



LOVE 
yourself

accept
yourself

forgive 
yourself

& be good to
yourself

because without you

the rest of us
are without a source of
many

 Wonderful

things

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Loving yourself

The following notes are designed to go alongside the teaching series at St Columba “loving yourself”. Listen to the weekly message on www.stcolumba.org.nz

To get the best out of these notes take some time for personal reflection and small group discussion.

Introduction

Luke 10:25-28

“On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. Teacher, he asked, what must I do to inherit eternal life? What is written in the Law? he replied. How do you read it? He answered: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' You have answered correctly, Jesus replied. Do this and you will live.”¹

This verse has three distinct phases

1. The question
2. The answer
3. The reply

Before you look at the answer be sure you understand the **question** and the **reply!**

In Matthew and Mark the question is slightly different as a test of Jesus’ Biblical knowledge and interpretation; What is the greatest Commandment? Jesus replied, there is not **one** but **two**, love God and love your neighbour as yourself.

Some commentators have argued that “loving self” is not a biblical mandate and that love of self leads to narcissism² (self indulgence).

2 Timothy 3:1-5

Godlessness in the Last Days

“But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control,

¹ See also how this verse is used in .Matthew 22:37ff, Mark 12:28ff, Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18

² Do a Google search on Narcissism. What happens when you fall in love with your own reflection?

brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.”

When does self love become self indulgence?

Is that a mark of today’s society?

This kind of self love is not the kind of love that Jesus had in mind when he said “love your neighbour as yourself”. Jesus was quoting Leviticus 19:18 where it is inconceivable that love of self could not be expressed in any other way than a love for others. The very definition of love is it does not exist for itself but rather is other centred. God’s love is always other centred. Self centred love is not love at all!

What is your experience of being loved and loving?

When in your experience does love cease to be love?

Discovering your God given image

There is much conversation today about “self image” and “self esteem”. The Bible does not use this language rather it talks of the “image of God” (*imago Dei*).

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” Genesis 1:27.³

Some insights

- What is happening in this verse is very different to the rest of the creation story
- God is intimately involved
- The creation of “man” (male and female) is the crowning act of creation – “This is very good!”
- There is a direct relationship between the image and the image bearer
- Each part of the image informs the other of its qualities and characteristics
- To be human is to be . . .
 - ✚ We are spiritual beings
 - ✚ We are personal beings
 - ✚ We are moral beings
 - ✚ We are relational beings
 - ✚ We are rational beings

³ Read also Genesis 2:4-25, known as a second creation story. What does this tell about God and the creation of mankind?

✚ We are emotional beings

✚ We are creative beings

When God created you he said “a w e s o m e!”

If these are the credentials of what it means to be human why do you think so many people suffer with low self esteem?

When you look yourself in the mirror who do you see and how do you feel?

What happens when the image of God in you is shattered?

Is your image of yourself formed and informed by being created in the image of God?

How could your view of other people change if you saw them as created in the image of God?

Read the following quote used by Nelson Mandela in 1994 in his inaugural speech and then apply it to yourself.

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that frightens us most. We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and famous?' Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that people won't feel insecure around you. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in all of us. And when we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.” by Marianne Williamson

In what ways do you make yourself small?

When are you at your personal best?

How do you “manifest the glory of God”?

For action

What personal commitments and action will you take in response to your insights on “discovering your God given image?”

What kind of image bearer do you want to be?