

Love Your Neighbor As You Love Yourself.

By Sarah (Maxie) Kamalski

I've been thinking about self love for the past few months. What is healthy self love? I find it deeply significant that the second most important thing Jesus said for us to do is to love others as you love yourself. If I understand this sentence right, this means that loving ourselves is the fundamental place where we start before we are able to love others. And loving others is vitally important to God. So loving ourselves, in order to love others well, must be equally as important.

Maybe we find it hard to love others because we find it quite hard to love ourselves. I wonder if we always try find fault with the people we try to love because we really are struggling to find ways to love and accept ourselves. The void that is left from not loving yourself cannot be filled by anyone else. Not even God himself can replace the love He intended you to show toward your own heart.

I think we often confuse self-obsession, selfishness, self-indulgence and self-centeredness as a form of self love. But in actual fact, that's one of the two sides of not loving yourself. You either walk towards the self-centered way, making out as if you are the ruler of your world, everyone coming your way because you need to make sure you feel the power to try and fill the void of self acceptance and love, or you go the people pleasing route. You seek to fill the void with recognition and love from others, bending over backwards to help others, even to the point of harming yourself.

Neither of those two extremes is what I think Jesus meant when He spoke these words. I think he was trying to remind us that we will only truly be able to love and care for others to the degree that we love and care for our own hearts. Nurturing and caring for your own heart is vital. Accepting and celebrating who you truly are can only happen if you know you are eternally loved by a constant, eternal, undying love. Until we find the One who shows us eternal, undying love, we cannot love ourselves nor others well, from a pure heart.

To love God and others we must first accept His love for us which helps us then open our own love for ourselves. Only then will we be able to truly and deeply love those around us well.

(Note: This article was recently written for **EKerk**, an online South African teaching ministry).