream.

I am daring you to stretch toward your full potential, enabled by the Holy Spirit to be all that God has gifted you to become.59

You've probably never heard of Amanda Smith, but she was a woman of excellence who lived during the 19th century. Born a slave, one of a family of 13, she lived through the deaths of several children, the death of one husband, and the instability of a second.

Yet her story is one of spiritual triumph and success. She rose to worldwide leadership in the Christian cause, becoming an internationally acclaimed missionary evangelist, preaching in England, India, Africa, and other parts of the world.

This is what one noted individual wrote about her: "As an enlightened, thoroughly consecrated Christian evangelist, Mrs. Amanda Smith takes the first place in American history. She is a Christian of the highest type. And a simple, confiding child of God has no superior among women of any race. And may we modestly say it? ...Nor among any Christian of our times."

Another minister who knew her well referred to her as "God's image carved in ebony."

What was the secret of her great success in an era when it was extremely difficult to be both a woman and black?

I suggest that it was because she got a glimpse of God's plan for her life. She caught a vision of what she could become through Jesus Christ. Realizing her value she began to stretch toward her full potential.

Once when Amanda stood before an audience of rank and wealth to sing, she suddenly realized that she was only a washerwoman with but two years of education...and she began to tremble. How could she possibly go out there and sing?

And then she remembered that she was God's child. Her success was not to be measured in status, money, power, or position. It was to be measured in what she did with what God had given her. She decided to be all that God had gifted her to become.

Amanda told herself, "I belong to Royalty, and am well acquainted with the king of kings and am better known and better understood among the great family above than I am here on earth."

She walked out into the spotlight, her head held high, and praised God for all that was within her.

After that day new opportunities presented themselves miraculously. She went through each door God opened and did her best to be all that He had gifted her to become.60

She grew. She stretched. She achieved. Amanda Smith was a woman of worth. She was a success, a winner in the game of life.

You are also created to win. You, too, can stretch toward your full potential, growing to become all that God has meant you to be, a woman of worth and excellence.

You are a woman of value, gifted for a purpose. Are you ready to stretch toward His ideal for you? Are you willing to say, "Yes, Lord, I'll be all that you meant for me to be?"

**IN MEMORY OF Dorothy eaton watts…**

**Dorothy Eaton Watts** was retired from administration for her church headquarters in India and served at the General Conference as Women’s Ministries Director in the 90’s. Dorothy was a freelance writer, editor, and speaker. She and her husband Ron served as missionaries in India for more than 28 years, where she founded an orphanage, and taught elementary school. She wrote more than 26 books and her hobbies included gardening, hiking, and birding (with more than 1,600 in her world total). On November 8, 2010 Dorothy fell asleep in Jesus. Her friends and family look forward to a joyful reunion with her on the resurrection morning at the second

coming of Jesus.

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