



SERMON NOTES

From In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley

WHEN WE FEEL INFERIOR

KEY PASSAGE: Ephesians 2:10 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: John 14:21, 23; 15:9-10; 17:23-24 | 1 John 2:1

► SUMMARY

Feeling inferior is devastating.

Often stemming from some of our earliest experiences, this emotional baggage can hinder us from achieving goals, beginning and maintaining healthy relationships, and finding contentment. No matter why we consider ourselves less significant than others, the truth is we are beloved by God. We are not inferior to anyone, regardless of what the world tells us. Rather than expecting us to rise to impossible standards, God graciously wraps us in His extravagant love, gives us His righteousness in Christ, and calls us to trust and obey.

► SERMON POINTS

Inferiority is a feeling that we are less than, don't measure up, are poor quality, or we have been rejected.

Where do feelings of inferiority come from?

This sense does not come naturally to children; feeling inferior is learned in a variety of ways.

- **Verbal criticism.** Parents may express rejection and criticism to their kids. Perhaps they tell them they weren't wanted or declare they won't amount to anything. These types of statements are extremely damaging to a child's heart.
- **Verbal comparison.** Mom and Dad may compare their children or play favorites. Instead of listening to their child's dreams and desires, some try to live their lives through the child. They may also point out how much better they are at a skill or sport than their son or daughter.
- **Circumstances of life.** Growing up in poverty can leave lasting scars on a child, especially if he or she experienced rejection as a result. Seemingly unimportant things, such as wearing clothing that is different, can lead to a sense of inferiority. For children who are shy or don't excel academically, the competitive experiences of a school environment—combined with an insensitive teacher or cruel classmates—can be devastating. Educators and other people can say and do hurtful things that affect kids long-term.
- **Physical differences.** Some people feel inferior because they look different, can't participate in the same activities as their peers, or deal with physical challenges. For instance, infertility can cause significant heartache and feelings of unworthiness in both women and men.
- **Lack of close relationships.** Godly relationships are important for our well-being. Someone may feel self-conscious about being divorced or alone.
- **Lack of education.** Some people feel inferior because they lack a degree or particular credential, even if their lives are successful by other measures.
- **Lower skill level.** As Christians, we should be careful not to compare ourselves with others since we all have unique callings. As a result, there is no need to feel inferior around highly successful individuals.
- **Financial comparison.** It can be tempting to feel inferior when others can afford to spend more than we can. Even so, believers should be careful to not go into debt just to impress people.

- **Physical discontentment.** In our superficial culture, it's easy to focus on outward appearance and feel second-rate if we don't measure up to some perceived ideal. Instead, we should learn to accept how God made us.

What are the consequences?

- **Perfectionism.** One of the manifestations of feeling inferior is the need to do everything correctly. This can lead to procrastination, because we are waiting until we can get it done perfectly. It's better to get started, even if we make mistakes. Sometimes the perfectionism is actually an attempt to make up for past mistakes. We should spend more time looking ahead to the next challenge rather than overanalyzing errors.
- **Ridiculing people.** Individuals who feel inferior will often criticize another person, especially one who has experienced a recent success. They attempt to pull others down rather than celebrate and be inspired by their accomplishments.

What are the steps to healing?

- **Understand God's viewpoint.** If you are a born-again child of God, you are His workmanship, which means "masterpiece" and has the connotation of "a person of notable excellence" (Eph. 2:10). He made you unique. There is no one you can compare yourself to, because God didn't intend anyone to be just like you. He has a purpose for each one of us.
- **Understand God's love.** The Father loved you enough to send His Son Jesus to die on the cross for your sins so you could be made righteous. You are designed by God to do whatever He calls you to do, and He would not create you to be inferior.
 - John 14:21. You are loved by both Jesus and the Father (see also John 14:23).
 - John 15:9. You are loved by Jesus just as the Father loved Jesus. In other words, you are loved perfectly.

- John 17:23. God the Father loves you just as He loves the Son.
- John 17:24. The Father loved you before the foundation of the world.

■ Understand God's expectations.

- He doesn't expect perfection. The apostle John, expressing God's heart, wrote to "my little children" not "my adults" (1 John 2:1).
- The Lord knows you won't do the right thing every single time. You will make mistakes and sin against Him, but you can seek forgiveness and begin again.
- God has only two expectations: Trust Him and follow Him. If you love Him, you will do these two things.
- You must choose to recognize your feelings of inferiority as lies.

Pray about it.

Father, I want to thank You for making me the way I am. Because I know You don't make mistakes, I trust that I'm not inferior. Thank You for giving me specific skills, talents, and abilities as well as a unique calling. I accept who I am as a child of God. Even though I make mistakes, I am perfectly loved through them all. Help me overcome my feelings of inferiority and focus on Your thoughts about me instead. You will always work to develop me into the person You desire me to be. I choose to trust You and follow You. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

► RESPONSE

- Why do you think feelings of inferiority interfere with our ability to have healthy relationships or reach our goals?
- What have been the sources of your struggles with feeling "less than"?
- How can understanding and choosing to believe God's love and acceptance help you or someone else experience victory in this area?
- Is there a Scripture that encourages you to see yourself as worthy, God's beloved son or daughter?

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