

## Learning to Love Ourselves

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We do not often think about the need to love yourself. Perhaps we see this as a worldly fix to spiritual problems, or we do not have concerns about our self-liking. But we should see that from a Scriptural perspective, if you do not love yourself:

You cannot love your neighbor – James 2:8

You cannot love your spouse – Ephesian 5:28

You cannot seek wisdom – Proverbs 19:8

Successful Christians must love themselves. But often times when we think about it, the answer is that we don't "love" ourselves. We set standards we cannot meet, such as worldly pursuits and goals, or we measure ourselves with physical characteristics that change, or even set for ourselves difficult or impossible spiritual standards. As well, we then turn to pursue empty means to satisfy our absence of self-love, chasing "happiness" and pursuing vanity. Our dilemma is this: we do not understand what "love" means, and we do not know how to "love".

What is Love? Love is NOT an emotion, an intense liking or simply acceptance, as the world often interprets or defines it. Therefore, loving ourselves is not "feeling" good about ourselves, or liking everything about ourselves, or even accepting ourselves "as we are".

In the Bible love is ideas like sacrifice (John 3:16), obedience (John 15:10), and action (I John 3:17-18). Even in the world, it is understood that the path to self-appreciation or worth is not one of self-service, but one of public service: *Treating others well, it turns out, is the fastest path to a healthy self-esteem. If you dislike yourself, stop focusing on your negative qualities. We all have negative qualities. There's nothing special about your negativity, I promise you. Focus instead on caring for others. Because the more you care about others, I guarantee the more in turn you'll be able to care about yourself* – Dr. Alex Lickerman, Psychology Today.

We love ourselves NOT by pursuing our happiness, but by seeking the best in God and in others. This makes us the best we can be of ourselves. In other words, loving yourself is being the best you can be.

So how can you learn to change? Let us examine those Biblical commandments that tell us about how being outwardly/otherly minded benefits us. Step 1: By learning to serve others (Ephesians 5:28, 1 John 5:2). Step 2: By learning to forgive (Matthew 6:14-15). Step 3: By learning to change (Romans 12:1-2, Ephesians 4:23-24). Step 4: By learning to move forward (Philippians 3:13-15).

Conclusion: You must love yourself to effectively serve God. Loving yourself is NOT a feeling or self-gratification. To love yourself you must lose yourself in God. Whether you love yourself is your choice alone.