



THE
Connection
CODE

Relationship Advice
from Philemon

O. S. Hawkins

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INTRODUCTION

Self-help books are a dime a dozen in our world today. Search for them in online booksellers or step into a bookstore and you will find them by the hundreds. We have an insatiable thirst to stay ahead of the competition to devour the latest “spin” on self-improvement. However, the more advanced we try to be in modern technique, the more we discover that the best ideas and methodologies have already been tried and tested for centuries. They are simply in need of being repackaged and applied to our more contemporary culture. For example, consider that one of the bestselling management books of the past generation was *The Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun*. Wess Roberts simply reached back into the past and brought someone to life who had been relegated to ancient history as sort of a barbaric little tyrant. The very principles he used so long ago to motivate and mobilize his motley forces into a nation of Huns with a spirit of



conquest are now found to be appropriately accurate and applicable in our world today.

Along the same lines, consider the generational marketing success of the bestseller *The Art of War* by the ancient Chinese warrior Sun Tzu. The strategies and management principles of this warrior-philosopher of 2,500 years ago have found their way into the briefcases and war rooms of practically every business executive in America.

Now, once again, from out of the past, comes an ancient document, a piece of personal correspondence, written by a “people-strategist” to a wealthy entrepreneur almost two thousand years ago. It contains only twenty-five verses in a half dozen or so paragraphs, and yet it is the most articulate case study in the building of positive and productive interpersonal relationships to be found anywhere at any time. Fortunately, this ancient document, known simply as “Philemon,” has found its way into the New Testament, thus to be preserved and read for all posterity.

Philemon was a successful business executive in the first-century city of Colosse. This letter involves the relationship between him and two other players. Paul, the letter’s author, was writing from a prison cell in Rome where he had been incarcerated for his allegiance to a new and growing phenomenon called Christianity. Onesimus,



the final person in this trio, had been a bond servant of the more influential and wealthy Philemon.

The substance of the letter regards the dynamics of their relationships. Onesimus had stolen from Philemon and split the scene, making his way to Rome and the bright lights of the big city. By the strangest of coincidences, he was arrested by the authorities on an unrelated charge and placed in the same holding cell as Paul. To make matters more “coincidental,” Paul happened to be a personal friend of Philemon and had, in fact, won him to faith in Christ on a recent visit to Colosse. In the constant presence of this warm and winsome people person, Onesimus himself soon came to see the error of his ways and also came to a transformational experience through faith in Christ. The proof of this emerged in the fact that upon his release from jail, his intent was to return to Colosse, show Philemon he was remorseful, and seek to make restitution.

With this bit of informational background, we now come to the letter at hand. Paul wrote this letter to Philemon to pave the way for Onesimus’s return. It is a blueprint for building positive, productive interpersonal relationships. In this piece of private correspondence, each of the six paragraphs contains a vital element in the building and sustaining of productive relationships.



First, Paul spoke of the importance of affirmation, a pat on the back. Early on in the letter he affirmed Philemon by saying, “Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord’s people” (Philemon v. 7 NIV). Positive words of honest affirmation have a disarming effect.

He continued with the importance of accommodation, popularly called the “win-win principle,” in our interpersonal relationships by reminding Philemon that “formerly he [Onesimus] was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me” (v. 11 NIV). In our modern vernacular, Paul was approaching him on the basis of a mutually beneficial relationship.

Paul also spoke of the importance of acceptance and forgiveness by calling upon his friend to “receive [Onesimus] as you would me” (v. 17).

No dissertation on interpersonal relationships would be complete without a word about allegiance, and thus Paul proved his commitment to them both by stating to Philemon, “If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me” (v. 18 NIV).

Finally, the apostle addressed the necessity of accountability in our relationships. This is the missing element in so many close connections.



Paul closed the letter, saying, “And one thing more: Prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers” (v. 22 NIV). In other words, “I am coming by to check up on things and to hold you both accountable in your relationships to each other.”

There is much on the market and on the bookstore shelves on building better relationships. Scores of writers each have their own formulas and catchy slogans to motivate and sometimes manipulate people into relationships. Some teach manipulative maneuvers to stimulate others to notice us. There are volumes telling us how to dress and how to win friends to our persuasion. Others even offer suggestions on how to intimidate our way into relationships that can become beneficial to us. Still other books imply we should fake interest in certain hobbies or the interests of others in order to gain influence. When it comes to the bottom line, many of today’s modern methods of building productive relationships are superficial and deceptive, resulting in short-term gain at best. The intent of *The Connection Code*, and the content of Philemon’s letter, is not just to win friends but to keep them in long-term, mutually beneficial, positive, productive interpersonal relationships.

Life itself is made up of relationships. Each new day



Life itself is made
up of relationships.

brings the need for constructive interpersonal communication. Perhaps this day faces you with the need of making a complaint to a landlord or coping with a problem with someone in your social circle. All of life is about relationships . . . husbands and wives seeking to build better understanding, teachers seeking to translate truth to their students, athletes striving to please the coach. Life is about relationships, and some of us have had great heartache and others of us have caused great heartache because we have never learned how to relate to one another in positive and productive ways. It matters not whether it is in the home, the workplace, or the social arena—we can all profit from learning how to properly relate to one another. Turn the page as, together, we dissect this ancient piece of private, personal correspondence, explore the well-worn secrets to building positive and productive relationships, and unlock . . . the Connection Code.



THE LETTER

A.D. 60

*Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy
our brother,*

*To Philemon our beloved friend and fellow laborer, to
the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the
church in your house:*

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the
Lord Jesus Christ.*

*I thank my God, making mention of you always in my
prayers, hearing of your love and faith which you have toward
the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints, that the sharing of
your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of
every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. For we have
great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of
the saints have been refreshed by you, brother.*

*Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to
command you what is fitting, yet for love's sake I rather
appeal to you—being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now*



also a prisoner of Jesus Christ—I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten while in my chains, who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me.

I am sending him back. You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart, whom I wished to keep with me, that on your behalf he might minister to me in my chains for the gospel. But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary.

For perhaps he departed for a while for this purpose, that you might receive him forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave—a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

If then you count me as a partner, receive him as you would me. But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account. I, Paul, am writing with my own hand. I will repay—not to mention to you that you owe me even your own self besides. Yes, brother, let me have joy from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in the Lord.

Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. But, meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you.



*Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you,
as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers.*

*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.
Amen.*





PART 1

LIFE IS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our beloved friend and fellow laborer, to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

—PHILEMON 1-3

I have always been an early riser. It matters not whether I go to bed late or early or whether I am rested or worn-out; my internal clock always wakes me up before sunrise. During my pastoral days in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, on the East Coast, I journeyed to San Francisco, on the West Coast, for a speaking engagement. I arrived, had dinner, and went to bed in the hotel to get rest before my assignment the next morning. Like clockwork I was wide awake at 6 a.m. The only problem was I



was now on Pacific time, three hours earlier than my body clock. The little red numerals on the clock radio beside my bed greeted me with the news: 3 a.m.! With zero success, I tried my best to go back to sleep. I quoted every verse I knew and, yes, even began to count sheep jumping over the fence. But all to no avail.

I got up and went to the desk by the window to work on some items I had brought in my briefcase. I reached for the switch to turn on the desk lamp, moved it to the on position . . . and nothing happened. I don't usually give up on things too easily, so I began to do a little detective work. I arrived at the brilliant conclusion that the lamp had only three possible points of connection: the source, the switch, and the socket. I checked the source. The lamp cord was plugged in to the outlet all right, snugly connected to the source. Next, I rechecked the switch. It was turned on. Now the process of deduction was coming to fruition. There was only one more possibility. I checked the socket where the light bulb was screwed into the lamp. Bingo! The bulb must have just been replaced and had not been screwed tightly enough into the socket. I gave it a couple of turns, and there was light!

When we really think about it, life is a lot like that lamp. We have all known people who seem to have a little



sparkle or shine about them. And most of us have been connected with others who, by their very presence, light up our lives and the lives of those with whom they come in touch. What is it about these kinds of people? They are connected at the source, the switch, and the socket. There are only three relationships in life. We have relationships with others, whether at home, at the office, in the social arena, or wherever. This is the outward connection, the socket, if you please. Here we make contact and touch the lives of others.

Second, we have a relationship with ourselves. Some call it self-esteem, self-worth, or self-respect. This is the inward connection, the switch that turns on the light. Here we connect with ourselves in order to produce positive relationships with others.

Finally, and this is an awesome thought, we have the capacity to have a personal relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the upward connection, the source where we can plug in to supernatural power.

We have the capacity to have a personal relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

What is the bottom line of these three relationships in life: the outward connection, the inward connection, and



the upward connection? We will never properly relate to others until we properly relate to ourselves, and we will never properly relate to ourselves until we find our self-worth in Christ by being connected with Him through faith. In short, in order to shine and light up the lives of others in positive, productive interpersonal relationships, we need to be connected at the source, the switch, and the socket.

We are made to communicate positively with each other in relationships. Back at the very beginning of the created order, with each creative act, God would pause and speak. Do you remember what He said? *That's good*. He said this same thing when He made the sun, the moon, and the stars and put them in their places of orbit in clock-like precision. He said this when He divided the sea and land and made the vegetation and the animal life. *That's good . . . that's good . . . that's good*. But then He made man, and God said something else: "Not good"! What? "It is not good that man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18). We are made to connect with each other in the power of productive interpersonal relationships. By our very nature, we are made to connect with each other. Much of our success in life is not determined by how much we know or how high we have managed to climb in material circles, but in



our ability to build positive, productive relationships with others in the home, in the marketplace, and in the social arena.

Two thousand years ago the apostle Paul laid hold of this threefold principle of relationships and masterfully used it in the initial paragraph in his letter of greeting to his friend Philemon. In the ensuing chapters we will discover how Paul viewed himself as connected at the source, plugged in to an unlimited power supply, fueled by the Holy Spirit. He saw himself as connected at the switch. He was switched on and exuded self-worth, self-respect, and self-confidence by finding his own identity in the person of Jesus Christ. And the result of his being plugged in and switched on was that when he touched the lives of others, he not only brightened their road but had a unique way of lightening their load at the same time.

Paul viewed himself as connected at the source, plugged in to an unlimited power supply, fueled by the Holy Spirit.

The problem with so many relationships is a breakdown at one of these points of connection. Some have a difficult time relating to others because of the fact that their own self-image is damaged. Thus, their tendency is to be so fearful of rejection that contact is never made with others,



and the light that could mean so much to others never gets switched on. Many relationships are unhealthy because we can project what we feel about ourselves onto other people in our world. Still others seem to move from one relationship to another, never able to move beyond just short-term connections.

Let's rewind the tape a moment. Allow me to say what I have already said and what I intend to repeat throughout the following pages. We have only three relationships in life: an outward expression, an inward expression, and an upward expression. And the truth is, we will never properly relate to others until we properly relate to ourselves. This will never happen until we come into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, realize how indescribably valuable we are to Him, and begin to find our self-worth in Him—not in ourselves. This is the thrust of Paul's ancient yet applicable letter to Philemon. Let's continue the journey to unlocking the Connection Code.



1 THE ETERNAL CONNECTION

*I*n Paul's opening paragraph of salutation to his friend Philemon, he said, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father" (Philemon v. 3). He revealed much of his own relationship with his source in this initial greeting. As Paul penned these words, he was writing in Greek, which was the universal written language of his day. In order to signal his own relationship with God, he used the Greek word *patros*, which we translate as "Father." He saw himself in a father-and-son relationship with the source of his life.

This same word is used to describe the father in the old and often-repeated story of the Prodigal Son in Luke's gospel. You can find the whole tale in Luke 15:11–32. It is the heartwarming story of the boy who took his inheritance and left home for the bright lights of the big city. It did not take him long to lose it all, along with his dignity and self-respect. What had promised to be a good time brought nothing but rip-offs, back alleys, and unemployment



lines. But the story has a happy ending. He decided to get up and go home. What would his father say? Or worse, what would his father do? The same dad who earlier had released the inheritance and let him go now said, *I receive you, and what is more, I reward you.*

The boy's father did not have to let him go in the first place. He could have refused to give him the inheritance money. But there are times when parents know what is ultimately best and let their children go. He released him, but he never gave up on him. When the boy returned with a repentant heart, the father welcomed him back with open arms and even rewarded him for finally doing what was right. All of that is wrapped up in Paul's greeting to Philemon when he used the word "Father."

Father . . . that is a difficult word for some of us to get around. In fact, for many people, that is the very word that is at the root of many unresolved problems in relationships with others. It is an all-too-common reality that some of us have a difficult time relating to others due to our own feelings of inadequate self-confidence and self-worth that are a direct result of unpleasant relationships with our earthly fathers. But Paul was not speaking of an earthly father here. He was visualizing himself in a relationship with his heavenly Father, like that of a loving and supportive



father-and-son relationship as depicted in Jesus' story of the Prodigal Son.

This is a good time to pause a moment to ask a rather personal question: How do you view yourself as being connected to God the Father, your eternal source of power? Positive and productive relationships begin when we see Him as our Father. He releases us. We are not puppets but people. And though He provides us with our own free will, He never gives up on us. The very moment when we are ready to connect, or reconnect, with Him, He receives us with open arms and gives us a brand-new beginning. He will become a source of strength and power to any and all of us who come to Him—especially those of us who may not have had positive relationships with our earthly fathers. This eternal connection, touching our source of being, begins when we, like Paul, see Him as our Father and view ourselves as His own sons and daughters.

How do you view yourself as being connected to God the Father, your eternal source of power?

Paul continued his greeting in his letter to Philemon, writing, “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 3). With these words, he introduced an added dimension in this eternal connection. He



now gave this source the name Lord, or *kurios* in the written language of the New Testament. He not only viewed his source of daily power as the paternal one, but also as the prominent one—that is, his Lord. Thus, he demonstrated that he viewed himself not only as a son but also as a servant. Remember, Paul was writing this letter to Philemon expressly in regard to his relationship with one of his servants, Onesimus. With these words, Paul was subtly reminding Philemon that each of us is a child and a servant in our relationships with God. This awareness helps bring our own inward relationship with ourselves and our outward relationships with others into clearer perspective.

Having described his relationship with God as the paternal one (Father) and the prominent one (Lord), Paul went a step further by referring to Him as the Promised One, *Christos*, Christ. For Paul, a learned and aristocratic Jew, he found his source of strength in the long-awaited and promised Messiah, to whom the world had been looking and for whom the world had been waiting for centuries.

Throughout his life in the synagogue and as a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin, Paul had celebrated that high and holy Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur. In Hebrew, *Yom Kippur* means “the day of covering.” It was on this holy day that the sins of the previous year were “covered” by



the blood of animal sacrifice. Today, our Jewish friends have abandoned their animal sacrifices and see their covering through *mitzvot* (good works). Paul, by referring to the Lord as *Christos*, identified Him as that Promised One who came to become a covering for all our sin and shame; through faith in Him, our faults and failures can bring purpose and peace to our lives.

Paul, in dealing with the source of all relationships, was not speaking about some unknown, unnamed “force” or positive mental attitude, but the person of Jesus Christ Himself. This can best be illustrated by remembering the hotel on the West Coast I mentioned previously. When it came time to check out of the hotel, I did not pull out a wad of cash to pay for my room. I used a credit card. That credit card had no real intrinsic value in and of itself. It was just a piece of plastic. But the hotel clerk accepted my card as if it was cash. Why did she do that? It was a forerunner of the true payment that would come later. The actual payment came a few days later when I paid my credit card bill, and the company forwarded the money on to the hotel. Until then, the credit card simply covered the purchase.

As such, the old covenant between God and man with its sacrificial system “covered” the faults and failures and the sins of those who believed in the Promised One who




was coming. And He came! He made the final payment for our covering with the sacrifice of His own life and the shedding of His own blood on a Roman cross of execution outside the city walls of Jerusalem. Consequently, through Christ, our own relationship with the Father has been pur-

Through Christ, our own relationship with the Father has been purchased and secured.

chased and secured. It is no wonder our Jewish friends have abandoned their sacrificial systems for the last two thousand years. There is no need for the credit card. The bill has been paid—and paid in full!

Paul spoke with authority to Philemon, and to us, regarding interpersonal relationships because he was well-connected. After his conversion, he related well and winsomely to others because he possessed a positive self-image found through his own relationship with Jesus Christ. He found his source of strength in the paternal One (Father) and saw himself as a member of God's forever family. He found his source in the prominent One (Lord) and thus viewed himself as one who was under a higher authority. And he found himself in relationship with the Promised One (Christ), and this set him free to find his own identity in what he described as "Christ in you, the hope of glory"





(Colossians 1:27). This eternal connection brought to Paul indescribable value as an individual and a high sense of self-worth. If we are not properly plugged into our source, the light will never shine through us and into the lives of others.



2 THE INTERNAL CONNECTION

*P*aul recognized the importance of possessing a positive self-image in his relationships with those around him. What is self-image? We are not referring to such things as self-centeredness, self-exaltation, or selfishness. Self-image has to do with such attributes as self-awareness, self-acceptance, self-appreciation, self-worth, self-love, and self-respect. It is the way we image or view ourselves. This is at the very core of many of society's modern ills. Every day we read about problems brought on by drug addiction, violence, prostitution, and many other avenues of social disorder. These are often just the fruits of a much deeper root of low self-esteem, self-respect, and self-worth. A large segment of society has been raised in environments where they never knew affirmation, and it should be no surprise that their lack of self-worth and the low view they have of themselves internally can have disastrous results. It is nearly impossible to relate in positive ways with others externally when we have such little self-esteem internally.



Paul referred to himself in the opening verse of Philemon as a “prisoner of Christ Jesus.” In so doing, he was revealing much about his own self-connection. Being a prisoner himself of Nero and the Roman Empire at the time of his writing, he chose an interesting word to describe himself as Christ’s prisoner: the Greek word *desmios*. It is of interest to note that in writing to Philemon, he did not say he was a prisoner of Rome. Yet the Romans were the ones who incarcerated him. They were the ones who locked him up. They were the ones who were watching over him. But they were a small part of the larger drama. Paul saw himself primarily as a prisoner of the Lord. He was not there by accident. He had placed his life in God’s control and care, and though everyone else considered him a prisoner of Rome, he knew better. He was not a prisoner *for* Christ Jesus; he was a prisoner *of* Christ Jesus. And there is a difference.

Positive and productive interpersonal relationships develop from the inside out. They not only have an external connection, but they also have an internal connection. Like the lamp that gives light, they are not only plugged in at the external source, but they are also turned on at the internal switch. This process of developing relationships from the inside out is a process that we call “being comes



before doing,” for what we do and how we act in relationship with others is determined by who we are and *whose* we are. For example, if you want to have a more fulfilling marriage, then *be* a more considerate spouse yourself. If you want a teenager in the home to be more cooperative, then *be* a more consistent, loving, and understanding parent. If you want a mom or dad to treat you more fairly, then *be* the kind of son or daughter you ought to be; dust off those old words about honoring and obeying your parents. If you want to have more opportunity for advancement in the workplace, then *be* the most efficient, hardworking, and cooperative employee in the office. In short, if you

Paul realized that in order to have a friend like Philemon, he needed to first *be* a friend to him.

want to have a good friend, start by *being* a good friend. Paul realized that in order to have a friend like Philemon, he needed to first *be* a friend to him.

When we speak of being in touch with ourselves or being connected with ourselves, we are not referring to some New Age concept of self-improvement or self-awareness. Quite the contrary. Jesus had said it like this: “Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it” (Matthew 10:39 NIV). A powerful and positive self-image does not come from



a pseudo, pumped-up mental attitude. It results from being connected with the Lord in such an intimate way that we become aware of how indescribably valuable we are to Him. Now, what does all this have to do with Paul referring to himself as a “prisoner of Christ Jesus” (v. 1)? There is a sense in which all of us should view ourselves as “prisoners” of our Creator. When we are held captive by His love, it has a liberating effect on our self-image and worth. And aren’t we all prisoners of someone or something? Some are held in the prison of their own passions. Others are prisoners of their own popularity. Still others are confined to the prison of pride. Still others are prisoners of another person. The way to a positive sense of true self-worth is to become, in the words of Paul, a “prisoner of Christ Jesus.”

This idea, put forth by Christ, of losing ourselves in the Lord Jesus in order to really find our true selves is in diametric opposition to most worldviews today. This is why so many live such confusing and complicated lives. Many have bought into the superficial and deceptive message of our day in a quest to “find themselves.” There is only one way to find our true self, and many miss it because of its paradoxical truth: “Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.” All



of this is in that little Greek word Paul chose to describe himself as a “prisoner of Christ Jesus.”

Paul was the single most successful people strategist of his day, and it was because he had a sense of positive self-worth that emanated from being a prisoner of the Lord. He had “lost” his life of popularity and prestige. But he had found so much more that brought not only a purpose to life but also a spirit of conquest. How? He was connected to God, the eternal source. He was plugged into His power and switched on so that this supernatural winsomeness and warmth flowed into him and out of him into the lives of all those with whom he came into contact.

Everything finds its strength from its source. If we are only trying to connect with our self, if the self is the source for us, then we have nothing more than a shallow self-awareness that must constantly be pumping itself up like an old-fashioned surface water pump well behind some dilapidated farmhouse. Some go from one self-help guru to the next, one leadership book to the next, one video series to the next, one seminar to the next, just like a water pump. Pump. Pump. Pump. Pump. But when you get connected to the source with an eternal connection to Jesus Christ and find your self-worth in Him, it becomes like an artesian well. You never have to pump an artesian



well. You just turn on the spigot and it flows because it has been dug deep into the ground and has tapped into an underground river as its source.

This is what Paul was saying to Philemon, and to us, as he talked about the importance of this internal connection. The truth is, we are all prisoners of something, and how much better is it to be a prisoner of the source of all living things? This is where we find self-image, self-esteem, self-worth, and self-respect—not in an emotional, pumped-up mental attitude, but in the spiritual realm. In many of Paul’s other letters, he said such things as “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13). In his letter to the church at Rome, he reminded them that “we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Romans 8:37). How could he make such statements? He had lost his life in the love of his power source and found in Him his inner strength and ability to believe God could make the impossible possible.

The more Paul was connected to his self, the more he saw himself as he really was. This progression played out vividly in his letters in the New Testament. His first

When you get connected to the source with an eternal connection to Jesus Christ and find your self-worth in Him, it becomes like an artesian well.



recorded letter was to the people in the region of Galatia and was written in or around AD 49. Here he referred to himself as “an apostle” (Galatians 1:1). Can you imagine him as he sat at his desk and penned these words with perhaps a bit of a puffed-up chest?

Five or six years later he wrote to the church in Corinth and greeted them by saying he was the “least of the apostles” (1 Corinthians 15:9). Later, in AD 60, he wrote the letter we call Ephesians and then referred to himself as “less than the least of all the saints” (Ephesians 3:8). A year or so later he wrote to his friend Philemon and called himself a “prisoner of Christ Jesus.”

And a few years later he wrote a moving letter to his young understudy, Timothy, referring to himself as the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). Most of the world would not recognize this as being a positive self-image. But most of the world seldom looks beyond the surface and the

superficial. The more this man lost his life in the love of the source of his strength, the more he found it. And the more he truly found it, the more it took root and bore fruit in his relationships with other people.

So much of our low self-esteem

The more this man lost his life in the love of the source of his strength, the more he found it.



comes from the influences of those around us. In some cases, this involves parents. In other cases, peers. But what is most important in recovering damaged emotions and feelings of self-worth is not what others think of us but in what God, the ultimate source of all, thinks of us. He loves you just as you are! When you place your trust in Christ, He sees you as His own child. Jesus did not leave His throne in glory to come down and take on human flesh to die on a Roman cross for someone of no worth or little value. You are indescribably valuable to Him. And when you awaken to this reality, you will begin to find your own self-worth where Paul did: “Christ . . . in me” (Galatians 2:20)!

