

Day 2

Love Your Neighbour as You Love Yourself

START WITH HEART

Lord, as You speak please help me listen with my whole heart and Holy Spirit please meet me today and make me more like Jesus.

Mark 12:37-40

37 Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: "Love your neighbour as yourself." 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

This verse is echoed many times through the Bible in both the Old and the New Testaments. (James 2:8, Matthew 19:19, Matthew 22:39, Galatians 5:14, Leviticus 19:34, Luke 10:27, Leviticus 19:18, Mark 12:33, Romans 13:9.)

One question that God seems to be challenging me with lately is, "Do I really love my neighbour if I don't really love myself?" This verse about loving your neighbour as yourself is often coupled with "love the Lord your God with all your heart and all our soul and all your mind" and is mentioned by Jesus so it really feels like an important verse to understand and to put into practice.

So many women today struggle with feelings of inferiority, feeling less-than, not good enough, comparing ourselves, judging ourselves and having negative thought patterns about who we are. My concern is that sometimes these negative thoughts that fill our day are debilitating – I am not a good enough... wife, daughter, friend,

mom, manager, homemaker, Christian, prayer warrior etc. These thoughts can sometimes overwhelm us and we can't see how God could possibly use us. All we can see are the many ways that we need to change, to do more and to be more.

The challenge with these patterns is that it's easily interpreted as "Good Christian behaviour" because you put others before yourself, you seem self-sacrificing and don't demand attention which in itself isn't wrong. But in these negative views of yourself you also don't glorify God. You don't see the value that God sees in you and how He wants to use you. This type of thinking often leads to inactivity because you just feel that you aren't good enough.

God lifts us out of these phases by showing us His love. We can't do any of what he's asked us to do without God. We would keep on failing, keep on getting exhausted and keep on getting to the end of ourselves if we try to do anything without Him.

It's such a relief that Jesus is our example. Jesus knew who he was because of the time spent with the Father. There was no doubt about His purpose here on earth. He loved so much, and He doesn't compare Himself, He doesn't doubt what God is able to do through Him. He acknowledged who He is - without hesitation or doubt. So, our confidence, our ability to love ourselves and to therefore love others is from God and who He says we are. Not who the world says we are or even who we say we are. Rather who does God say we are?

So, by spending time with God and reading His word we learn that we can't love our neighbour or ourselves without loving God and we can't do any of these things without accepting the love of God. God's love changes us and as we soak up more of God's love, we can then love others and ourselves.

But in many ways this verse still makes me feel uneasy because it pushes me out of my comfort zone. It feels selfish to love myself. This "love yourself" type of message is something the popular world often tells us. We should love ourselves, appreciate ourselves, look after ourselves. "Me time", "you are worth it", "you are enough", are some of the slogans we hear in the advertising world. So, it is important to differentiate between the modern world's idea of loving ourselves and God's way of

loving ourselves. As we dive deeper into understanding what God means to “love yourself” it’s so vital that we do not make this a worldly perspective. It is important the love I have for myself and therefore others comes from God.

There are so many verses about our worth in God:

- Psalm 139: 13-16 speaks about how God created you and me and knows us intimately and has a unique plan and purpose for each one of us.
- Ephesians 3:16-19 speaks of the love of God. Jesus dying for us is a great demonstration of our value and worth. True freedom and self-worth are found only in Christ. God’s opinion is the only one that matters. When we find our identity or significance in anything other than Christ, we will always be disappointed. Who I am depends on who God is.
- John 15:15 God chose us to bear fruit.
- John 1:12 We are children of God.
- Genesis 1:27 You are created in God’s image

So, it’s very clear to me that I can’t love myself by myself. And that a love for myself isn’t because I am good anyway. Crazy right! We have to look to Christ in order to realise what love is and it’s only through Christ that there is anything to love.

But there is still the command to love our neighbour as ourselves.

So perhaps the crux of loving my neighbour as myself is accepting myself as Jesus accepted me and therefore accepts my neighbour. We are redeemed not because of what we do but because of who Christ is and what He did for us on the cross. You can’t love yourself by looking at yourself – we are broken, sinful and hurt. We need to look at the Father's love.

Now that we have looked at who we are in Christ which builds our ability to love ourselves and others it’s important to look how we can practically love ourselves. 1 Corinthians 13 is often read in the context of marriage or friendship. I was challenged with looking at these verses from the perspective of love for myself through Christ.

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Think about the above verse in a personal way by looking at these questions:

- Are you patient with yourself when you make a mistake?
- Are you kind to yourself when you aren't as disciplined as you had hoped?
- Do you envy others because you feel you are less than them?
- Do you dishonour yourself in the way you speak or think negatively about who you are?
- Do you get easily angry with yourself?
- Are you keeping a record of your wrongs?
- Do you delight in the truth of who God says you are, or do you listen to the lies?

We can only love ourselves when we see ourselves through the eyes of Jesus. We are worthy because of Jesus. 1 Corinthians 13 is a really practical way of beginning to think about how we can love ourselves because of who we are in Christ. And remember that the goal is not just to love ourselves. We love to glorify God – to show how much he loves us. Our goal isn't to our own glory, it's for God's glory. We are created and redeemed for the glory of God. Isaiah 49:3, Isaiah 43:7, Isaiah 36:21 – 32.

JOURNALING QUESTIONS:

1. What are the patterns of negative self-talk/beliefs that I have in my heart that go against who God says that I am?
2. Write about how much God loves you and who He says you are
3. How you can show God's love to yourself using the tips from 1 Corinthians 13?

Thank You Lord that You are the great I AM (YHWH). Please help me to remember that when I feel that I am not good enough you say I AM. I pray that through your

Holy Spirit you will guide me to change any negative views or thoughts of myself so that I can glorify you. May my whole heart belong to you and may I be obedient to your command to love my neighbour as I love myself.

WORSHIP SONG:

Who You Say I Am – Hillsong Worship (Album “There Is More”)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lKw6uqtGFfo>

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