

Feel ugly?

God thinks you're to-die-for.

God shows his own love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8

It's easy to feel ugly amongst the beautiful people of Sydney. We may feel that we don't measure up physically next to the likes of the stylish models in magazines, the attractive people in advertisements or even just the person walking on the footpath in front of us. It's easy to feel emotionally ugly, with a personality no one really finds attractive, or relationally ugly, scarred and unwanted by past events and relationship breakdowns. Perhaps we may feel spiritually ugly, shallow and superficial after too many quick-fix attempts that didn't last. Even hyper-confident, super-optimistic people that never struggle with low self-esteem.....even they have those rare times they hide from everyone else when their insecurities come out from their secret hiding place and threaten to swamp them.

We all long to be secure in ourselves and there are plenty of gurus promising to unlock the doors to the deep springs of power and potential that supposedly dwell within us, waiting to be released. For many people, the old Christian doctrine of sin is seen as an oppressive, damaging influence on a person's self-esteem. Once freed from this unhelpful negative baggage, so the story goes, humans will be free to create their own image and forge their own destiny in this world.

Sadly, the statistics show this just hasn't worked. Instances of depression and suicide continue to rise, and though we are materially better off and physically living longer than ever before, people's dissatisfaction and levels of unhappiness seem to be increasing.

The unique self-image of the Christian is the antidote to our mixed up ideas about self-esteem. God sees right into our hearts, including our flaws and failures and, as Jesus says (in Mark 7:20-21), 'out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts'. He sees the ugly way we treat people, the things we say behind their backs, the way we ignore God and value ourselves over anyone else. He doesn't try to paper over it. He deals with it by sending his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to come down and die for it. But he doesn't do this under compulsion or begrudgingly, he does it out of his extravagant love for us. Love that sees us as we really are yet offers forgiveness and mercy and a new life following Jesus.

And that's the unique Christian self-image. Ugly enough that Jesus had to-die-for our ugliness and richly loved enough by Jesus to-die-for us. That's a true view of yourself that doesn't need a slogan to keep it going.