

Today's Climate

Looking around the world today, it does not appear that we need more self-love. In fact, the Bible warns, "In the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves" (2 Tim. 3: 1–2). True, many women have poor self-esteem. But telling them they can change this by chanting the self-love mantra only causes more denial and despair. The woman who killed her unborn child is not a worthy person. The woman who has led a promiscuous lifestyle is not a worthy person. If you are honest about your heart, even ***you are not*** a worthy person.

Where does this leave us?

Should we hate ourselves? No. In reality, this is also self-centered. It is convoluted pride, and our ego is still at the center. Any time we are focused on ourselves, whether we are priding ourselves or condemning ourselves, we are the center of our focus.

The goal of the Christian is not to focus on self, but rather to die to self.

Death Requires Sacrifice

The Bible says, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1). If we are to be "living and holy sacrifices," it requires that ***something dies***. ***What dies is our self***. When *anger, bitterness, hatred, insecurities, jealousy, pride, hurt, lust*, and the *other sins of the heart* motivate our actions, ***self is central in our life***. These feelings spring out of our human nature. They are natural, normal human responses to life's hurts and disappointments. But ***they separate us from God***.

We could, like so many people, deny their existence in order to live up to the Christian image, but this only results in repressing them. And, although we are repressing them, we will express them at some point. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matt. 12:34).

When we admit to these feelings, admit to our defeat in overcoming these feelings, and offer them to God, we take self out of our focus and place ***Christ in the center*** of our lives. We ask Him to heal our hurts and change our hearts. In doing this, self-condemnation and self-commendation are both eliminated. It's up to Christ—***not us***. This way, we don't love or hate ourselves; we simply ACCEPT ourselves. We become able to acknowledge and accept our strong points, our weak points, our foibles, our fancies, our insecurities, and everything else about us. Instead of striving to change these things, we surrender them to God and allow Him to do the molding, changing, and shaping.

Humility: Of all the conditions of the heart, ***humility*** is probably the most sought after and least understood by Christians.

"In my pursuit for humility, I felt like a gerbil on a wheel getting nowhere. The more I strived to be humble, the prouder I was of my humility. Until I realized I was proud and then I felt like a failure at becoming humble."
- Dinah Monahan

Humility is not thinking lowly of oneself, but rather, **not** thinking of oneself at all. Humility is **not** something to be achieved. It is a by product of a surrendered heart. One simply must surrender what's in their heart and God will replace it with His heart. It's not a matter of arriving at a point of spirituality where you achieve humility, but rather a day-by-day, moment-by-moment walk in surrender with Christ. Humility no longer becomes the objective. It is simply the shifting of focus from self to Christ and the total absence of gauging spiritual performance at all.

Verses referenced in this lesson:

Daniel 5:20 But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him.

Matthew 5:5 God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth.

Matthew 11:29 Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Matthew 12:34 Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

Matthew 18:4 So anyone who becomes as humble as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Matthew 22:39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself.

Matthew 23:12 But those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

Leviticus 17:11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood...it is the blood that makes atonement.

Luke 1:52 He has brought down princes from their thrones and exalted the humble.

James 4:6 And he gives grace generously. As the Scriptures say, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

John 8:32 And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

John 8:36 So if the Son sets you free, you are truly free.

Proverbs 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Romans 8:1 There is, therefore, now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

Romans 12:1 Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

2 Tim. 3: 1-2 In the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves.