

Should I Love Myself or Hate Myself?

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The following is an excerpt from *Slaying Your Giants*.

(Available online. You can also purchase a separate discussion guide for small group study with Q&A—up to 20 sessions if you study entire book.)

To love self or not to love self. That is the question. Jesus said, "You shall love your neighbor *as yourself*" (Matt. 22:39).

I love me.

He also said, "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even *his own life*, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26).

I love me not.

These two apparently contradicting verses, both spoken by Jesus, make me wonder, "Should I love me, or love me not? If God loves me, shouldn't I love me?" And here's a bonus question. If Jesus commanded me to love everyone, why does he now tell me to hate?

No, Jesus wasn't commanding us to despise mom and dad. The biblical word "hate" doesn't always mean to "cease loving." In this case, it is used as an idiom of preference, where one person is preferred over another. When Jesus says you must hate your relatives and yourself, he means that you must favor him above everyone else. Christ wants to lead you, rather than letting anyone else control your life.

However, some people wrongly believe they must hate themselves—the very souls Jesus created and died for. If that were true, you should *want* to go to hell, which would be the ultimate hatred of self. Obviously, that can't be right. You would be fulfilling Satan's will, not God's.

The devil desperately wants you to see yourself as a worthless creature with no reason to live. He wants you to take your eyes off Christ and place them on yourself. Then you'll become focused inwardly instead of upwardly. Inferiority blinds you from seeing yourself as God's unique creation with a wonderful purpose to fulfill.

Author Leanne Payne has said, "If we are busy hating the soul that God loves and is in the process of straightening out, we cannot help others. Our minds will be riveted on ourselves—not on Christ who is our wholeness."

The Comparison Trap

A man told his psychiatrist, "Doc, I think I have an inferiority complex. Please help me." The doctor ran a series of elaborate tests, then called his patient back into his office to discuss the results.

"Please have a seat," the doctor said. "I have good news and bad news. The good news is you don't have an inferiority complex."

"That's great," the relieved man said. "What's the bad news?"

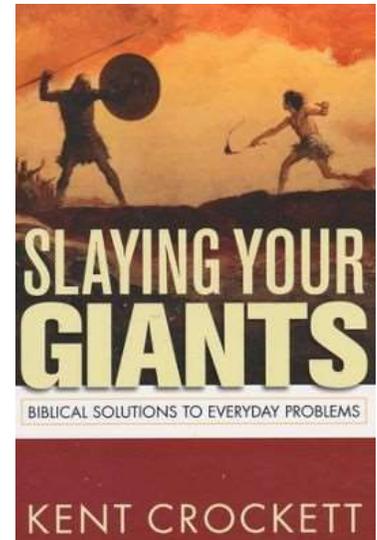
"The bad news is you really are inferior."

Many people try to attain self-worth by comparing themselves with others. They think feeling superior will increase their self-esteem. However, comparison usually makes most people feel inferior. Paul warned about the dangers of using others as a measuring stick when he wrote,

For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding. (2 Cor. 10:12)

When Moses sent the twelve men to spy the land of Canaan, ten spies compared themselves with the people living there and immediately felt inferior. They said, "All the people whom we saw in it are men of great size . . . and we became like grasshoppers *in our own sight*, and so we were in their sight" (Num. 13:32, 33).

The way you see yourself determines how you believe others view you. The ten spies saw themselves as grasshoppers ("in our own sight") and believed their enemies also saw them that way ("so we were in their sight"). If you see yourself as inferior, then you believe everyone else sees you as



inferior. If you view yourself as a grasshopper, you will act like a grasshopper. I haven't seen any grasshoppers beating up giants lately. Have you?

Whenever you measure yourself with others, you wrongly interpret your self-worth. The comparison trap can be devastating. Someone is always bigger, stronger, faster, prettier. Just when you think you are winning the rat race, you run into faster rats. It's a frustrating way to live.

Mirror, Mirror, on the Wall

When you look into the mirror, you see the most unlovable creature gawking back at you. An inferiority complex draws your attention to four areas of introspection that produce self-hatred.

Physical appearance

Self-image is the way you view yourself. It's the self-portrait that hangs in the gallery of your mind. Some people have considered committing suicide because they hate the way they look. This is not the kind of "hating self" that Christ meant.... (continued)...

Intelligence

Don't let your IQ determine your self-worth. God makes his Albert Einsteins and his Forrest Gumps. He has also made sure that no one will ever know everything....(continued)...

Abilities

The master in the parable of the talents distributed five talents to one slave, two to another, and to another one, "each according to his own ability" (Matt. 25:15). God doesn't give everyone the same abilities. Some people may be extremely gifted in one area, while others are gifted in other ways...(continued)..

Success

Self-worth should never be measured by achievement either. Years ago a successful businessman lost over a million dollars in a bad investment...(continued)....

Other reasons for self-hate

People hate themselves for other reasons...(continued)...

Healthy Self-Image

Jesus said, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:39). Why is this important? It's because you can't honestly tell someone that God loves them if you don't believe it about yourself...(continued)...

"Self" can make one person feel superior and someone else feel inferior. Both attitudes are wrong because everyone is equally valuable in God's sight. No one is greater or lesser in value than anyone else. It's important to understand that "self" can mean a couple of things. It can mean "the person God created you to be," which is good, or it can mean "having a selfish attitude," which is bad. The Lord wants you to love yourself as his creation, but to hate your selfish attitudes...

(continued)...

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