

In the first book of Samuel, chapter 16, the prophet Samuel is being sent by God to anoint a new king over Israel, to replace King Saul who had rejected the Lord. God gave Samuel specific instructions on what to do and told him that he would find the new king from among the sons of Jesse, in Bethlehem. When the prophet saw Eliab, one of Jesse's sons, he said, "Surely, this is the Lord's anointed." But God said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." Eventually God confirmed that Jesse's youngest son, David, would be the future king over Israel.

Some years back, a Christian group called 4Him, had a song I absolutely loved called *The Measure of a Man*...

I say the measure of a man
Is not how tall you stand,
How wealthy or intelligent you are.

Cause I've found the measure of a man
God knows and understands,
For He looks inside to the bottom of your heart.

And what's in the heart defines
The measure of a man.

Oh, how I wish that were true for all of us today. As a woman, it seems especially hard to ever measure up to what the world tells us we should look like. We learn very early in life how acceptable we are, just by how we look. This very moment I am asking myself if it wouldn't be better to just skip the school pictures during grade school? I'm guessing most would agree those are days we always dreaded, and if we forgot it was picture day and 'came as we were', the resulting picture was a guaranteed 'fail'.

I saw an episode of *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman*, where Kenny Rogers portrayed a photographer who was taking the first photographs from the 'new west'. As people started seeing themselves in the photographs, they became self-conscious about how they looked. For the first time they could see their own faces frozen in time, allowing them to examine and critique their features and flaws.

Perhaps the Amish and some of the remote tribes who do not allow photographs have the right idea. We have seen movie clips and videos of chubby, braless women singing and dancing freely to music, moving in complete abandon to the rhythm of the drums. I envy them. I really do. I can't pass a store window or catch my reflection without thinking of some bit of criticism about myself.

I've had low self-esteem for as long as I can remember. I jokingly say I needed a bra as an infant because of the rolls on my little body. I was the baby of the family, yet my growing spurt made me taller, and rounder, than my brother who was two years older than me, and my sister who was four years older than me. I know I've mentioned it before in other blogs, but I truly felt like I was 'Baby Huey'. Google it.

I was the first one in my group of friends to need a bra, to start my period, everything. Back then, the cute clothes were for the smaller girls. To buy clothes in my size I often had to shop in the women's section, so if I didn't feel ugly enough, I had to dress like my mother.

My mother... She insisted that I looked 'so cute' with short hair, so I always had short hair. Now I'm thinking she was just traumatized by my older sister and the nightmares with brushing her long hair, so she just told me my short hair was cute to dodge any more potential meltdowns. All I remember is being mistaken as a boy, often, which makes no sense since I had to wear a bra. That, and I remember walking home from school with the sun shining down from behind me. I would see what appeared to me to be an enormous shadow of my body with a pinpoint for a head. Yep, good times.

I don't even want to talk about middle school or high school, but I think you get my meaning. The craziest part of all of it, is that I wasn't even that big. Terms like 'big-boned' ring a bell. Perhaps I was 'thicker' than a lot of my friends, but when I look back at these pictures now that I'm an adult, I was a lovely young lady. There was nothing wrong with me at all. I look into the eyes of that tortured girl, and I feel so sorry for her. I would never want to relive those years again, even if you paid me a million dollars. I absolutely hated myself, and my life.

I guess the point I'm trying to make here goes right back to what God told the prophet Samuel.

"Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7

Can I tell this to you? Are you feeling depressed because of how the world has made you feel? If you're like me, your own family while growing up might have been the source for making you feel unworthy. Perhaps your spouse puts you down, or perhaps even worse, ignores you and your needs completely. It's hard to be your best self when the world keeps telling you that you aren't worth the trouble.

I have it on high authority that the Creator of the universe loves you more than you could ever fathom. My dear friend, He created YOU! He has instilled in you alone, very special traits and gifts that no one else on the planet has, and there is a purpose for everything you are. I know the lies and the negative voices that have been in your head for so long are hard to turn off, but you must.

I still struggle at times and need to watch out for the fiery darts that Satan loves to send out when my guard is down. But today I can say that I am just fine, just as I am. I find joy in the little things, and marvel at the beauty all around me. I also struggle myself, trying not to judge others by what I see on the outside and love them for who they are on the inside. It is not an easy journey. God sees you for who you really are, and loves you beyond belief.