

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Dictionary.com defines brainwashing as:

- A method for systematically changing attitudes or altering beliefs, originated in totalitarian countries, especially through the use of torture, drugs, or psychological-stress techniques.
- Any method of controlled systematic indoctrination, especially one based on repetition or confusion.

It is terrible to be brainwashed. To think that an enemy could forcibly cause me to believe something different from what I now believe. To imagine that same enemy being able to get me to behave in a way contrary to my normal behavior. But even more shocking, if that enemy is successful, I end up not only doing what they want me to do, but I do it with all my heart believing it is the right thing to do. That is the result of a thorough brainwashing. Why can a person be brainwashed in this way? It doesn't make logical sense. But understanding the answer to that question can actually help us discover the secret to being able to change our own lives in a positive, healthy way.

Truth be told, this book is not a spy novel nor a book about brainwashing techniques. It is actually a book about building a healthy self-image. But now that I have your attention, let me explain the reason for the title. Note, the title is Brain Washed, not Brainwashed. Yes, a play on words, but a very important play on words. When we make it two words, it can totally change the connotation.

The idea that our brain could be washed (cleansed or renewed) is a very intriguing concept. We have all been hurt, lied to, betrayed, misused, and abused, which has left deep scars that fill us with frustration, bitterness, and emotional pain. Not only that, we have all hurt others which plagues us

with guilt and regret. These experiences produce negative inner beliefs which damage our self-image and rob us of peace, joy, and fullness of life. They negatively affect our health and wellbeing more than anything else. They can fill us with insecurity, fear, frustration, and shame, causing us to feel unloved, worthless, and unacceptable.

What if our brain could be washed in a way that changed these negative beliefs into positive beliefs? You don't think that is possible. Well, if an enemy can change our beliefs in a negative way against our will, why can't we discover how to change our own beliefs in a positive way to transform our self-image?

I firmly believe we can, and I am first and foremost speaking from personal experience. My self-image went through a radical transformation in my young adult years, and I came through that period seeing my life changed in wonderful and amazing ways. I went on to earn a Master's Degree in counseling and have been a professional counselor for the past thirty-five years.

But the most fascinating aspect of the transformation of my self-image is that the change happened through my relationship with God. Coming to deeply know and understand the amazing love of God is the single greatest factor that can transform the self-image.

If you are one of the millions of people who suffer from a low self-image, I believe that your self-image can be transformed in a way that radically changes your life for the better!

David Nofziger

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Part I

Understanding Self-Image

INTRODUCTION

I will never forget the first day of a two-year graduate program in Pastoral Psychology and Counseling. One of the classes that day was "Self Esteem 101" (I can no longer remember the actual name of the course but this is close enough). The class was being taught by the head of the counseling program, Dr. Richard Dobbins, PhD; Founder of Emerge Ministries in Akron, Ohio.

As he began writing on the large blackboard at the front of the class, he started listing on the left-hand side, five symptoms of a low self-image. As he listed each belief and the symptoms associated with those beliefs, I thought to myself, "*Those all look very familiar.*" I wondered, "*Do I have a low self-image?*" To be honest, I had no idea at that point what self-image or self-esteem even meant.

Then, on the right-hand side of the blackboard, he began to list the components of a healthy self-image. At this point, a new thought came, "*Those are the changes God has been making in my life over the past five years.*" Radical, wonderful, life-transforming changes. I was very grateful for the changes even though I hadn't fully understood what God had been changing.

On that day and the rest of the semester, I started realizing that God had been changing my self-image. What fascinated me most was that the changes were happening naturally through my growing relationship with Him. Plus, those changes were helping me become more like Jesus Christ. My changing self-image was enabling me to be "*conformed to the image of His Son*" as described in Romans 8:29. This revelation gave me a keen interest in understanding self-image; and over the past thirty-five years as a counselor, I have enjoyed helping others develop a healthier self-image through an ever-deepening intimacy with God. I trust you will enjoy going on this journey with me, perhaps your self-image will be radically changed in a positive way as well!