**Self-Love**

*2 Timothy 3:1-5; Matthew 22:39*

**Introduction**

1. The love of self may be viewed differently depending on the “world view” one has:
   1. The modern thinker will view the love of self as a positive pursuit of true fulfillment.
      1. Or as one has put it, “Loving yourself is the foundation for everything.” (Amanda Jette Knox, “Learning to Love Yourself,” TEDxYouth)
   2. The Christian will likely think of self-love as a purely negative pursuit.
2. The Bible speaks of self-love with a striking contrast of two sorts – **2 Timothy 2:1-5; Matthew 22:39**
3. Especially in today’s society, it is extremely important that we have the proper view of self-love.
4. Worldly Self-Love
5. The Pop-Psychology of Self-Love
   1. Self-love – “regard for one's own well-being and happiness (chiefly considered as a desirable rather than narcissistic characteristic).” (New Oxford American Dictionary)
   2. Regard for one’s own well-being and happiness is not a bad thing, but the cultural context of this theory of pop-psychology reveals its true substance.
   3. “What it Really Means to Love Yourself,” John Amodeo Ph.D., MFT (psychologytoday.com)
      1. “Self-love means finding peace within ourselves — resting comfortably within the depths of our being.”
         1. “this is simply a way of being nonjudgmentally kind, present, and mindful toward whatever we happen to be experiencing.”
         2. “We need to have empathy and unconditional positive regard for whatever we are experiencing inside.”
      2. “This gentle way of being with ourselves is an antidote to shame. Rather than battling ourselves or trying to fix or change ourselves, we find more inner peace by simply being with our experience as it unfolds.”
   4. “What Self-Love Truly Means and Ways to Cultivate It,” Allaya Cooks-Campbell (betterup.com)
      1. “Contrary to what you might’ve heard growing up, fishing for compliments isn’t a bad thing.”
         1. “One wonderful habit I got from a course…was to respond [to a compliment] with ‘Thank you, it’s true.’”
      2. “The way you speak to yourself significantly influences your self-perception and overall well-being. Incorporating positive self-talk and affirmations into your daily routine is a powerful strategy for enhancing self-love.”
         1. “Replace negative statements with positive affirmations that emphasize your strengths, capabilities, and inherent worth.”
         2. “Additionally, surround yourself with positive influences, whether through supportive friends, motivational literature, or affirming podcasts.”
      3. “Establishing and maintaining healthy boundaries is a crucial aspect of self-love.”
         1. “Surround yourself with individuals who respect and support your boundaries.”
   5. “Loving Yourself: Why and How to Do It,” Tchiki Davis, MA, PhD (berkeleywellbeing.com)
      1. “When we love ourselves, we have an appreciation for our own worth or value. We don’t need affirmation from others and we don’t need them to tell us that we are enough, smart enough, attractive enough—we simply know.”
      2. “Self kindness involves being patient with the aspects of your personality that you don’t like, being caring towards yourself when you’re going through a hard time, and being tolerant of your flaws.”
      3. Need for forgiveness of self.
      4. Quotes offered:
         1. “Owning our story and loving ourselves through that process is the bravest thing that we’ll ever do.” – Brene Brown
         2. “If you’re searching for that one person that will change your life, take a look in the mirror.” – Unknown
6. The world’s view of self-love is:
   1. **Highly subjective** – naturally so, however, it is paradoxically not so in the Biblical perspective. (**cf. Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 14:12**)
   2. **Insular** – “ignorant of or uninterested in cultures, ideas, or peoples outside one's own experience” (New Oxford American Dictionary) (**cf. Psalm 139:17, 23-24; Galatians 6:6**)
      1. Encourages separation from those who demand or challenge you to change.
      2. Encourages one to ignore the sense of shame with the ultimate goal of being “unapologetically you.”
      3. While some will suggest that you learn to love by loving yourself and then share that love with others, what is encouraged will actually inhibit genuine love for others.
   3. **Self-aggrandizing** – it is a promoter of pride, which is the seat of all sin. (**cf. Proverbs 6:16-17; James 4:6**)
   4. **Contrary to true introspection** – self-examination is meant for identifying problems and weaknesses to correct them, not to sweep them under the rug with self-praise. (**cf. 2 Corinthians 13:5**)
   5. **Small in aim** – if the bravest thing we can do is love ourselves on our own terms, then we never aim higher than our own head. (**cf. Mark 8:34, 36; Revelation 2:10**)
   6. **Blasphemous** – “If you’re searching for that one person that will change your life, take a look in the mirror.” – Unknown (**cf. John 6:68-69**)
7. Worldly Self-Love is Condemned – **2 Timothy 3:1-5** – it is the opposite of loving God, and living for heaven, and is ironically contrary to true self-love.
   1. ***“lovers of themselves”*** bookends the descriptive list with what is synonymous, ***“lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God”***
8. Godly Self-Love
9. God Commands Self-Love
   1. God’s word is not only not against the idea of self-love, but it requires us to love ourselves – **Matthew 22:39 (cf. Leviticus 19:18); Ephesians 5:28-29**
   2. The suggested aim of the world’s view of self-love is confidence, security, courage, contentment, peace, happiness, etc.
      1. The self-love the world promotes only offers a fleeting semblance of those things.
      2. God’s revelation of self-love is the only way to these things.
10. True self-love is rooted in faith that accepts one is made in God’s image.
    1. We are God’s image bearers – **Genesis 1:26-27**
    2. **There is no legitimate basis for self-love without the acknowledgment that our existence is owed to God:**
       1. **True self-love is a product of the observation of intrinsic self-worth.**
       2. **However, there is no intrinsic self-worth unless we all are individually part of something bigger and more important than ourselves.**
    3. **Self-love does not result from realizing independence, but rather from realizing one’s connection to his Creator who decided he was worth creating.**
    4. David understood this:
       1. **Psalm 139:14** – our makeup injects us with fear and wonder.
       2. **Psalm 8:3-9** – our place in creation is telling.
    5. Despair comes when our search ends at the end of our nose – **cf. Acts 17:26-28**
    6. Those who love themselves for the sake of loving themselves, and not because their existence is a gift from God to His glory aim small and miss big.
       1. This was Solomon’s point – **Ecclesiastes 1:2; 12:6-8, 13**
       2. ***How can I truly love myself (and find all the benefits of such) if I continue to deny who I am in the first place.***
11. True self-love is not reached through the knowledge of oneself, but through the knowledge of Christ.
    1. **Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 14:12** – the world tells us to look within and love what you see to find fulfillment, but God warns about the destructive nature of such.
    2. **Jeremiah 6:14-21** – this could easily be describing the self-love encouraged by the world.
       1. **(v. 14)** – convince self of peace.
       2. **(v. 15)** – reject shame and smother it until it dies.
       3. **(vv. 16-17)** – an outside source offering true peace and rest through self-denial is rejected.
       4. **(vv. 18-21)** – the fruit of looking within to accomplish self-love is self-destruction. (***“fruit of their thoughts*,” v. 19)**
    3. Jesus Himself serves as an example:
       1. **John 9:4-5 –** He set foot on earth, not to further His will or work, but that of God who sent Him.
       2. **John 11:9-10** – Jesus expresses that true light is not within oneself but is an objective realm in which we must walk.
          1. Context – to go near Jerusalem where Jews sought to kill Him to raise Lazarus to God’s glory and His.
          2. Objection by disciples – **(v. 8)**
          3. Jesus’ response – **(vv. 9-10)** – day = God’s will (including the time to fulfill it); night = my will (if I choose self-preservation at the expense of God’s will, I will stumble – spiritually)
          4. If we do not look beyond ourselves to the light God provides, we will have no sense of direction at all because ***“the light is not in him.”***
          5. His purpose and fulfillment was in walking the path intended by God. (**cf. Matthew 26:39**)
    4. **John 9:5; 12:35-36** – Jesus is that light, and we must believe in Him lest darkness overtake us.
       1. **(v. 36)** – ***“sons of”*** is an idiom which means characterized by.
       2. Not characterized by what we see within, but without.
    5. **True self-love is not found in being unapologetically you, but in letting Christ live in you unapologetically. (cf. Galatians 2:20-21)**
12. True self-love is reflected in our love for others.
    1. **Matthew 22:39** – the second greatest command to love neighbor is conditioned by established self-love.
       1. Parable of Good Samaritan **– Luke 10:25-37**
          1. **(vv. 30-32)** – the priest and Levite ignored the man.
          2. **(vv. 33-36)** – Samaritan had compassion, and loved the man through action – **the seat of compassion is self-love and self-reflection.**
             1. Seeing them in such a condition moves you to think of yourself in their place. (**cf. Hebrews 13:3**)
             2. How would you feel? What would you need? – **cf. Luke 6:31**
          3. **Context** – after the 70 return with joy – some accepted, some rejected.
             1. **(v. 21)** – hidden from wise and prudent, revealed to babes.
             2. **(v. 25)** – lawyer (wise and prudent) stood up to test him about the law.
             3. Levite and Priest represent the wise and prudent who look within to satisfy self, instead of looking to God to please Him.
             4. **They do not “love their neighbor as themselves” because they do not love themselves enough to follow God!**
    2. **Romans 13:8-10** – all summed up in loving neighbor as yourself.
       1. The committing of any of these offenses reflects poorly on one’s view of oneself.
       2. Anyone with true self-love will see themselves in their neighbor and avoid doing something they would not want done to themselves.
       3. **This is especially framed by God’s word, for true self-love is trust enough in God’s word to always do what it says.**

**Conclusion**

1. The world will tell you that the most important thing you can do is to love yourself – this is a ploy of Satan to drown us in a sea of Godless self-centered despair.
2. The Bible teaches us to love ourselves, but it is not accomplished through selfishness, but a willingness to deny ourselves, trust God, and follow His ways.
   1. This does not lead to self-neglect or self-harm (mental, physical, emotional, spiritual).
   2. There are blessings for self inherently associated with a life of self-denial in service to God and others – **Proverbs 3:5-8**
   3. **We take care of ourselves and love ourselves by denying ourselves and putting our lives in God’s hands.**