

THE YEAR OF INTEGRITY

BULLETIN

VOL. 57 | 07 MARCH 2021

LOVING THE
WORD OF GOD

SELF-LOVE,
IS IT BIBLICAL?

Bethany International Church
THE HOUSE OF BETHANY FOR ALL NATIONS

Vision

To be a "House of Prayer for all nations"
Isaiah 56 :7b

Mission

A praying and witnessing church who have a close personal relationship with The Lord, to change the world for the glory of the Lord.



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Bethlehem — Felix, Fransisca
Jordan — Sony, Wilfred
Horeb — Ferry, Febria
Bethany — Paulus, Erina
Bethel — Adel, Patricia
Cana — Bobby
Philadelphia - Pniel — Dwi, Vero
Moriah — Elve, Calista
Ephraim — Sonia, Kendrew
Ekklesia — Edo, Ica
Emmaus — Fabian, Priska
Galilee — Kevin Y, Corine
Gennesaret — Reinetta, Albert
Gilgal - Carmel — Erika, Mike
Hebron - Philippi — Yoseph, Rian
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Eden — Jennifer

FAMILY

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Tiberias — Andre, Albert
Gethsemane — Michael, Rudy
Jerusalem — Hestu
Mt Hermon — Lily, Unggul
Phillipi — Hariyanto, Ivan
Shekinah — Alice
Tabernacle — Sandi
Westal — Michael

180

Macedonia — Eric, Alicia
Shiloh — Daniel, Clarissa

NEXT GEN

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Judah — Aldo, Kezia M.
Israel — Catherine, Jerry
Jeremiah — Sinta, Kevin W.
Heaven — Pauline

Self Love



Self-love, is it biblical?

By Valerie Setiono

Nowadays, we see and hear the word “self-love” everywhere. Many songs, movies, books take self-love as their main topic, answering questions of why and how to love and appreciate ourselves. The most widely used Bible verse that is thought to promote self-love is in Matthew 22:39: ‘And the second is like it: *‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’*” Many understand this verse as “unless you love yourself first, you cannot love other people around you” or “you can only love your neighbour as much as you accept and love yourself”. While it may sound appealing to love, accept and prioritise ourselves, is this what Jesus was trying to say in this verse? Is it in line with what God taught us in the Bible?

First and foremost, we are all sinners. *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23). The root of our sinfulness is pride, which highlights our desire to be happy

apart from God and apart from the happiness of others in God. Pride is to find happiness anywhere but in the glory of God and the good of other people. When saying “love your neighbour as yourself”, Jesus is referring to our nature, inborn human trait to love ourselves. Without anyone commanding us, we all have a powerful instinct to protect ourselves, to be happy, to live with satisfaction, and to want food, clothes, a place to live, friends for ourselves, which is all a form of self-love. God created this desire in us, and it in itself is not evil.

What comes after that determines whether it becomes evil in our life. Jesus is saying, “as much as you love yourself, so love your neighbour”. Which means, as you long for food when you’re hungry, so you feed your neighbour when he is hungry. As you seek friends for yourself, so be a friend to your neighbour. In other words, ***“make your self-seeking the***

measure of your self-giving” (John Piper). But then, we might think that it seems like Jesus is saying that if we love others as we love ourselves, then we have to love them instead of loving ourselves. And this threatens our own self-love.

This is why it is important to read the whole passage when understanding the Bible. Let’s read Matthew 22:34-40:

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

*Jesus replied: “**Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.**’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: **‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’** All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two*

commandments.”

As we feel threatened by the second commandment, we come to realise why the first commandment is the first commandment. It takes away the thread that the second commandment is taking away our own happiness and makes the second commandment doable. To ‘love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind’ is the basis to ‘love your neighbour as yourself’. Which means, **we have to make God the measure of our self-seeking before we can make our self-seeking the measure of our self-giving.** Take our self-love – our longing for joy, love, hope, security, satisfaction, acceptance, appreciation – and focus it on God, until He becomes our satisfaction. When we have done that, we will find that it does not cancel out our self-love, but it fulfills and transforms our love for self.

As sinners, we do not and should not

like what we see inside us. Sin will be in all aspects of our lives, and we could not find anything to love about ourselves. The self-love philosophy teaches us that we can only find peace when we find something to love about ourselves. It is based on the idea that humans are fundamentally good, but since we are sinners, we cannot find this satisfaction in ourselves. The Scriptures taught us to look beyond ourselves to Christ, because there is actually very little to love about ourselves.

Often, we based our self-worth in the Biblical truth that we are created in God's image (Genesis 1:26), but we ignore the other half of who we also are, that we are sinful humans, and our own sin has robbed us from our loveliness. Therefore, self-love is unsatisfactory and lacking.

Not only it is unsatisfying, but self-love can also leave us unsanctified. Self-love tells us to "be yourself" and to "stay as you are", while Christ

invites us to "come as you are". When Christ calls us to come to Him, He genuinely loves and embraces us because He, Himself, has fulfilled all the requirements for us to be able to come to Him and be fully accepted. But it doesn't just stop there, He also calls us to "*put off your old self*" (Ephesians 4:22), to "*not be conformed to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind*" (Romans 12:2), and to "*deny yourselves*" (Matthew 16:24). It is God's will for us, not for us to accept and undermine our sins but to hate our sinful nature and to desire sanctification.

Yes, self-love and self-acceptance may seem like the easier way to feel okay and stop feeling guilty and inadequate. But it is just a temporary relief that the world offers. It is incomparable to the overwhelming relief of being truly loved and accepted by God. It is to see ourselves the way God sees us: sinful, guilty and inadequate, but has

been *“justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus”* (Romans 3:24). The true self-love is not to accept ourselves despite our flaws, but to accept ourselves as redeemed people. We can say we are loved and accepted, not because we are worthy in ourselves, but because Christ is worthy. Our self-worth is not found from our own brokenness, but only in Christ. When we come to God, He will give us the fullness of joy. He will satisfy our heart, mind and soul with His glory. And our self-love has now become one with our love for God, our desire to seek happiness and love has now become a desire to seek Him, because that is where we will find the never-ending fountain of joy and the unfailing love of Jesus Christ.



Loving the Word of God

By Jessica Sutiono

*How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter
than honey to my mouth ! (Psalm 119:103)*

I believe all Christians agree that reading the Bible is essential to our spiritual growth. Part of loving God is to know Him and obey His commandments; and that is why reading the Bible is so important. I consider reading the Bible as a delightful quotidian routine for every believer. Although many believers might be reading the bible as part of obligation without any sense of enjoyment or perhaps struggle

to maintain the daily read, our perspectives and relations towards God will determine how we value the Bible.

"The words of Scripture thrill my soul as nothing else ever can," quoted Charles Spurgeon. *"How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"*, written in Psalm 119:103.

Both scriptures attest to the truth that Bible reading is not just a mere Christian activity or a means to expand knowledge about Christianity. It is more than that. It is a profound book that has the power to transform lives. In fact, the Bible points to Jesus, our Lord Himself. *"In the beginning, was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* (John 1:1). God uses His written words (*logo*) for us to speak His words (*rhema*) to us. Through the Bible, we receive the gospel, the instruction on living as Christian, and revelations by the Spirit. We

learn about our new identities as born-again. We are given eternal perspective and hope for the future kingdom. The Scripture teaches us to discern and understand the will of a Father. The Words are our defensive weapons against evil. We also discover His promises and purposes in our lives, and the reasons to read are endless. Knowing such a great book should lead us to know God more and hence, we read the Word with anticipation and joy.

However, to know God and to love His Words will require our action and devotion. Bible reading has to be an integral part of our Christian lives. Yet veritably, to seek the things of God, is not natural for us sinners as this desire often contradicts our fleshly wants. The remedy to this is to make a commitment to build spiritual discipline. The decision needs to start with ourselves; our heart, mind and attitude. Be thankful for having the source, be curious to know God more. Cultivate a focused mind and

have a will and desire to be who God wants us to be. Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide and instruct us as we read.

As for myself, I would say that it is a blessing to own and read a Bible. For certain, there were times of struggles, like finding the Words too tedious at some point or having lost the motivation in the past. In spite of that, knowing the importance keeps me returning to the Bible again and again. Not only this fascinating book is full of knowledge and wisdom, the word of God has been my guide and anchor, the instruction for my spiritual growth. The Words speak to me on many occasions, especially in times of weaknesses. In the moment of darkness, the Scripture enlightens me. It is the most treasured book

that I will read over and over again throughout my life.

While having the Bible close to us, let us set our heart and mind to seek God through his Words. Pray for the desire to grow in the knowledge of God and have personal encounter with Him. Pray for the Holy Spirit to give us the hunger and thirst to know God more and more. Set a reminder. We could start by planning our time to read the Bible faithfully. Reflect and meditate on the Words.

The more we know the great love of Christ and His abundant grace, the more we will find delight in the Word when we experience its beauty and obey it. And having tasted its sweetness, we could be a blessing to share the eternal Words to others.



MINISTRY LIST

Vocal — Jessica Sutiono
Musician — Raynaldo Ali
Multimedia — Budi Sendjaja
Lighting — Budi Sendjaja
Sound — Steven Santika
Usher — Elbert Pranoto
Translator — Elbert Pranoto
Caring — Felix Hariyadi
Dancer — Priska Sunaryo
Drama — Jennifer Chandra
Sunday School — Reinetta Tanujaya
Hospitality — Tasmin Ifah
Intercessor — Monica Haryanto
Mission — Felix Chietra
Media Art — Sonia Pranatha
Community Kitchen — Yolanda Tjong
Cultivated Podcast — Ravello Satria
Youth — Rio Susanto



*The gift of sonship to God becomes
ours not through being born, but
through being born again.*

J. I. PACKER

