

The Art of Being Yourself #5: Loving Yourself and Living for Others
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Jesus is talking with his friends, his students, and two of them have been saying they want to sit on his right and on his left when he becomes King, because they want to be in great glory with him.

Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask."

"What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.

They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."

"You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"

"We can," they answered.

Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."

When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:35-45)

Self-love in the Bible

This idea of self-love is fundamental to the Old Testament's law code:

"Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD." (Lev. 19:18)

Jesus assumes self-love when reaffirms the greatest of the Old Testament laws:

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 neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matt 22:37-40)

Paul, in speaking to husbands, assumes that they love themselves first:

"...Husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself." (Eph 5:28)

Jesus doesn't correct this attitude and tell us that we really shouldn't love ourselves. Instead, he says that we should love others **as we love ourselves**.

Narcissism-----Self Love-----Loss of Self

Self love is a horse that you can fall off either side of. On the one hand a person can love themselves in such a way that they are selfish and narcissistic.

But falling off the other side of the horse are those that are self-less in the negative sense - of loss of self. This can take the form of codependence—in which the person's needs are met in an unhealthy way through their relationships.

So what does loving ourselves have to do with living for others? When Jesus speaks to his disciples, he's assuming self-love, and a desire for good things. "Whoever wants to become great among you..."

Jesus' radical notion is that true greatness is intrinsically related to servanthood.

Leadership and Servanthood

Because power and leadership can be abused and can be dark in the hands of fallen people -- because Jesus has warnings about it -- some people get distrustful about any form of leadership or the exercise of power. They don't initiate, they don't challenge, they don't stretch those who are around them.

They hold back from leading when they ought to lead, and they hold others back from leading. That's not a good thing. Their families, their churches, their organizations suffer. When people aren't envisioned and challenged and stretched to grow, they suffer.

To lead is a good thing. At the very beginning, the Bible says that God created human beings to be fruitful, to multiply, to fill the earth, to work it, to be productive. Jesus doesn't reject leadership or even the use of power or greatness for that matter, but he redefines it, he redeems it.

As he says here, Jesus himself is the ultimate example of redeemed leadership. He says, "I didn't come to be served," which is generally the measure of leadership in our world. How many people are below me, serving me?

He says, "I came to serve." That's what servants do. Here's a real key point. In Jesus, to lead is to serve. In Jesus, leadership is simply one form of servanthood.

People who love themselves in the best way: are in touch with their God-given aspirations and dreams, understand that they've been made in the image of God, and are seeking to understand the true self that God has created them to be. They're people who understand that living for others means leading through servanthood. That in being servants we are not debasing or lowering or losing ourselves, but we are expressing the very essence of who God is—a community of love.