

Loving Yourself

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Asked by Jewish scholars which commandment is the greatest, Jesus cited Deuteronomy 6:4-5. *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.* What Jewish people know as the “Shema”—the quintessential Jewish statement of faith—is vitally important for Christians, too: **God, the LORD is one.** Jesus reiterated, *And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.* Jesus continued: *The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these* (Mark 12:29-30, ESV).

When we focus on God, we’re not embroiled in present chaos or entangled by future fears. Relying on God rather than people, places, or things, we can live a life of peace, fully confident in His love. We know God sent Jesus so we can have eternal life in Him (see John 3:16). **We need to apply what we know.** Emotionally, spiritually, mentally, and physically, we can choose to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and strength—then follow Jesus’ directive to love ourselves and our neighbors.

Loving ourselves includes:

1. **Vulnerability:** confident in God’s unchanging love, we’re able to share who we really are without worrying what others think of us (Psalm 34:5; Proverbs 29:25, Romans 1:16).
2. **Contentment:** satisfied in God’s salvation, we live for His glory, pursuing righteousness rather than controversy or the world’s temporary satisfaction (1 Timothy 6:4-12; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20).
3. **Fearlessness:** not distracted by the world’s uncertainties, we live as God’s ambassadors, boldly proclaiming His love (Psalm 27:1; 2 Corinthians 5:20; Philippians 4:7).
4. **Hopefulness:** anchored in Christ, we look at life through the lens of His Word, aware He alone is our hope and strength (Hebrews 6:18-19; Hebrews 12:1-2).
5. **Serenity:** even when we experience life’s inevitable suffering and challenges, our souls are at rest in the Lord (Isaiah 30:15; Romans 5:1-5; 2 Timothy 2:3-13).

In *Practicing the Presence of People*, Mike Mason says, “Love for self is not selfishness, because the way I see myself is like a pair of glasses through which I look at the world. If my image of myself is poor, then my vision will be warped so that I cannot see beauty in others.... Jesus’ second great commandment implies that we will love others only to the extent that we love ourselves. The command might be better understood by putting the words, ‘You will’ in front of it: ‘You will love your neighbor as yourself.’ That is, the feelings you have toward yourself will inevitably be projected upon others. If you do not love yourself, you will not love your neighbor. If you are not real to yourself, no one else will be real to you either.”

1 Corinthians 13 describes love as *patient and kind*. That includes speaking kindly to ourselves (with patient and gentle self-talk). Real love *does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful [and] rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.* We need to be confident in God’s love for us before we try to share His love with others. Otherwise, it’s far too easy to rely on others for the hope found in God alone.

To help you love yourself, you can work through *Core Healing from Trauma*, a biblical counseling workbook I wrote for individuals or groups, available on Amazon (<https://cutt.ly/ifl85nO>). To manage the impact of life’s challenges, you can also watch “Strengthening Your Core,” my 12-video series on YouTube at <https://cutt.ly/Or6EiiW> or you can subscribe to my blog at <https://corehealingfromtrauma.com/>.