



Loving Yourself— What does the Bible Say?

Jesus narrowed the most significant priorities of life to just two: **Loving God**—with all your heart, soul, and mind—and **loving others**, as you already do love yourself (Matthew 22:36-40). Contrary to a deluge of humanistic teachings, there is no third commandment to “love yourself” in this key passage of Scripture.

Our inherent “love of self” does not need to be encouraged by God or others. Apart from Christ, each of us responds to all aspects of life by how things affect us personally. That’s not because of any great dislike we have for ourselves (Ephesians 5:29). Instead, our love of self is, by nature, the pivot point for all of life.

Prior to believing in Jesus Christ, none of us loved God or loved others as described in the Bible. No one can love in that manner unless there is a personal spiritual transformation (2 Corinthians 5:17). This change begins with belief in Jesus for eternal life (John 3:16) and progresses by the power of GOD’S Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18) through the application of God’s Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Our love for God and love for others are typically evidenced by how we respond to situations of life. Expressions of love, or lack of them, reveal a biblically sound or an unbiblical, deficient perspective toward the two greatest priorities of life.

With a biblically sound perspective that begins with faith in Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9), we learn to love God and can grow in our love for Him. This is accomplished by the Holy Spirit’s power working in us as we obey Scripture (1 John 5:3). If we have an inadequate understanding of loving God, we will disregard God’s perspective on matters of life. As a result, we will do what we want (live by fleshly desires and self-oriented feelings) and often violate clear directives of Scripture with surprising impunity (see Galatians 5:13-17).

With a biblically sound perspective, we will love others (1 John 4:7-11) and grow in that love. We will do what is best for others, considering them as more important than ourselves (Philippians 2:3-4). With an unbiblical and distorted perspective, however, we place ourselves as the first priority and have little concern for others except in response to the supposed benefits they bring to us. Therefore, our feelings and desires determine what is “best” when responding to others. Sadly, we often remain oblivious or unconcerned that we have created significant problems and heartache for others by our love of self.

The motivation to love God and others will be steadfast as we stay focused on Jesus (Hebrews 12:1-2), the Supreme Example of authentic love. When we obey Christ and do all to please Him, we will grow in the knowledge of His will (Colossians 1:9-10); and our love for God and others will increase. As a result, the two greatest priorities of life will not be a subject to discuss but will be a way of life.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Matthew 22:36-40, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. **On these two commandments** depend all the Law and the Prophets.” (*emphasis added*)

Ephesians 5:29, For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church.

2 Corinthians 5:17, Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

2 Corinthians 3:18, And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, and being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

2 Timothy 3:16-17, All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

Ephesians 2:8-9, For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

1 John 5:3, For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

Galatians 5:13-17, For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

1 John 4:7-11, Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Philippians 2:3-4, Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Hebrews 12:1-2, Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Colossians 1:9-10, And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.