

To **Love** Myself, or Not To? That is the Question.

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Eternally Speaking Now

Is it okay to **love** ourselves? *Should* we be **loving** ourselves?

The key to answering these questions is found in defining **love**. Since God is the One who came up with **love** in the first place, let's see what He has to say about it.

Jesus said, "The first of all the commandments is:

'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

And **you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.**' This is the first commandment.

And the second, like it, is this:

'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

There is no other commandment greater than these."

Mark 12:29-31

Love God. **Love** others. As yourself.

Pondering this, I got tripped up by the word 'as.' Does "**love** your neighbor as yourself" mean "**love** your neighbor *while you are loving* yourself?" Or does it mean, "**love** your neighbor *to the same degree* as you **love** yourself?"

I didn't find a clear answer, but the conclusion appears the same for both: Either way, we're to **love ourselves**.

So, what does that look like?

Do we **throw caution to the wind** and gobble down five donuts, **frivolously** spend \$500 on Amazon jewelry, and then **loung**e on the couch watching soap operas? Do we do whatever we want, because we think **we deserve it**? Obviously not. Scripture and experience prove that following our flesh and making irresponsible choices neither come from nor produce **love**.

Once again, the answer is in the Bible.
God, who created us,
is the One who told us to **love** others as ourselves,
and He's given a clear definition of what that means in
1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

Love is **patient**. (*Am I patient with myself?*)

Love is **kind**. (*Do I speak and behave kindly to myself?*)

Love does not envy. (*Do I envy the idea of who I think I should be, or what I think I should have accomplished in my life by now? Whose standards am I using to measure myself?*)

Love is **not puffed up- does not boast**. (*Am I thinking more of myself than I ought?*)

Love does **not behave rudely**. (*How do I speak to myself? Is my self-talk rude? If so, it is not in line with the truth and what God says about me.*)

Love does **not seek its own**. (*Have I neglected another, behaved selfishly, or exalted myself above someone else? Feeding selfishness does not have loving results in my soul or my relationships.*)

Love is **not provoked**. (*Do my thoughts toward myself provoke an unloving attitude?*)

Love thinks no evil. (*Do I call myself names? Our thoughts toward ourselves need to be true. Otherwise, they are lies, which come from the father of lies, who is evil.*)

Love does **not rejoice in iniquity**, but **rejoices in the truth**. (*Do I dwell on my faults and sins, speaking curses over myself? Or am I filling my mind with the Word of God, which is truth?*)

Love bears all things (*Am I patiently walking the process of growing in the Lord?*), **believes all things** (*Do I believe what God has told me about who He is as my Father and who I am as His child?*), **hopes all things** (*Are my sights on Jesus and His promises?*), **endures all things**.

Love never fails.

Whew. *(Please read all that again if you skipped over it. Take your time. The enemy doesn't want you to think about this!)*

The above isn't just a nice message for a wedding card.
It's God's Word. *It's Him.*
He's alive, and He's meant to be 'lived' through us.

On the one hand, I'm overwhelmed by these verses.

It's **too much** to do on my own!

On the other hand, I quickly realize it's **silly**
to think I could do any of this **on my own--**
*only the Holy Spirit can 'do **love**' through me.*

I believe the only way we can **love God**
and **love our neighbors** as **ourselves**
is if we have the **love of God** working inside of us—
the Presence of Jesus Himself.
The reason it works this way is because
God is love. (1 John 4:8, 16)
Not only does **God love us**, but **He is love.**

**If He, who is love, dwells within us,
then we have all we need to love Him, and
love our neighbors as we love ourselves.**

CHALLENGE

There is so much more to say about this topic, but I want to conclude with one section of Scripture that could cause **confusion**.

God **warns** us in 2 Timothy 3 that in the end days (which many believe is now), people will become “**covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers...**” and “**lovers of their own selves.**”

Sound like our culture today? What a list. And that's not even the entire section of Scripture.

But wait- isn't God warning us here *not* to be “**lovers of our own selves?**”
Definitely. This phrase, “**lovers of their own selves**” is from *one Greek*

word, “philautos.” Philautos is an adjective, meaning “**lover of own self; too intent on one’s own interest, selfish.**” (Strong’s Concordance #G5367)

Philautos (**lovers of their own selves**) is the opposite of "**agapao**," (verb) and "**agape**" (noun). Agapao and agape are the two Greek root words for "**love**" in all the verses discussed above in this writing. Take a moment to *savor* the meaning of these words:

**Agapao (v) = to love; to have preference for;
wish well to, regard the welfare of;
to take pleasure in the thing, prize it above other things, be unwilling
to abandon it or do without it;
to welcome with desire, long for**

Agape (n) = love, affection, benevolence, charity, dear, *charity feasts*

Agapao is what Jesus did on the cross as He died in our place and for our sins. He **prefers** you. He **takes pleasure** in you. He **prizes** you and is **unwilling to abandon** or do without you!

He welcomes you with desire. He longs for you.

Agape is the **love** God has for us, the **love** we fall in **love** with, the **love** we **love** God back with, and the **love** that then spills over to our neighbors. And it’s the **love** we’re to show ourselves.

When all is said and done,
God and His character, as revealed in His Word, are our standard.

You will love your neighbor as you love yourself.

If the Lord loves you, which He does, then you should love you, too.

Do you?

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