

## HOW DO YOU SEE YOURSELF?

By Bill Irby

There is a lot said these days about self-image. We hear about how that kids need to have a good self-image and that we shouldn't do anything to make them have a bad self-image. I see some merit in this idea. It doesn't do any good to be unrelentingly negative toward a child. It may do much harm. But I can't help but think that a little realistic negative reinforcement from time to time might also be beneficial. He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly (Proverbs 13:24 NKJV).

The world has more than its share of people who have an unrealistic self-image. I wonder if our corporate giants, movie stars and sports heroes really think they are worth the money they make. Now, I don't begrudge them the fact that they take advantage of the market system. No, I just wonder what vast wealth does to the self-perspective of such people. When we see how some of them behave, we cannot but imagine that their perspective is off-kilter.

But "normal" folks have this problem, too. Christians, particularly, have to be careful about how they see themselves. Do we think of ourselves as somehow special and more important than others? That would be wrong (Romans 12). Do we allow ourselves to be defined by past accomplishments and/or failures? This also is an incorrect method of self-appraisal (Philippians 3). There is more than one way to come up with a false self-image.

For the Christian the answer to this is revealed in Scripture. Years ago I had lunch with J.C. Dobbs. If ever you were around him much you aren't likely to forget it. One thing that came up was his favorite passage in the New Testament. He said that it was Galatians 2:20: I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me. It is difficult to say that one verse is the whole answer, but this does come close. A Christian's life is defined by Christ. As a practical thing, we all know that we are somewhat defined by our strengths and weaknesses, our age and appearance, or jobs and our hobbies. It's all there, making us what we are. But in the end, we must grow to see ourselves as we shall most essentially become, a child of God, beholden to a loving Savior.

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