

Chapter 6



The Bitter Roots of Inferiority

Bible Character – Moses – Exodus 3-4
Symptoms – Effects – Causes – Biblical Cures

A Definition of Inferiority Complex

We are looking at bitter roots in our thinking that cause a dysfunctional life. Hebrews 12 instructs us to remove the weights and sins that so easily beset us and then identifies those weights that hinder us as being bitter roots in our thinking patterns. These roots cause trouble for us and defile those around us.

In this chapter, we are looking at an inferiority complex. An inferiority complex is nothing more than the thinking and feeling that one is inferior to others. It is caused by thoughts that create insecure feelings.

An inferiority complex is a thinking disorder. Those who have an inferiority complex would disagree. They would assure you that what they think about themselves is not a delusion nor false, but the absolute truth. They believe they are inferior to other people. They suffer from feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem. They struggle to feel positive about themselves.

Let me give you a definition. Austrian physician and psychotherapist, Alfred Adler defined the inferiority complex this way.

“It is a personality that is characterized by feelings of incompetence and personal inadequacy.”

<https://www.everydayhealth.com/emotional-health/understanding-inferiority-complex/>

An inferiority complex is not mental illness or a disease. It is a thinking disorder. It is a feeling based on a thought or thoughts that one is less than average. If you suffer from an inferiority complex, you will often feel you are ugly, stupid, incompetent, useless, uncoordinated, undesirable, and/or worthless. When you put all those things together, you've got an inferiority complex.

There are many dangers in an inferiority complex. It breeds other emotional disorders. It often can lead to feeling unloved, perfectionism, anxiety, self-hatred, anger, depression and even suicide. Those who have an inferiority complex are practicing many of the 10 Cognitive Distortions or the 10 Lies of Satan, as we choose to call them.

The Situation (biblical character)

A Biblical Example of an Inferiority Complex – Exodus 3:11-14

Our character of choice from the Scriptures is Moses. You will find the complete story of his insecurity complex in Exodus 3 and 4.

Exodus 3:11-14

¹¹ But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” ¹² And God said, “I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.” ¹³ Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?” ¹⁴ God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

Exodus 4:10-14

¹⁰ Moses said to the LORD, “Pardon your servant, Lord. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue.” ¹¹ The LORD said to him, “Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the LORD? ¹² Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.” ¹³ But Moses said, “Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else.” ¹⁴ Then the LORD’s anger burned against Moses and he said, “What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well. He is already on his way to meet you, and he will be glad to see you.”

Moses’ Symptoms of Inferiority

Moses had an inferiority complex. Moses had an inferiority complex that caused him to not be used by God. He would have passed up on the opportunity to serve God because he felt so inadequate. He felt like a failure and worthless. Because of this, he ran away from Egypt and hid in the wilderness of Midian for forty years.

Moses had every reason to be insecure. He had some bad experiences early in life that even being raised as Pharaoh’s daughter’s son was not enough to overcome his self-doubt.

It was during a time of great suffering for the Israelites living as slaves. Pharaoh had commanded all the male boys to be killed to halt the population explosion among the Jews. His mother saw that he was a special child. According to ancient Jewish sources, he was first called Tov, or Tobiah, by his mother Jochebed, because the house was filled with light when he was born. Seeing he was a special child, his mother hid him, putting him in a basket and hiding him in the bulrushes.

Moses’ Impressions

You can imagine what that would do to a child. For the rest of his life, people would tell him the story of how he was pulled out of the river and that nobody wanted him. Pharaoh’s daughter

pulled him out of the bulrushes and called him Moses, which meant drawn from the water. When he went to school all the kids joked about it, behind his back, of course. "You were so ugly your mother didn't even want to look at you anymore."

Perhaps Moses had that insecure feeling because of this experience. Being a foreign child in an Egyptian household was not pleasant. Pharaoh's daughter took him to the palace. Yet, he was always the stranger. The court was aware of his identity and how he became the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

He had been adopted into her family, given an education, given all the other amenities of a prince, but they made it very clear to him, he was still a Hebrew. He didn't look like an Egyptian. Being a Hebrew, he had certain physical characteristics that set him apart. He was probably mocked by other children in the palace. They teased him about being a slave in the king's court.

His Name

Moses even had a name that was given to him. The name Moses means "salvaged" or "plucked out." Now, imagine yourself going to school. You walk into the kindergarten classroom and the teacher introduces you and says, "We have a new classmate today. His mom and dad didn't want him, so he was adopted." What do you think the kids in that class are going to do? Well, I know kids. They would tease him. They would pick on him. They would mock him behind his back. They would mock his name. Moses probably went through these stages in his life with feelings of rejection or not belonging. He was the unwanted one. The unusual one, the strange one.

He was adopted

Moses was adopted, a foreigner, and a Hebrew in that Egyptian court. He was the misfit. He might have spoken with a slight accent early on because it was his mother who nursed him for two years and raised him for much of the time. She gave him those first lessons in language.

He was the son of Pharaoh's Daughter

I imagine that Moses, because of his position being the son of Pharaoh's daughter, overcame some of the inferiority and shame put on him. As he grew up, he emboldened himself with a false confidence, probably dressing in Egyptian clothes and cutting his hair in the Egyptian style. He probably even used makeup like an upper class Egyptian.

One day, he went to visit the Hebrew people. As he went among his people, he saw a Hebrew being beaten by an Egyptian overlord. He walked right in and tried to protect the Hebrew and he killed the Egyptian.

Now talk about an inferiority complex. Here's a guy that was trying to do everything that's right and be accepted. He wanted to get on the good side of the people. Feeling he was rejected as a child from the Hebrew people he walked back into their lives and only got in more trouble by accidentally killing an Egyptian.

The next time he saw a Hebrew beating another Hebrew slave he stepped in to stop the fight, but instead of helping, he was accused of murder. They asked him, *“Are you going to kill me too, like you killed the Egyptian?”* Soon his crime reached the ears of Pharaoh and he was put on the most wanted list. Moses hightailed it out of there because there was a bounty on his head. He became a fugitive from the law.

As we look at Moses’ life there weren’t a lot of happy things happening. As he grew to maturity, instead of having a safe refuge at home with family and friends, he discovered he wasn’t welcome as a Hebrew or an Egyptian. He had no one that loved him. The Egyptians hated him and the Hebrew people despised him.

A Criminal Background

As a fugitive, he fled back to the wilderness of Midian and there he wandered. All those years, he tried to find his own self-esteem. This was a man with a damaged self-image. The impressions that came into his mind were projected on the screen of his life. “You were a nobody, and you’re still a nobody. Why don’t you become a shepherd? Go out in the fields and take care of sheep. That’s about all you’re good for.”

Moses’ God Encounter

This was the context in which we find God encountering Moses’ life. He was a man with a damaged self-image, with lots of self-doubt going on inside that testified to his lack of ability. He even said it clearly to God. “God, I can’t go to Pharaoh, they’ll kill me and my people hate me. Besides that, I stutter, I always have.” He spoke with some kind of speech impediment and always had. He said, “God, before you came to me, I spoke like this. And now that you’re talking to me, I still stutter. You’re asking me to get up and go preach to people and tell them I’m going to be their deliverer. Look what I’ve done. I’m a criminal and a murderer. They already hate me. So, I’m not going to do it. I can’t do it.”

That’s the inferiority complex speaking. It’s the feeling that there’s something wrong with you, that you aren’t good enough, you’re a nobody, you have no talents, you’re not smart enough, nobody likes you, everybody hates you and is out to get you.

Symptoms of Inferiority Complex

1. **Extreme shyness**, seclusion, isolation, introversion
2. **Fear of public places**, crowds, classrooms
3. **Self-consciousness** – blushing, stuttering, nervous tick
4. **Idiosyncrasies** – nail biting, teeth grinding
5. **Panic when on the spot**, tests, interviews
6. **Fear of authority figures** – teachers, preachers, police
7. **Fear of rejection** – not being liked or loved

Let me give you some symptoms of an inferiority complex. I'm going to encourage you to look at your children and your grandchildren. Don't look at yourself, but look at your children and your grandchildren and see whether they might have an inferiority complex.

Number one, they tend to isolate themselves in seclusion.

They don't like to be with people because it makes them feel bad about themselves. They don't want to hear any more bad reports. And so they isolate. They seclude themselves.

Number two, they have fear of public places.

They don't enjoy being in crowds. They certainly can't speak in public. But when they're with crowds of people, they feel intimidated by many people around them. They feel like they're the least of all the people in the room. So they fear being in public.

Number three, they are self-conscious.

They blush easily. Many of them stutter. They are nervous about being with people because they feel like they're going to get corrected, embarrassed, or beat up again.

Number four, they fear authority figures.

They had a difficult time relating to any authority figure. They have a difficult time dealing with teachers from their past experience with them. They were humiliated. They were never made to feel good about themselves. If you feel that way about teachers, it's probably because you developed the idea that you weren't good enough.

Teachers can be intimidating. The same is true for pastors and police officers. They can strike fear into the heart of someone with an inferiority complex. How do you feel when you see a police car behind you with his lights flashing? Guilty?

Number five, they develop nervous habits.

Many people with inferiority complexes have ways of showing it through their idiosyncrasies, such as nail biting, thumb sucking, lip biting, or knuckle crunching. Even nighttime teeth grinding is a sign of feeling inferior or anxious.

Number six, they experience panic and confusion

They are prone to panic and confusion when they're put on the spot or if anyone suddenly asks them a question. They freeze up. Their mind goes blank. It strikes terror in their hearts. They blush, their heart races, they hyperventilate. They may know the answer, but they can't answer because they are panic stricken.

Number seven, they fear not being liked or loved.

Often, they have very few friends. Or they choose one good friend and that's the only person who they feel safe with for the rest of their life.

My Own Symptoms of Inferiority

As I was growing up I didn't realize that I had an inferiority complex. When I returned from Brazil after five years on the mission field, I was visiting with the pastor of my home church. He was a doctor in psychology, as well as the pastor. As we were eating together, the subject of my family came up. Without a doubt, we were a pretty dysfunctional group of people. He said, "Dick, every one of the LaFountain children has an inferiority complex." I waited for him to say, "Except you," but he didn't. I went home and looked at myself and reviewed my life, and sure enough, I had the same symptoms of an inferiority complex as my siblings.

My Childhood

When I was a little boy, whenever company would come over, I was so shy that I would hide under the bed and not come out until they left. I literally hid under the bed so that nobody could find me. I remember how much fun it was to hear everyone looking for me. I was in my little safe place. I didn't want to see people. I didn't want to meet strangers. I didn't even want relatives coming up and pinching my cheek and saying how cute I was. So, I hid under the bed.

At an early age I sucked my thumb. Now I can't even remember which thumb I sucked, but for a long time I could identify it because I sucked it so much that it became white and wrinkled.

We laugh at it now, but I sucked my thumb for a long time. I remember how comforting it was. Those of you who sucked your thumb will remember how it was done. You put your thumb in your mouth and wrap your index finger over your nose. It served as a hook to keep the thumb in there. My parents tried everything to keep me from sucking my thumb. They tried pepper, tabasco sauce, just about anything distasteful to keep it out of my mouth. But nothing worked. Thumb sucking is an early sign of insecurity, a sign of something missing in your upbringing. You are seeking to satisfy something that was not satisfied by words or external expressions.

Kindergarten

I was a very shy child. We had just moved to a new house when I went to kindergarten. I arrived with my mother to be introduced to a class full of children. First, my mother introduced

me to the teacher. She was a pretty lady. My mom introduced me by my name, which at that time was Ricky. When she left, my teacher stood me in front of the class and said, "This is Dickie LaFountain. He's a new student in our class." From that time forward, I was Dickie. I hated that name. I felt embarrassed by it.

First Grade

I remember one of my first tests in the first grade. I had never taken a test before. It was a long test too. You were supposed to circle or underline the correct answer; I don't remember which. We all finished the test and turned it in. The next day, the teacher handed back our tests. She passed by each student and laid their test face down on their desk. When she came to my desk, she put my test down face up. It had a big red X across the whole page. I had not understood the directions and underlined instead of circling the answers.

I got a big fat "F" on my first test. To make matters worse, the teacher held up my test and said, "This is what happens when you do not follow instructions!" Then, before the whole class, she thumped me on the head with her finger three times and said loudly, "Think! Think! Think!" What do you think that does to a kid that is already building an inferiority complex? It didn't help.

That experience went right to the projector in my brain and filtered through my thoughts. It took about two seconds. I had my conclusion. "You're stupid. You're the dumbest kid in the class." "You're an embarrassment!" I'm sure the teacher didn't mean to harm me. She thought she could motivate by shaming me. Ever since, I have been terrified of tests.

Adolescence

During those early years, I hated myself right into adolescence. I absolutely hated who I was. I tried to compensate by doing some other things that I did well. When I was in the second grade, I arrived at church one day with a curl hanging over my forehead. Some lady touched it and said how cute it was. So, after that, whenever I went to school or church, I would comb my hair and always make sure that curl hung down on my forehead. It made me feel special.

My Sixth Grade Teacher

When I was in the sixth grade, I was doing poorly in my schoolwork. I've always loved studying, but I hated tests. I was terrified of getting thumped on the head again. I had an excellent memory. In church, I excelled at Bible memorization and won prizes. But in school I did not do well at all. I dreaded the end of every school year, fearing that I would fail and be held back a grade.

In the sixth grade, I had a male teacher. I liked that. It was the first year they gave IQ tests. The teacher explained the nature of the test and gave out the IQ test with all the instructions. I was careful to follow the instructions. Weeks later, we got the results back. He stood in front of the class and he said, "I'm going to break the rules this morning. I'm not supposed to do this, but the results of this IQ test were so significant I think it might change somebody's life. When I share what some of your scores were, you'll be shocked." I thought, "Oh boy, here comes my thump

on the head again.” He said he would share the scores of the top third of my class. When he read off the IQ scores, John was number one, Trula, was number two, then he said, “The third highest score in this class is... Dick LaFountain.” The entire class turned with a gasp and looked at me. Everyone was shocked. I was a C and D student at best.

After class, Mr. McNew sat me down and said, “Dick, with an IQ like yours, you can do anything and be anything you want to be in this world. You could be a doctor, lawyer, or the President of the United States. You’ve got the ability and potential to do anything. I want you to remember that for the rest of your life. You can do whatever God wants you to do.”

A few weeks later, he called my parents in for a parent-teacher conference and to share with them my IQ score. He shared with them that I had great potential, but something must be very wrong at home that kept me from believing in myself.

I thank the Lord that he brought me through those childhood situations and brought me through a time of testing. God made every one of his children special. You may not have a great IQ, or be super talented. But God doesn't want you to live the rest of your life, shy and locked away in a closet. He wants you to discover that He loves you so much, that He's made you capable of doing anything by His power.

***It is no secret what God can do
What He's done for others,
He'll do for you.
With arms wide open,
He'll pardon you.
It is no secret, what God can do!***

The Sources of Inferiority (causes)

Children are Impressionable

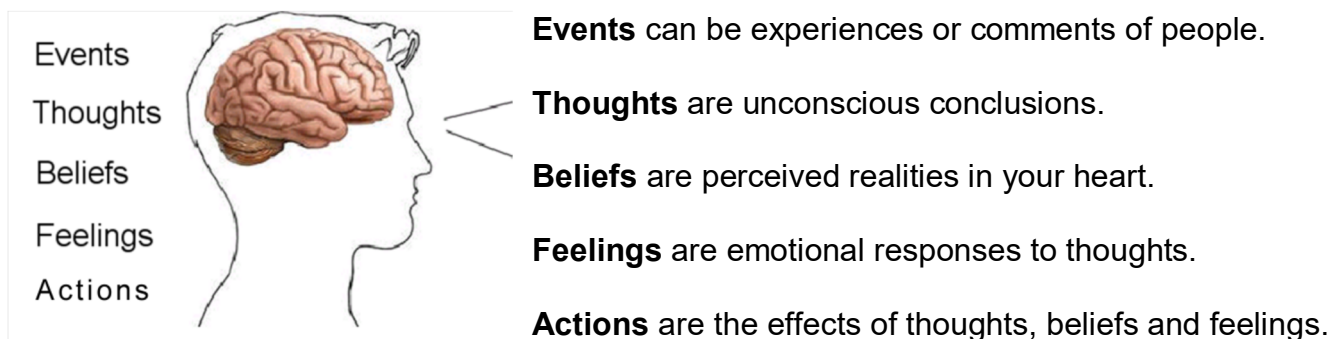
Every child is a piece of soft clay. It is a blank slate when he is born. Nothing has marred it. It's blank. Then life starts happening. Events shape that clay, like meteors hitting the surface of the moon. His life is impacted and marred. His life is bombarded with a variety of experiences that leave impressions. Comments are made that leave a sense of who we are. It helps shape our perception of self. Every one of us received input through the eye-gate and the ear-gate while we were growing up.

If you grew up in a healthy home where everything was fine, then everything you received in the eye-gate and ear-gate was good. You got good vibes from your environment. You had good images projected on your brain. The comments others made about you made you feel good about yourself. Those images and impressions became the mirror of your soul and you believed them.

Your mommy often said she loved you and you were the sweetest, smartest, and most beautiful baby in the world. Your screen displayed love and assured you that you were loved. That became your world view. It became part of your self-image. You felt good because you had happy thoughts about yourself. It always feels good to be loved.

But if you grew up in an unloving home, the images that were projected on the screen of your life were bad images of who you were. They were images and comments that bombarded your little brain every day. If that was your experience, you would have a negative view of yourself. Your self-image would be harmed. If you had parents, relatives, brothers and sisters that brought bad vibrations into your life through your eye-gate and your ear-gate, then you were given poor impressions of self. Then your feelings about your self-worth would be negative.

Let me give you a visual of this process. Let's use the picture of a projector shining images on a screen.



There are three stages that help us develop who we are.

The first is our experiences. Things happen to us. We see things happen to us and we hear what people say about us.

The second is thinking about remembering those events. We interpret events and people's comments that lead us to conclusions.

Those conclusions have become thoughts, then the thoughts become what we believe about ourselves. Those thoughts or conclusions may be completely false, but because we believe it, we buy into it emotionally.

The Eye-gate and the Ear-gate

All our experiences then go into our mind through the eye-gate and the ear-gate. Those experiences project information on to the blank screen of our brains. That screen presents ideas and thoughts to us. Ideas come into your mind from what you see, hear, or experience. If something comes into your mind through the ear-gate, you draw conclusions based on what you have heard. You either believe it or reject it. Either way, it develops into a thought. That thought develops into many thoughts. Those thoughts make us draw conclusions. These conclusions become your beliefs. Beliefs rule your emotions. You feel what you believe to be true. They then create your emotions. Remember, your thoughts and beliefs create your emotions.

Internal Voices

There is one other input device in our minds. I call it internal voices or internal dialogue. They are the thoughts you think every day. A thousand times a day we think thoughts. We may not verbalize these thoughts, but they are the voices we hear in our mind. Call it conscience, Jiminy Cricket, or self-talk, whatever, but it's a conversation you have with yourself day and night. Your brain is always thinking, even when you sleep. They are the silent whispers deep inside our brains. Your brain has a filter. It can allow or disallow those thoughts. You control your thoughts. You are the owner of the house. You are the gatekeeper. Guard your gate!

What (or who) whispers to you?

- Satan – accuses us before the throne (Zechariah 3, Revelation 12)
- Memories – echoes of voices heard (parents, siblings, teachers)
- Comments – name calling, derogatory remarks, put-downs, insults
- Embarrassments – humiliations like wetting your pants

We cannot erase our memories, comments made, or embarrassments experienced. They will always be with you, but you can choose to turn them off or turn them on. You can choose to think about them or to not think about them.

When it comes to Satan, you can choose to resist his whispers. When he whispers that God doesn't love you, you have the absolute truth from the word of God to contradict that thought.

Jesus did it when Satan whispered to him in his temptations in the wilderness. He always said, "The Word of God says..." and he gave Scripture. The word of God is referred to as the sword of the Spirit for that reason. It is a sword, and it is a shield. Learn to use it!

"For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)

You came up with a conclusion about yourself based on what others thought about you. If you had an abusive parent, you probably thought those things that were said about you were true. You concluded "I'm worthless. I'm no good. I'm never going to amount to anything."

You believed the authority figure in your life. You will continue to believe those on the outside of your life until you consciously reject those opinions. Those impressions create self-talk and self-talk becomes self-belief, and your beliefs become your emotions. You act out your emotions in real life. It became part of your heart, part of your self-image. So you grew up with what we call a distorted self-image.

Human psychology wants us to develop self-esteem based on our own ideas about ourselves. But God says He wants your self-esteem to be based on His word. He wants you to get into the word and find what He says about you, not what your parents thought about you.

Your earthly experiences have't tainted you forever. If you've been marred with negativity, it is possible to be healed. If someone has given you the impression that you are worthless, you can argue against it. God says, "Whatever your emotional damage I want to fix it." How? By *"the renewing of your mind by the washing of water by the Word."* God says, "I don't care what your parents said about you. I'm going to tell you what I think of you."

Now that you're an adult, you can make decisions about the projector and the screen. You can change your mind about what people said about you. Thoughts are powerful things. They run your whole body. They determine what you believe, that is, what's true and what's not. Emotions are powerful things. Emotions are your response to what you believe.

The Sources of Inferiority (causes)

The Causes of an Inferiority Complex

There are many contributing causes for an inferiority complex. But boiled down, it is a thinking problem. It is that we believe a lie about ourselves. We feel inferior because we believe a lie that our parents told us, or our siblings ridiculed us, or other children made fun of us. It might have been a childhood trauma of being made to wear embarrassing clothing, dress like a girl (or a boy), or bed-wetting and severe scoldings and punishments. Lots of things contribute to an inferiority complex. It is not important what caused it. God wants to heal those thoughts and feelings.

Thoughts of Insecurity

You can find a long list of negative self-belittling thoughts in our Appendix under *Lies We Tell Ourselves*. Check it out and mark some thoughts you have entertained from time to time. Then wrestle those thoughts into subjection with the truth of God's word.

Here are just a few:

"I can't do anything right. I'm a failure. I'm stupid. I hate myself. I'm ugly. Everything I do is wrong. I wish I'd never been born. I wish I were dead. I can't stand the way I am. I never will amount to anything. Nobody loves me. I'm worthless."

Having an inferiority complex is nothing to be ashamed of. Some of the best and most competent people have inferiority complexes.

Here are some other causes of an inferiority complex.

Parents

Many children feel rejected by their parents. Remember our first dysfunctional trait, feeling unloved? I have dealt with parents who have children that are very insecure and who struggle with self-esteem. The parents feel they have not contributed to the child's insecurity, but often they unknowingly do so by withholding affirmations and significant love.

Belittling

I have had parents in my office say, "I don't know what we've ever done to hinder him." But I've watched them. I've heard them yelling at their child, threatening the child, roughly manhandling the child, and calling their child derogatory names and predicting their failure.

Teasing

There is often teasing in the home by siblings. That was true in my family. We treated each other horribly at times. We called each other names. We tagged inferior siblings with nicknames that were embarrassing. We teased each other all the time. It's a wonder any of us are sane, let alone feeling inferior.

Name Calling

There is often a lot of name-calling. In our family, we were not allowed to swear. But we would substitute swear words with other more Christian words. We would say something like Jack-donkey instead of calling someone a jackass. We would call each other all kinds of names to put each other down, often until someone burst into tears. One exercise with my counselor was to list all the derogatory names I heard used in our home. It was an eye-opener. I had a long list in no time at all. Try it. I buried all those names in my subconscious memory.

Negative correction

Negative correction by humiliation and embarrassment is a great way to make a child feel inferior, unloved, and unlovable. There are parents so angry at a child for wetting his pants that they make him go to school or church with soiled pants to "teach him a lesson." How cruel!

Unfavorable Comparisons

What do parents do when they feel a child is not living up to their expectations? They make unfavorable comparisons. So they say, "Why can't you be more like your sister? Your sister is so good all the time. Your sister gets all A's on her tests. What's the matter with you?"

Those impressions are being projected onto the screen in your brain. "What's the matter with you?" It implies that something is wrong with you. That question looks for a response. So, the child feels like he's no good, he doesn't measure up to impossible standards. Parents can put impossible standards in front of their kids. Things that they couldn't do themselves while they were growing up, they expect their kids to do.

Over Solicitude

The other side of the coin is to overcompensate with solicitude. What do I mean by that? Pampering a child, spoiling a child. The opposite of an inferiority complex is a superiority complex, which often develops when a parent will be too protective of a child, giving excessive attention to the child, or acting like the child can do no wrong. You can spoil a child, making him overly dependent just as easily as making him insecure. So the child never grows up.

Sayings (self-talk)

Track your insecure thoughts. Self-hatred is at the core of insecure thinking. Its roots go deep and affect many other aspects of your life and emotions.

- _ I'm a failure
- _ I'm no good
- _ I'm so dumb
- _ I'm ugly
- _ I'm stupid
- _ I'm worthless
- _ I'm unimportant
- _ I'm a loser
- _ No one loves me
- _ I'm useless
- _ I'm helpless
- _ I hate myself
- _ I'm lazy

There are many more than we can list here. Go to the Appendix and review *The Lies We Tell Ourselves* and check off those thoughts you have when you are emotionally distressed.

Ten Distorted Thought Patterns

Untruthful Thoughts (lies of Satan)

1. All-or-Nothing (expecting perfection)
2. Overgeneralization (Murphy's law, pessimism)
3. Mental Filter (gloom and doom)
4. Disqualifying Positives (minimizing good things)
5. Mind Reading (reading people's thoughts, motives)
6. Fortune Telling (predicting disaster)
7. Magnification (dwelling on small things, blowing them up)
8. Should-itis (demanding fairness, blame and shame)
9. Name Calling / Labeling (derogatory name calling)
10. Personalizing Everything (feeling responsible, pity party)

Counteract your negative thoughts about yourself with God's thoughts about you.

Be sure to visit the Appendix for exercises and help in overcoming an inferiority complex. Also, our website has full 8 ½ x 11 PDF pages for you to download. www.PrayerToday.org

- Lies We Tell Ourselves
- Who I Am in Christ
- Attitude Check-up

Solutions (God's truth)

The Cure for Inferiority Complex

1. Stop recycling distorted thoughts.

The negative thoughts are peace-killers. When you put yourself down in your thoughts, you are telling yourself a lie. When you think derogatory thoughts about yourself, you are throwing stones at one of God's little children. Don't do that. God doesn't see you that way. God doesn't make junk. You are not junk. You are not stupid. You are not useless. Those are lies from Satan's whispers.

I found a secret that helped me. In the book of Acts, when Peter was calling Gentiles unclean people, the Lord said, ***“What God has cleansed don't you call common or unclean.”*** Stop bad-mouthing God's creation.

Then in Romans 3:4 it says, ***“Let God be true and everyone else a liar.”*** What God says about you is absolute truth, so anyone who says otherwise is a liar. Don't believe a lie. Don't repeat a lie even in your thought-life. When we are looking for self-esteem, we need to look to God's esteem. God gives us value. Talk back to the devil. Tell him he is a liar. Tell yourself to stop believing the devil's lies.

Jeremiah's Insecurity

Jeremiah was one who felt inferior. In Jeremiah 1:7, the Lord told him he was going to speak and be a prophet. But Jeremiah said, ***“Not me, Lord, not me. I'm a child. I can't speak. I can't do what you're asking me to do”*** Then God said, ***“Do not say, ‘I am too young.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you.”***

God says, “Do not say it.” Do not allow insecure thoughts to bounce around in your brain. Silence the negative inner dialogue and the negative self-talk. Don't think it in your mind. Stop telling yourself lies. Refuse to say it, think it, or feel it. You see, God wants us to know that those thoughts that tell us we can't are negative distorted thoughts He did not give us. God doesn't see any of us as inferior.

2. Track Your Thoughts. Reject Untrue Thoughts.

Listen to your self-talk. Listen to your accusing thoughts. List those things you are thinking that are not true. Examine your thoughts. Whenever you feel yourself doing one of the 10 Cognitive Distortions, write it down. What were you thinking? What were you saying about yourself?

I know a psychologist that teaches people in his counseling sessions to count the number of offending thoughts throughout the day. Do you remember the old manual counters you used in the supermarket? Keep track of your errant thoughts like that. Count every one of your offending thoughts. Write them down. Use the chart in our Appendix.

Enlist your wife or husband, even your children, to recognize the cognitive distortions. I did this with my wife. Whenever we'd hear anyone using an all-or-nothing statement, we'd call it out. "That's all-or-nothing!" "That's a pity-party." "That's mind reading." "That's fortune telling." You get the idea. Even keep a coin jar and put a penny or dime in it every time someone is caught using negative expressions.

These thoughts are self-accusing, self-condemning thoughts. Why are they there? They got there through parental influence, life's hard knocks, other people's opinions, and a myriad of events. In the end, it does not matter how they got there. What's important is that we recognize they are there in our thoughts. They are lying thoughts that need to be uprooted like weeds in your garden.

It is through the word of God that we determine what is true and what is false. When we permit what is false to stay in our minds, even for a moment, those thoughts will multiply. If we don't rid ourselves of the dandelions, they will trouble us and defile others around us.

3. Accept the Value God Has Given on You.

To cure our inferiority complex, we need to accept the biblical value that God gives to us. In Matthew 6:26, Jesus tells us to look at the birds of the air. They don't sow, reap, or gather into barns, but God cares for them. You are more valuable than they are. God says you are extremely important to Him. You're more precious than any bird. You're more precious than the flowers that God clothes. You are mine, He says. You are a brand plucked out of the fire. You are a child of God. You have been born again. So, stop acting and believing like you are not.

Take the time to look at our listing in the Appendix of *Who I Am In Christ*. It is important to know what God says about you. Accept it. Believe it. Confess it. Shout it if you have to, but get it into your brain.

You Are a Special Person.

God wants you to know that He says this also, "*Fear not, little flock. It is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*" You are God's little lamb. You'll always be God's little baby. You don't expect a baby to be perfect. You shouldn't get mad when your little baby messes his pants. It's to be expected. So, put that fear away from you. You're special and created fearfully and wonderfully from your mother's womb.

You Are Complete in Him

Colossians 2:10 says this, "*You are complete in him.*" That word "*complete*" is the word that literally means "full up." You are filled up. You are made perfect, complete in Him. You have been given a name in heaven. It's written there before the throne of God. You've been given a place around the throne where you can pray and intercede. God calls you a chosen vessel, a royal priesthood, a person made holy, special, and unique.

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:
(1 Peter 2:9)

God has called you his own child. Therefore, because of who you are in Christ, you are to reckon, calculate, do the math that it is so. It's not about feeling. It's about God's math and God's truth.

That means we need to go back through some childhood experiences that left us damaged and start rethinking them. Our identity does not come from childhood experiences. Our identity comes from God, our Father in heaven.

I don't believe in healing memories, but I believe in healing wounded spirits, wounded emotions, and diseased thoughts. The diseased thoughts need to be rebuked. We need to say to Satan, "Not so. What God has cleansed is not common or unclean. We need to clean house and recognize that we are right with God through Jesus Christ, who has *"made us accepted in the beloved."* (Ephesians 1:6)

We are children of God by faith in the Lord, Jesus Christ. Therefore, all of those things are null and void. We believe what God says, not what other people say.

3. Believe and Affirm Our Potential.

Believing is never trusting your negative emotions. Believing is trusting something completely, throwing yourself on it, considering it reliable and walking in that reality. It's as though God put a plank in front of us and said step out and walk on it. It will hold you. Instead, many of us stand back and say, "Well, I think that's a nice plank, but I'm not sure it will hold me." God says, if you really believe it then step out on it, walk on it, and trust it.

We need to do some affirming of our beliefs. When God says that we are complete in him, we need to affirm it. We need to verbalize it. We need to say it out loud.

We need to pray it, say it back to God. When we pray, we need to say it as though we were preaching or teaching it to a child. We need to reinforce our belief and make it tangible. It is amazing how difficult it is to verbalize a truth you do not yet feel. You'll feel silly doing it. You'll be embarrassed to say it out loud. But it is important to hear yourself say it. It is truth. Why should you be shy about it?

Try reciting or reading the statement from *Who I Am Before the Throne*. It's a brief paragraph based on biblical truths that many would-be believers find hard to articulate.

Why is it so hard to change our thoughts? Because for your entire life, you have believed a lie. These truths seem the opposite of what you have been telling yourself for umpteen years.

Philippians 1:6 says *"Being confident of this very thing that he who began a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."*

That is laying it on the line. As a young person trying to get out of my inferiority complex I grabbed onto that verse, and several other verses, and began praying and saying them back to God. *“God I believe you have begun a good work in me and you’re going to perform it until the day that Jesus comes again.”* That verse makes me happy.

Philippians 4:13, The Apostle Paul is in prison, writing to the church, writing to a bunch of people who weren't perfect. He says, “I want you to know this. *‘I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.’*” Say it out loud. Shout it out. It’s true!

I want you to be able to do that as a believer. When somebody asks you to take a Sunday school class, or to preach a sermon, or sing a song but you say, “I can't.” My question is, “If God is asking you to do something, He has already gifted you, and made you competent, why then do you deny His ability and choice and refuse to do it?” As Paul said, He has made you complete in all things. He has given you a gift to use for his glory. If you say, “I can't, I am inferior, I am not up to snuff, I am not what God wants me to be, or I can't be used of God,” then you are denying God’s ability, not your own.

4. Praise God for Our Weaknesses.

Overcoming an inferiority complex is not easy. It is not erasing your weaknesses. If you grew up feeling that you were ugly and you look in the mirror as an adult and you’re really truly ugly, you don’t deny that you are homely. You look in the mirror and thank God that you are not as ugly as someone else. I want you to look in the mirror and see what’s really there. Thank God for what's there. “God, I thank you that I'm not as ugly as some other people.” Can you do that?

God doesn’t make junk. You are not junk. God wants us to be able to look ourselves in the mirror without despising what we see and feeling bad about it. God wants us to be able to look in the mirror and say, “I thank you, God, for what you've done with me. I wasn't much, but you took that little bit and you made it better. I'm far better off now than I would have been if I were left on my own. God, you do all things well. You don’t make mistakes, and you don’t make junk.”

God wants to take your weaknesses and use them for his glory. In conclusion, the Apostle Paul gives us his take on our weaknesses. He talked about his own weaknesses, his troubles and his thorn in the flesh in 2 Corinthians 12. He says,

2 Corinthians 11:30

If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

⁷And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure .⁸ For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. ⁹ And he said unto me, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.¹⁰ Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in

necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

“I will boast in my weaknesses.” That is, I will glory in my frailty, my ugliness, my bad eyes, my poor hearing, my crippled body, my puny brain, or my lack of education. I will thank God for my weaknesses that God hasn't taken away.

I thank God Paul wasn't a good preacher. That's not my opinion, others testified to it. *“For some say, ‘His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing.’”* (2 Corinthians 10:10) He even put people to sleep. A young man, Eutychus, fell asleep on Paul's preaching and fell out of the balcony, and died. I thank God that hasn't happened to me yet.

But Paul says, *“I take pleasure in my infirmities.”* He knew what his weaknesses were. He knew all about himself. He wasn't an egomaniac. He simply looked at what God gave him and said, *“God, I thank you for what you've given me. I lay it on the altar, whatever I am and all that I am not, I give to You for You to use me as you see fit.”*

We have this treasure in jars of clay (I'm just a cracked pot) to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

2 Corinthians 4:7-12

⁷ But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. ⁸ We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰ always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. ¹¹ For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹² So death is at work in us, but life in you.

This is God's solution for inferiority.

He doesn't ask us to build our own self esteem, but He asks us to go to him. He would give us His esteem and His word would give us confidence. The Holy Spirit would fill us and make us able. God is at work, both to will and to do his good pleasure. Paul said,

*"I suffer these things. Nevertheless, I am not ashamed for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that **he is able** to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."* (2 Timothy 1:12)

That's not artificial self-esteem. That's God's esteem.

Conclusion

Be sure to visit the Appendix for exercises and help in overcoming your inferiority complex. Also, our website has full 8 ½ x 11 PDF pages for you to download. www.PrayerToday.org

- Lies We Tell Ourselves
- I Feel... (checklist)
- Who I Am in Christ

Stop Here!

Don't read any further until you have digested, applied, and used what you've just read.

Avoid overload. Read only one chapter a week.

Personal Response to Insecurity

1. How did this subject make you feel? Sad, confused, upset, depressed, guilty, condemned, enlightened, happy, hopeful, etc.?
2. Was this chapter helpful in identifying some of your own Stinkin' Thinkin'? If so what specifically?
3. What 3 negative thoughts do you need to change? What are they and why are they distortions of truth?
4. What 3 or more biblical truths, verses, or promises do you need to digest and make a firm part of your thoughts and beliefs?

Group Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever exhibited any physical evidence of insecurity? Thumb sucking, blanket holding, stuffed animals?
2. Have you ever been humiliated by a teacher, parent, sibling? When? What was done to you? How did you feel?
3. Have you ever felt like you were being unfairly picked on, made fun of, ridiculed? When? What was done or said?
4. Do you ever feel like you are being picked on? Are you paranoid? Do you ever feel like a failure? Talk about it.

Download our helps and tools at go to www.PrayerToday.org/Stinkin.htm

**10 Sermons on Stinkin' Thinkin'
365 Promises of God
Exercises & Forms in 8.5x11 PDF format**