



Unity Church of Christianity
The Esteem Stream Part Three
July 24, 2011

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For 2 weeks now I've been talking about a topic; it was a two-part series called God's Esteem Stream, and I thought I was done at a two-part series, but God said no, we're not done. We're all slow learners on this I guess. This is part three, a surprise to me as well. Okay, and God's Esteem Stream is really about a healthy self-esteem from a spiritual perspective; from the place of how God sees us, not how we see ourselves. We need to begin to see ourselves in the light of that which God sees us to be and has created us to be and holds us to be. Self-esteem has to do with self-love. They are one in the same. We said they were synonymous, and so we'll just go over a couple of things to highlight that on the first and second parts.

We emphasized the importance that Jesus placed on love; of course, we're here to love. There is nothing that is more important than our learning love and the energy of love and all that it means. Jesus said that the greatest—two greatest commandments were about love. The first commandment was to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind, and that's vitally important to be in that process as well, certainly. Then the second, he said, was like unto it. The second was to love your neighbor as yourself. We talked about how important it is to remember that you actually can't love your neighbor until you love yourself.

You can't give what you don't have. If you're on empty, and you find it very difficult to love yourself, you're going to find it nearly impossible to love others as well, at least in a healthy kind of love. It's important to learn to love ourselves. Healthy self-esteem, we said, is knowing inwardly—knowing inwardly—that you are of value. No matter what, you are of value, and it carries with it a feeling. It's a feeling that you feel comfortable within yourself. You feel comfortable in your own skin. You accept yourself where you are. You love yourself as you are. It's accepting yourself, while at the same time being honest with yourself, and recognizing that there are things to see that are good and things to see that are not so good that have to be worked on. We are in a process, certainly. We recognize that we're not expressing perfection. We are just aware and awake in the process of healing and renewing ourselves and moving towards a greater expression of that which God holds us to be. We share characteristics of low self-esteem, and things like low self-esteem include the need for validation outside of yourself—really, really needing others to tell you you're okay. It's the tendency to blame ourselves for everything or blame another or others. It's various fears, fears of change of one kind or another, certainly. It's the tendency to want to control and be in control and even dominate others. It tends to be a person who is constantly negative, always seeing the worst or what can be the worst, the need to be right, always be right. It's the tendency to always be comparing, looking outside yourself and comparing, and then always arriving and concluding either you get to feel inferior or you get to feel superior and that whole dynamic. There is excessive criticism and excessive fault-finding that is typical of low self-esteem. It can also be the person that is the under or overachiever. It can be any of the extremes, really. We talked a little bit about a person that is extremely competitive which may be some low self-esteem. They always have to win, which goes along with "I always have to be right," that kind of thing. Anything that is extreme behavior may be related to that.

Characteristics of high self-esteem: We want to spend some time there, don't we? They include getting validation from within, within yourself. It's knowing within yourself. It's honoring individual differences. Everyone doesn't have to be just like you or the way you want them to be. It's listening to other points of view, whereas not everyone has to believe exactly what you believe in order for you to be comfortable. Its things like self-acceptance. It's self-respect. It's self-confidence, and it's a feeling of love towards yourself. You love yourself because you're an expression of God, and so we establish just that very fact: A dimension of loving God is loving our self. We talked about the self with a capital S. At our core is the seed of our true self. At our core that's who we are. God created us, and God doesn't create junk. We are created in the image and after the likeness of God. There is that self, as I say with a capital S, which is of God and to love the part of you that is God is another way of loving God. To love the part of you that is of God is to love God; you are a part of God and so it's important to do that.

It's not narcissistic or unhealthy to love yourself, knowing that it's the part of you that is connected with the Divine, loving and accepting yourself where you are. To love ourselves unconditionally and to love others unconditionally is then a way of seeing and identifying really the core that we're talking about, the core self that is in us and that is in others, though it hasn't yet come into full expression as yet and we understand that, of course.

An awakening person—an awakening person—is one who is, we said, on a journey of loving God, loving themselves, loving others, loving life and coming to know that all interactions and all events and happenings in a person's life have meaning and purpose and are meant to take us deeper in our pathway or journey of learning and growing. All things that are happening, all encounters, all responses and reactions all have an opportunity to take us further. We said that inwardly we are basically all the same. You know that we are all children of God, inwardly. We all have the Spirit of God within us. Our value and worth is not determined by an external view. Ultimately, when you develop an internal view, and you know the inner of you that is of God, you will then also see the inner of everyone else and that's where equality is realized. You get that yes, we're all different with an outward perspective. We look different. We wear different clothes. We have different houses we live in. You know it's all different out there. We feel separate from one another. With the inward view, once you grow into that, then you look at everyone with an equality because what you're seeing is not the level at which they're expressing. You're beginning to see them as God sees them, the truth that has been covered over, the inner core, the real being, and there's a sense of compassion for everyone because we're all in this process. We're all in this journey of waking up and going back to, again, loving ourselves; whereby, we can love all others. We can be reflective of the love of God which is unconditional. It's very, very powerful. What we're saying is that essentially, in various ways, we have covered over our true self. Our job then becomes one of uncovering who we really are and that's part of our healing. We're here to love and to discover our true self.

Today what I want to do is look at these things that we've just kind of gone over with a stronger focus on our relationships with others. We need to learn the value of relationships in life. We talked a lot about a relationship with ourselves. Now let's talk about our relationships with others and how they can be really healthy and important. We need to understand their value. Our relationships in life are simply for learning to love. It's like a school. When you enter a relationship, you're stepping into a classroom. It's the classroom of learning how to love, how to love unconditionally, and it bumps up against a lot of things along the way, of course. Everything unlike love that comes up in our relationships have essentially come up for healing, for growth, for change, for transformation, for enlightenment; that's why it has come up so that it can be released and let go. Notice this isn't who I am. This doesn't feel good. This doesn't feel good what I'm issuing out to my world or to others. Everything unlike love comes up in our relationships for healing and growth.

All relationships are tied to the inner person. We can say that there are basically three main areas of important relationships. They're obvious. They are our relationship with God, our relationship with our self, our relationship with others, and they are essentially created from within. The quality of those relationships, all three, come from within the person. God is found within our relationship with God. Jesus said the kingdom of God is within you. Where the kingdom is, the King is, you understand. We know that God is holy and pure and sacred. We know that about God. We know also then that we're told we're made in the image and after the likeness, and so that image and likeness of us is the true self that is pure and sacred and holy. You must know that. We must uncover that part of ourselves that's been covered over with ignorance and limiting ideas and limiting beliefs and various things that we decided about ourselves that are untrue. We know that the truth will begin to set us free. A healthy spiritual relationship with yourself would be one that knows itself as being part of God. You couldn't be healthier than knowing that you are part of God, that you are one with God. Jesus said the Father and I are one, and from there he went everywhere and was able to see to the core of every soul that they were a child of God, and there wasn't anyone that he couldn't love.

An unhealthy relationship with yourself is to be basically lost in the idea of separation. Being separate from others, being separate from God, all of that. Lost in the illusions of a separate self, separate from God and basically functioning from the voice of ego. The ego is always arguing for separation, always arguing by looking outside to be afraid or fearful as opposed to the Spirit of God. The voice of the spirit inside of you is Holy; that's why we call it the Holy Spirit. It's trying to guide you to the truth of who you are. If we have a really healthy relationship established from within that has a connectedness to our true self, then our relationships with others are going to be so good because there is a connectedness to the part of you that is already whole and complete in the eyes of God. You begin to touch and feel that dimension of yourself that is whole and complete. There is a part of you that is there, but the truth is we don't go there. We don't really embrace that part of ourselves and that's part of the process and the journey; that's what I'm talking to you about. As you want to step into God's esteem stream, you have to begin to know that there is this part of yourself that is made in the image and likeness that is your true self, that is whole and complete, and begin to identify more with that and notice when you are not being that and make adjustments and healings. Relationships are huge. It's a huge area and domain for our opportunity to learn and grow and to simply become more aware, and so what is it that we are learning? We're learning to love and to be loved. What is it that we're healing? We're healing our past, really, our limiting ideas and beliefs. What are we becoming more aware of? We're becoming more aware of what is true versus what is false about ourselves, about God, about life, all of that.

We think that relationships are for finding someone to love us. We often say that that's what relationships are about; finding someone to love us. It might be more accurate to say that relationships play an important role in helping us to find ourselves, to find our true self, to find that part of us that is whole and complete so that we can truly live happily with or without a partner.

In a relationship with a significant other, in love relationships—and I realize that some of you have significant others, some of you may not, have been, may be again another time—so understand that these are all things that you, perhaps, know to some extent already; but, it is a good refresher and also is good to know that it can be helpful wherever you are in the field of relationship. In a committed relationship, there are three stages. Stage one is the romantic stage. It usually begins with a strong physical and emotional attraction. Your body gives off all these endorphins that cause you not to think straight. It produces all this exhilaration. It projects perfection onto each other. Many people get married in stage one, and somewhere along the line—a year, two years, three years, who knows—it varies for each couple—stage two arrives and that's where some of the romance and the infatuation has begun to wear off. This is a time of adjustment, and in most cases, there are power struggles that begin here. Each is, to some extent, attempting to mold the other into their ideal partner if you will, and that can obviously create tension. This stage is also when each person's issues of low self-esteem become more evident. Guilt and blame are used to control one another and both keep looking for and wondering what happened to all the lovey-dovey stuff in stage one? Where did that go? Conflicts begin around assumptions that each have made about how the relationship was going to look or how each was going to be, and this is where everything unlike love begins to come up to be healed, to be resolved—family of origin issues and all kinds of things. It can be a very, very painful time because it becomes more evident how much we need to be loved—really, it just comes oozing up, and then when we're not loved the way we want to be loved, problems result. This is where a person may even begin to wonder what in the world was I thinking when I got married? I mean almost every couple has had that thought at one time or another. Each is asking the other to change and then asking themselves why do I have to be the one to change when they're the one with the problem? I just wanted to say there are no perfect relationships. We all have wounds. We all have insecurities. We all have issues to heal, and many people present to the public a persona that is really different from what they're really feeling inside and what's going on inside. During this time, it's very common for a person to build some sort of a wall of protection that protects themselves from seeing their own issues, their own traits, their own behaviors. This defense really is designed to protect oneself from seeing all of themselves. It's like it is too much to take on all at once, and so what this is called is projection.

The result is that you project all of your stuff onto the other person; those things that are so uncomfortable for you to own, you disown and put it out on them. You see everything wrong in the other person, and there are things that we're not ready simply yet to accept about ourselves or in ourselves, so we tend to be very judgmental. We're judging others and our significant other as well. In a relationship that is awakening, a relationship that is evolving, it's very important to have learned about projection and be willing to become aware of when you are in it.

It would've been very helpful for me in my earlier days of marriage, and the things that my wife Diane and I went through, if I had understood and owned some of my stuff earlier on. It would have helped a lot; would not have had some of the difficult stages we went through as any relationship does. It's very important for you to learn and understand projection, and own it and look for when you are doing it. It's something called mirroring and what it means is that other people will mirror for us the things that we like or dislike. It helps us if we can learn to notice the characteristics of the things that we react to, either have a strong like or dislike for. It's good or bad or we realize that it's reflecting back to us, really parts of ourselves if we have that big reaction. If we are always being critical and always being fault-finding of our partner and building a case, a projection of "I don't know if I like this person; I don't know if I love this person" projection self that we're actually building a case for not being able to like and love ourselves. Everything needs to be noticed back you see even if another person criticizes you and it hurts. You kind of hang on to it and run it over and over in your mind, whether it's a person you aren't that close to or someone you are in a significant relationship with maybe it's a sibling or a coworker or something—just notice that if you have that kind of a reaction, you probably believe it. It's a match for something that you have as an issue inside.

We all have blind spots. We all have things that we just aren't able to see or don't want to see; are difficult to uncover. It's very helpful to a person, especially a person in relationship, to realize that everything that you judge, criticize, love, hate, react to, suffer over or even are attracted to in another is an opportunity to learn more about the hidden side of one's own consciousness. Our need for another person to be different is often a sign of our hidden need for our self to be different—to be more, to be better—and that often times we get so occupied on wanting to change the person we're closest to or the people around us that unconsciously we're using it to avoid the work that needs to be done in ourselves and so it's just noticing that. I read where even the analogy was made that dog trainers know they're not working on just the dog's behavior. You know classes on dog training are really owner training classes, and it's designed to change the behavior of the owner. There's always something on our part. In our relationships, if we don't like the way that we're being treated or spoken to, we need to start with our self and our behavior patterns. What's provoking some of this? We should always remember that bringing out our best, of course, is what brings the best out in others. Once we are—once we become an adult—move into adulthood, basically no one can give us self-esteem. You can't get it from somebody else, and no one can really take it away. You simply didn't have it to begin

with. They can bring up the awareness that self-esteem isn't there and you need to heal that. No one can give or take away self-esteem because if you do think that you'll be in trouble.

We talked about stage one being infatuation and stage two being kind of a power struggle. There is a stage three. As one person in the earlier service said, "Man I just wanted to get through stage two. It just reminded me of what I went through." This can be difficult, but obviously understand that these overlap. There are still lovey-dovey infatuation parts along with stage two. Stage three really involves moving beyond our projections, moving beyond control issues. We're more mature now, a more mature loving relationship. We still can get upset, but each person is more aware of their own traits and the traits in the other as well. There is a greater degree of not just tolerance but acceptance of the other. There is also forgiveness, a greater ability to communicate with one another, and differences are approached from a more positive perspective. There is some release of the old expectations that can't be met, necessarily, and also some of the idealistic fantasies that one held to early on. There's a more realistic sense of accepting each other for who they are and where they are. When in an unhealthy relationship, attention is given to only the negative rather than looking for the true self or trying to understand what it is that lies behind; that's when we enter into trouble. In a mature relationship, it doesn't see just all the faults. There is more a sense of this person has a hurting inner part that's trying to heal and so I'm not going to pounce all over that. I'm going to be more compassionate and try to be more understanding. I'm going to look at what that rears up in me as well.

I remember Sig Paulson a minister who was here prior to me. Several times when he was at the podium I heard him say in the midst of his talk—and his wife's name was Janie who is a lovely lady—he'd say, "Janie and I, we've been divorced many times." He just was being realistic that through stage two there are times where it just doesn't go well and you have all this stuff coming up. It's part of the process and journey of healing, and you have to understand that. Once you understand that, it's very helpful also to move through some of that. It means that you come to the place where whatever feelings come up, you begin to ask yourself the right questions. You begin to own things that you previously were not willing to own. You come from a new understanding so each person in the relationship begins to take a greater responsibility for their own self-esteem; whereas in an unhealthy relationship, they are asking the other to give them the self-esteem, and that's really not possible. It's clearing out old issues. It's clearing out limiting ideas and beliefs, and then when you go through that what's left after that clearing is an unconditional love. There's an acceptance. There's compassion. There's a caring that can be very beautiful.

Some of the main ideas of a successful, awakened relationship then are simply to get to know yourself, family of origin issues, patterns of thinking and behaving. Ask yourself, would you want to be married to yourself? You know that's a good question. Learn to love yourself. God loves you unconditionally that's what you're being called to, is that kind of love.

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Ask yourself what would happen in your relationship if you truly loved and appreciated you, yourself. Then you would be able to truly love and accept your partner and others in a much more unconditional fashion because you're able to love yourself for who you are. You're then able to love them for who they are, and so learn to be patient and tolerant and forgiving, to accept the other. Take responsibility for your own transformation. Avoid projection as we said. Don't disown your feelings, but notice your criticisms and your judgments and try to gain insight into them. Tell the truth to yourself about what you are feeling and own the feelings. Go forward and have fun in your relationship, in all your relationships. Just remember that we're all spiritual beings, and we are all called to a greater understanding of who we really are. The universe has order in it, and it will call forth people who will push our buttons in various ways until we own what our buttons are and heal them. Unhook and uncover from what we're not and stand true and tall to who we are standing in God's esteem stream. God bless you all. Go be a light in the world.