

2 find true identity

While 88.4% of the church planters' wives surveyed volunteer one to eight hours daily to the church-planting process, it is sometimes hard to label the *identity* that goes with the multitude of tasks. While 80% of ministry wives have mostly satisfied to delighted feelings about their contribution to others, 59.7% feel they have some or very little power over their life focus. So many dynamics go into how we view ourselves. Carol provides an important biblical foundation for evaluating what goes into our sense of identity.

balanced in the midst of a life where people's opinions seem to demand that I perform in order to maintain their happiness and comfort? I've discovered that my identity and worth in God keeps me from getting too caught up in feelings of failure, incompetence, or mediocrity. Living in the solid and unchanging reality of my worth in God supports me through the fluctuations and uncertainties of the responsibilities to and opinions of those whom I love and serve as wife, mother, church planter, and counselor.

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About the Author: I'm a wife, mother, church planter, and professional counselor. As I consider each of these roles, I can't help but feel the reality of my responsibility to each person within each of my roles. I could get over-whelmed at the weight of needs and demands that my husband, children, congregation, and clients require of me.

I fail in meeting someone's needs every day. Whether it's not getting to the dry cleaners for my husband, not calling a client back within the hour, not saying hello to a church member as I flew by, or serving eggplant for dinner—no matter what, someone will have ample opportunity to think ill of me. The efficiency and quality of my performance seems to drive each person's opinion of me. How can I stay

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Welcome to this chapter in your great adventure of trusting God as a church plant wife. Today we will be discovering the invaluable treasure of our worth in God. This truth will prove to be vital to you as you journey the extremely uncertain but amazing road of church planting.

Not too long ago, a new client came into my counseling office. Her mother insisted that she make the appointment with me. The mom didn't like my client's boyfriend and was threatening to cut off all support and connection unless the daughter stopped seeing the young man. The daughter was twenty-three at the time and her boyfriend was twenty-four. The boyfriend, according to my client, was physically and verbally abusive, but she just couldn't seem to let go of him. The relationship was costing her a great deal. For the first time she started lying and sneaking as a way of life. While in relationship with this young man she lost her purity, integrity, safety, sense of personal value, and identity. In addition, she was about to lose her family. She was aware of all her losses. When I asked her what she wanted to accomplish in therapy, she said that she wanted to work on building her self-esteem. She said that she must not think very highly of herself since she was willing to stay in an abusive relationship while giving up everything else.

About the same time that I was working with this young lady I received a phone call at my office. The voice on the line said, "Hello, my name is Jane Smith (not her real name). You don't know me, but one of my friends is a former client of yours. She gave me your card eight months ago and told me I should call you for counseling. I've carried your card with me all this time and feel that now is the time to start dealing with my problem." We made an appointment for the next week. The day of the appointment came and I went out to my waiting room to meet my new client. There were several people in the waiting room and since I had never met Jane Smith I called out her name. A very beautiful, well groomed (perfectly done hair, French manicured fingernails), richly dressed, and flawlessly accessorized woman looked up at me, smiled, and pleasantly introduced herself as Jane Smith.

We walked from the waiting room together and entered my office. After the usual business preliminaries, I asked her what she desired to accomplish as a result of counseling. She said, "I want to improve my self-esteem. I don't like myself." I asked her how long she had felt this way about herself. She didn't even hesitate as she told me, "All my life." I asked her to explain what she meant when she said that she didn't like herself. She said that 1) she always put herself down; 2) she compared herself with others and always fell short; 3) she had a tendency to lose herself around others, pretending she liked what they liked or pretending to agree with them when she actually didn't; 4) she could never accept a compliment; 5) she was afraid to try new things and 6) she didn't invite people over to her house. As she spoke I began to feel the ache in her heart.

Nearly all my clients tell me that they have low self-esteem. You're probably thinking, "Well, of course, those kind of people who need counseling probably really do suffer with low self-esteem. But, for over twenty-five years I've discipled Christian women in my churches and most of them, in their vulnerable moments, tell me that they don't feel good about themselves. They share with me that they struggle with low self-esteem."

My husband and I planted a church a few years ago and one of the blessings I have is connecting with other church planters' wives. I get to hear their hearts either at social gatherings, in my counseling office, or when I work with them at an assessment center. I find that many have self-doubts, a sense of inadequacy, and a fear of failure as they enter this uncertain time of church planting. They talk to me about their low self-esteem.

For at least twenty-five years self-esteem has been a hot topic, and I'm not sure where we've gotten with it.

So my twenty-three-year-old client with the abusive boyfriend and Jane Smith with the beautiful face, body, hair, nails, and clothes, both said, "I'm here in counseling hoping to improve my self-esteem. Can you help me?" They both were very serious in making their requests and I saw in their eyes a mixture of despair and hope. I paused as I took time to think and pray about how to respond to them. I said to both

of them, "I'm sorry. No, I can't help you improve your self-esteem." I did quickly add this statement: "Let me explain something to you and then let's decide if improving your self-esteem is really what you want."

Before I share with you what I explained to my clients, let me orient you to this chapter of your tool kit.

Focus and Objectives

Our **focus** is: "*All people have a deep need to know that they have great value. We are of great worth to God, and in God.*" Matthew 6:26 says, "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?" (NASB).

Our **objectives** are that we would come to understand and experience the benefits of the treasure of worth as we discover:

1. the difference between self-esteem and self-worth;
2. four commonly accepted false beliefs about ourselves that deceive us and enslave us;
3. the tools that enable us to plug into our gift of worth; and
4. how to apply these tools in order to experience our worth.

As we understand our focus and objectives, then we'll understand what I shared with my clients.

I wanted my clients to understand why I couldn't join them in their therapeutic goal of improved self-esteem, so I went to my dry erase board that hangs on my office wall and I picked up my marker and I drew out a chart. A similar chart is included below titled "Worth vs. Self-Esteem." Self-esteem is a very real entity. Because it is real, it has characteristics and a source.

Worth vs. Self-Esteem

Worth (the truth of who I am in God)	Esteem (the sense I have about myself)
1. Never changes 2. Stable 3. Always true/trustworthy 4. Fact 5. Already ours <i>Source: God</i>	1. Changes, fluctuates 2. Unstable 3. Untrustworthy 4. Feelings/sense 5. Earned <i>Source: my performance, people's opinions</i>

Self-esteem = performance and people's opinions

Self-worth = what God says about me

Self-esteem, by way of definition, is a sense or a message that I have about myself. It is a compilation of thoughts, sensations, perceptions, feelings, attitudes, and evaluations that I have about who I am and what I do.

As the chart demonstrates, self-esteem changes and fluctuates. It can change within short periods of time. A friend told me that she had a job interview last week. When she left the interview she felt so confident and proud of herself. She loved what she said about herself, she loved how she conducted herself, and she loved the questions she posed to the interviewers. She thought she was so cute and clever. She concluded that they were so impressed that they'd definitely be offering her the job. Within a few hours of the interview she started questioning herself. Self-doubt moved in, and within a few short minutes she was berating herself for all the foolish things she had said. She suddenly felt awful about the interview.

Self-esteem is also unstable, meaning that it is very up and down, it isn't even or level. It is untrustworthy. You can't count on its veracity. For example, some people who are perfectionists perform at exceptional levels and yet always seem to feel it's not good enough. Self-esteem is based on a feeling or a sense. Finally, self-esteem is something that must be earned or acquired.

So where do we get self-esteem? What is the source? According to Robert McGee, in his book *The Search for Significance*, we get self-esteem from other people's opinions and our own performance.

One of the reasons I cannot, with any sense of integrity, join a client in the therapeutic goal of improving self-esteem is because of the futility of trying to control other people's opinions and my performance. Jesus Christ, for example lived perfectly while here on earth, but most of his contemporaries thought he was demon possessed and raving mad (John 10:20). I believe that a person who is trying to improve self-esteem is setting him-self up for failure and trying to do the impossible. I believe that it is very unhealthy to create personal goals that require the involvement of others in order for me to achieve my goals.

We've examined the characteristics of esteem, now let's take a look at worth. On the chart you can see that worth never changes. It's never better, never worse. Never more, never less. Therefore it is stable. Worth is always true and therefore is trustworthy. It is a fact, it is an absolute, and best of all it is already ours. We can't earn it. We can only receive it. There is no effort on our part to achieve a state of worth. Where do we get this worth? We get our worth from God. Our worth is the truth of who God says I am and what God says about me.

Let's see how this chart works as a tool to help me live authentically in my worth. Suppose my husband chose to leave me for another woman. No doubt that my esteem

would be affected. Obviously, for him to leave me meant that in his perspective my performance was less than he desired and his opinion of me wasn't high. If I regularly dwell in the esteem side of the chart, there's a high probability that I may go over the edge in low self-esteem.

However, I try to imagine that there is an electric cord from my heart and mind to the left side of the chart, to my worth. I take the plug and I insert it into the socket of my worth and let the truths of my worth empower me to hold and manage the unsteadiness of my esteem. To continue the illustration, in a very practical way, as I plug into or embrace my worth I come to realize that my husband left me but God will never leave me. My husband rejected me but God chose me. My husband stopped loving me but God loves me eternally and unconditionally. My husband held grudges but God forgives. I call this the "YES, BUT" exercise. "Yes, he rejected me, but God chose me." "Yes, they don't like me, but God loves me." If we use this YES, BUT exercise by unplugging from our self-esteem side and plugging into our worth we will start to notice a difference in the way that we approach and handle situations and people along the way of this risky road of life.

As the reality of who I am to God and what he says of me—the truths of my worth—stabilize and manage my esteem, then no circumstance or individual, even myself, can cause me to be buried in low self-esteem.

The key truth here is that I cannot improve self-esteem through trying to control all my behaviors and people's opinions. I can only live in the reality of my worth to God, and consequently these truths will manage my self-esteem.

I remember one of the first times that I clung to this YES, BUT exercise. I had just graduated with my masters in psychology and had interviewed for my first counseling job with a prominent counseling center in my town. I was very excited about the possibility of working with such a reputable agency. When I got the phone call from the director informing me that they decided not to hire me, I quickly thanked him for his time and his call and hung up the phone. I wanted to get off the phone as soon as I could so that he couldn't hear me crying. I started to berate myself and question my future in the field of psychology. Obviously their opinion of me was low and my performance wasn't up to their standards. I was definitely plugging into the self-esteem side of the chart. Then the Lord gently reminded me of himself and of my worth in him. He led me to unplug my energy source from the self-esteem side and plug it into my worth. I was able to see that "They rejected me but He chose me. I'm not good enough for them, but I'm good enough for God." After a few minutes of focusing on my worth in God, I was able to respond to the rejection of the counseling center with peace and confidence, knowing that God had a better plan for me.

May I ask a personal question? On which side of the chart are we placing our plugs for a majority of our time? The self-esteem side or the worth side?

Listen to the sad part of all this. Unbelievers *only* have the self-esteem part of this chart. All they have as a defense and drive in life is the fickleness of others' opinions and their own evaluation of their performance. What a draining, ineffective way to have to live life. They don't have the absolute truths that we have in our identity in Christ. We are so blessed to have our worth in and from God as our solid rock in this world of sinking sand.

You may be wondering, "What keeps us from living consistently and dynamically in the freedom of our worth in God?" Robert McGee, in his book *The Search for Significance*, suggests that we fail to appropriate our worth because we live in the bondage of one or more false beliefs.

As we continue to consider our worth in God, the exercise that I'd like you to do now comes from Robert McGee's book *The Search for Significance*. Reflectively consider the following four statements according to directions.

Four Commonly Accepted Lies

The following are four general beliefs that many of us apply daily in our relationships and circumstances. To what extent do these affect you? Estimate the percentage you live by each of these beliefs from zero to 100 percent. (a-d should total 100%)

- a. _____ % I must meet certain standards in order to feel good about myself.

- b. _____ % I must have the approval of certain people (boss, friends, parents, etc.) in order to approve of myself. Without their approval I cannot feel good about myself.
- c. _____ % Those who fall (including myself) are unworthy of love, and therefore, must be blamed and condemned.
- d. _____ % I am what I am. I cannot change. I am hopeless. In other words, I am the sum total of all my past successes and failures, and I'll never be significantly different.

The following chart is also from *The Search for Significance*. Notice Robert McGee says that those who live under the false belief that they must meet certain standards in order to feel good about themselves are saying, "If I fail to meet these standards, I cannot really feel good about myself." Those of us who live under this false belief are driven into a performance trap type of lifestyle and we live in fear of failure. We believe that success will bring fulfillment and happiness, so we live under the pressure of self-imposed standards and a rule-dominated life. Consider the following chart of false beliefs with the correction of God's answers.

	False Beliefs	Consequences	God's Answer
The Performance Trap	<i>I must meet certain standards in order to feel good about myself.</i>	The fear of failure; perfectionism; driven to succeed; manipulating others to achieve success; withdrawal from risks.	Justification Justification means that God has not only forgiven me of my sins, but has also granted me the righteousness of Christ. Because of justification, I am, therefore, fully pleasing to the Father. (Romans 5:1)
Approval Addict	<i>I must be approved (accepted) by certain others to feel good about myself.</i>	The fear of rejection; attempting to please others at any cost; overly sensitive to criticism; withdrawing from others to avoid disapproval.	Reconciliation Reconciliation means that although I was at one time hostile toward God and alienated from Him, I am now forgiven and have been brought into an intimate relationship with Him. Consequently, I am totally accepted by God. (Colossians 1:21-23)
The Blame Game	<i>Those who fail are unworthy of love and deserve to be punished</i>	The fear of punishment; punishing others; blaming others for personal failure; withdrawal from God and others; driven to avoid failure.	Propitiation Propitiation means that Christ satisfied God's wrath by His death on the cross; therefore, I am deeply loved by God. (1 John 4:9-11)
The Shame Game	<i>I am what I am. I cannot change. I am hopeless.</i>	Feelings of shame, hopelessness, inferiority; passivity, loss of creativity; isolation, withdrawal from others	Regeneration Regeneration means that I am a new creation in Christ. (John 3:3-6)

When I was younger I tended to get caught up in **the performance trap**. I lived my life according to a very tight schedule. I designed my list of what needed to be accomplished each day and I ran my appointments to the minute. My agenda demanded that everything run perfectly in order to accomplish my goals for the day. I never counted on snags or mistakes. If things didn't go well or someone slowed me up, I felt nervous and tense. I also felt a sense of emptiness and anxiety if for some reason it looked as if I might have nothing to do for a period of time. I didn't know what to do with "empty time" and I felt lazy and unfulfilled unless I was constantly doing something.

I needed God's deliverance from the performance trap. My freedom came as I started to live in the reality of the truth of *my justification with God*. God's truth of justification is the solution for the problem of the performance trap. Justification means that because of Christ's sacrifice, God has given us a right standing with him, *totally apart* from our ability to perform. He not only *freely* granted us this right standing, but justification also means that he has given us the righteousness of Christ. Consequently, we now are totally worthy in God's presence and we are fully pleasing to God at all times. We don't earn our worthiness or his pleasure through

performance. We already are worthy, and we are a constant pleasure to God because he made us worthy and pleasing when he justified us.

As we begin to live in the reality that because we are justified we are fully and always pleasing to God, we will start to notice some very tangible changes in our thinking and behaviors. We will notice that our demanding, unrelenting voice to "do, do, do" will quiet down and God's grace and rest will allow us to become more flexible and relaxed in what we do. We will also start to become warmer in our relationships and we will genuinely move toward being people- rather than project-focused. Finally, we will be able to enjoy times of silence, solitude, and stillness without feeling guilty.

Notice the second false belief: "I must be approved (accepted) by certain people to accept myself. If I do not have the approval of these people, I cannot accept myself." This belief results in becoming an **approval addict** and the fear of rejection influences all thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Mary feels like a vending machine. Anyone who wants anything can just pull a lever and get it. Mary is always the one they can count on to do the extra shifts at work. At school, others ask her for help, which she gives at the expense of her own grades. At church, she is known as "Old Faithful" and is taken advantage of. Friends call on her when they need a hand. Mary appears to be so sweet and self-sacrificing, but in reality she's driven by the fear of rejection. She can't say no and is inwardly resentful of all the demands put on her.

Mary needs deliverance from being an approval addict. God's solution to the fear of rejection is reconciliation. The truth of reconciliation can free us from being enslaved to living for the acceptance of others. Reconciliation means that those who were enemies and alienated from God are now forgiven and have been brought into intimate relationship with God. As a result of my reconciliation I am totally accepted by God. God does not base his love and acceptance of us on the things we do for him. We cannot earn God's acceptance, and because of Christ we are already accepted by him unconditionally. If I can't earn God's acceptance through my performance, then it stands to reason that I can't lose it through my lack of performance. I am totally and eternally acceptable in Christ.

Growing in the reality of our reconciliation with God replaces our fearful, people pleasing heart with a heart at peace, a heart that knows deeply and truly the full acceptance of God. I remember a time in my life many years ago that I used to set the alarm to get up at 6:00 every morning. Whether it was Saturday or I was on vacation or I didn't have an appointment that day till noon, I was up. After deeply examining my motivation for this habit, I realized that I did it just in case someone asked me what time I get up in the morning. I thought I would appear more ambitious if I said 6 a.m. rather than a later time at which I would wake up naturally. As I started to embrace the profound certainty of my full and constant acceptance by God, I began to experience increasing freedom from the fear of rejection. I developed a willingness to be open and vulnerable. I was able to start to set appropriate boundaries, and I developed properly motivated disciplines of self-care. I also started to be able to say no to people without feeling guilty.

Our chart identifies the third false belief as **the blame game**: "Those who fail (including myself) are unworthy of love and deserve to be blamed and punished." This belief leads to the fear of punishment and the propensity to punish others. Robert McGee says, "If we believe that performance reflects one's value, and that failure makes one unacceptable and unworthy of love, then we will usually feel completely justified in condemning those who fail, including ourselves."¹

Susan came from a home where her parents cared more about what Susan did than how Susan felt or who Susan was. She learned very early in life that what she did right was not recognized and what she did wrong was punished. She doesn't recall expressions of love being given verbally or physically by her parents. She grew up longing for the security of their love. However, she always fell short of earning their love because she'd inevitably do something wrong and again experience their disapproval. She grew up believing that love had to be earned and wrongs should always be punished. As she entered into marriage and motherhood she carried on the only way that she knew how to experience relationships—"Those who fail are unworthy of love and deserve to be punished." Susan became miserable and lonely in her poor relationships and felt the need for God's deliverance from the blame game.

We who blame and punish ourselves or others must come to understand the truth of propitiation. What is propitiation? Propitiation means that Christ satisfied God's wrath for my sin by taking my punishment on the cross. Therefore, I have no fear of ever being punished by God, and consequently, I can live freely in his love.

Propitiation is a difficult concept to understand, so let me say that another way. Our sin deserves the righteous wrath of God. But instead of demanding that we pay the penalty of our own sin, Jesus Christ took the punishment of our sin and in his death he satisfied God's wrath against all unrighteousness. Since Jesus was punished for me, I no longer fear punishment from God. Without the fear and burden of punishment, I am then free to intensely, genuinely, and uniquely experience God's love.

First John 4:18 says, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love" (NASB). As we come to experience the truth of propitiation we will gain an increasing freedom from the fear of punishment. We will be able to demonstrate a true sense of patience and gentleness with ourselves and/or others and we will be quick to apply forgiveness.

The fourth false belief that Robert McGee recognizes is **the shame game**. This is the belief that "I am what I am. I cannot change I am hopeless." This means that I am simply a total of all my past performances, both good and bad. The person who is living in the world of shame has come to believe I am what I have done. This belief leads to a sense of shame, inferiority, and passivity. "I just can't help myself." "That's the way I've always been." "I can't do that!" We have low expectations of ourselves and assume that others believe we aren't good enough either. Those of us who find ourselves living out this painful lie need to find profound meaning in the truth of regeneration. Because of regeneration I have been made brand new. I am complete in Christ. "Regeneration is not a self-improvement program, nor is it a clean-up campaign for our sinful natures. Regeneration is nothing less than the impartation of new life."² Second Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."(NASB). Because we are new people with the Spirit of God living in us, we have incredible potential for God, our heavenly Father, to grow and change us.

As we come to know the truth of our regeneration in our daily experience, we will be increasingly Christ-centered and less self-conscious. We will experience his confidence, joy, courage, and peace. We will be able to look people in the eye, laugh at our mistakes, initiate conversations, resist negative and disrespectful self-talk, experience less of a need to criticize others, and start to feel close to God as our loving Father.

The performance trap, the approval addict, the blame game, and the shame game are four lies that can prevent us from experiencing our worth in God.

What I've presented in this chart is only a brief overview of the false beliefs and God's solutions of how to be delivered from these destructive lies. If you would like to do further study of these false beliefs and how to be set free from them, please purchase, read, and study the book and workbook of *The Search for Significance* by Robert McGee.

I'd like to suggest three tools for us to get started in the process of plugging into our worth. We can live daily in the victory of worth as we choose to use these tools in the power of the Holy Spirit.

First, in taking the initial steps of knowing your worth in God, the following is a tool designed to help us allow God's truth of who we are in Christ to transform our minds and lives. Neil Anderson, in his book *Victory over the Darkness*, includes this list titled "Who Am I?" as an encouragement in the development of our sense of our identity in Christ. Anderson suggests that we read over this list at least five to ten times a day. As these truths become real to us, they will be used of God to transform us through the renewing of our minds. I've placed this list on my mirror in my bathroom, and I review it while I get ready in the morning. I also have a copy in my car and I read it when I get stopped at a red light. At times I've put it by my night stand and I read it before I go to sleep. The idea is to read it often throughout the day and let God's Word be living and active in your life.

Who Am I?

- I am the salt of the earth. (Matthew 5:13)
- I am the light of the world. (Matthew 5:14)
- I am a child of God. (John 1:12)
- I am part of the true vine, a channel of Christ's life. (John 15:1, 5)
- I am Christ's friend. (John 15:15)
- I am chosen and appointed by Christ to bear His fruit. (John 15:16)
- I am a joint heir with Christ, sharing His inheritance with Him. (Romans 8:17)
- I am a temple—a dwelling place—of God. His Spirit and His life dwell in me. (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19)
- I am a member of Christ's Body. (1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 5:30)
- I am a new creation. (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- I am an heir of God since I am a daughter of God. (Galatians 4:6, 7)
- I am God's workmanship—His handiwork—born anew in Christ to do His work. (Ephesians 2:10)
- I am a son of light and not of darkness. (1 Thessalonians 5:5)
- I am a partaker of Christ; I share in His life. (Hebrews 3:14)
- I am born of God, and the evil one—the devil—cannot touch me. (1 John 5:18)

Since I Am in Christ, by the Grace of God . . .

- I have been justified—completely forgiven and made righteous. (Romans 5:1)
- I died with Christ and died to the power of sin's rule over my life. (Romans 6:1–6)
- I am free forever from condemnation. (Romans 8:1)
- I have received the Spirit of God into my life that I might know the things freely given to me by God. (1 Corinthians 2:12)
- I have been given the mind of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:16)
- I have been bought with a price; I am not my own; I belong to God. (1 Corinthians 5:19, 20)
- I have been established, anointed, and sealed by God in Christ, and I have been given the Holy Spirit as a pledge guaranteeing my inheritance to come. (2 Corinthians 1:21; Ephesians 1:13, 14)
- I have been blessed with every spiritual blessing. (Ephesians 1:3)
- I was chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blame before Him. (Ephesians 1:4)
- I have been made alive together with Christ. (Ephesians 2:5)
- I have direct access to God through the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:18)
- I have been rescued from the domain of Satan's rule and transferred to the Kingdom of Christ. (Colossians 1:13)
- I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins. The debt against me has been cancelled. (Colossians 1:14)
- I am firmly rooted in Christ and am now being built up in Him. (Colossians 2:7)
- I have been given a spirit of power, love, and self-discipline. (2 Timothy 1:7)

Committing these truths to your memory and to your heart will make the next tool more meaningful in your daily life.

Second, you may want to put your chart "Worth vs. Esteem" (p. 30) in a safe place where you can readily get to it when needed. Every morning before you get out of bed you might ask the Lord to plug you into the worth side of the chart. During the day if you find that you've unplugged yourself from the socket of your worth and you've plugged into your self-esteem side, then stop, pray, and get refocused on your worth in God. Do your YES, BUT exercise. It will enable you to stay out of the performance trap, the approval addict dance, the blame game, and the shame game.

Third, use the tool "That's what I did, not who I am." We tend to condemn ourselves and call ourselves names. We usually say, "I'm so clumsy. I'm so stupid. I'm so thoughtless. I'm so fat. Etc." If we're blaming another person, we'll say, "You're thoughtless. You're mean. You're selfish." That's not who you are or who they are! We see ourselves as being someone who is clumsy, stupid and thoughtless etc. instead of seeing what we did as an act or action outside of who we are. It's more accurate and kind to say, "It was thoughtless of me not to call," or "It was a miscommunication and I'm sorry for the inconvenience," or "That wasn't a kind thing to say."

As a mother of two children I became aware early in their lives that it was very important that I correct and train them without guilt and condemnation. I would intentionally say, "Joseph, that was a wrong choice." Or I'd say, "Rachel that was an unkind thing to do to your brother." The tool "That's what I did, not who I am" will enable us to stay out of the blame game and the shame game.

In our time together, we've identified the difference between self-esteem and worth. We've looked at four commonly accepted lies about ourselves that deceive us and prevent us from experiencing our worth. And finally, we've suggested tools that might help us start to plug into our worth so that we can live daily in the victory of who we are in God.

God bless you as you face this church-planting experience anchored in your treasure of God's worth and not on the instability of your self-esteem.

Notes

1. Robert S. McGee, *The Search for Significance* (Nashville: Word, 1998), 83.
2. McGee, 113.
3. Neil Anderson, *Victory over the Darkness* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1990).