

Session 8 Loving Ourselves in the Grace of God

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The foundational premise in this teaching series is that God loves us with the same intensity that God loves God (Jn. 15:9; 17:23). To abide in this love includes agreeing with how He loves us. The ultimate statement of our worth is that Jesus loves us in the way that the Father loves Him.
⁹“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. (Jn. 15:9)
- B. The redeemed are to see and love themselves in light of the truths of Jesus’ work on the cross, of His love and delight for us, and of our value to Him. We love ourselves in the very love that God has for us and for God’s glory.
³⁹“And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Mt. 22:39)
- C. Bernard of Clairvaux spoke of living in *the blessedness of loving oneself in God and for God’s sake*—to be jealous to be all that He called us to be for His sake.
- D. We are to behold the quality of love that the Father has for us and refuse the false humility that minimizes how much *God enjoys loving us* and how He wants us to *enjoy being loved by Him*.
¹Behold [focus on] what manner [quality] of love the Father has bestowed on us... (1 Jn. 3:1)
- E. He delights in *the person that He made us to be* in His grace and love. We love “the person” who Jesus loves, died for and made new in the grace of God. By seeing ourselves as ones that God loves, we are empowered to love ourselves so as to grow in love, gratitude, humility and purity.
- F. There is a deep connection between loving God, self, and others. These truths do not impact us best when separated from each other. We do not love others well if we are overwhelmed with the “emotional traffic” of rejection, insecurities, fear, comparisons, bitterness, defensiveness, etc.
- G. God created each of us in a unique way as His workmanship (Eph. 2:10). We magnify Jesus as we love ourselves in agreement with the riches of grace (v. 7) and honor His “investment” in us.
⁷...that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ...¹⁰For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. (Eph. 2:7-10)
- H. We are to focus on who we are in Christ, not who we are according to the flesh or in man’s eyes; in other words, according to how we look, much money, influence, or gifting we have. If we see who we are according to the Spirit (or in God’s eyes; Rom. 8:9), then we can love who we are without despising our appearance, status, gifting, or ministry assignment (even if it is small).
¹⁶From now on, we regard no one according to the flesh...¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he [our spirit] is a new creation; old things have passed away...all things have become new. (2 Cor. 5:16-17)
⁹You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. (Rom. 8:9)

II. EMBRACING GOD’S VALUES IN LOVING OURSELVES RIGHTLY

- A. God does not agree with man’s fleshly view of what is weak, ugly, and worthless. He sees what man calls weak, and anoints it to overcome what appears strong according to the flesh.
²⁷God has chosen the [so called] foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and...the [so called] weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty (1 Cor. 1:27)
- B. God sees our physical appearance, abilities, and service very differently from how we see them.
⁷“Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature...for the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” (1 Sam. 16:7)
- C. The premise of loving ourselves in the grace of God is to agree with what God values. God sees *eternal values* as superior to temporal values, and He sees our *growth in godliness* as superior to our external achievements when evaluating the success of our lives and rewarding us.
²⁶For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? ²⁷For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. (Mt 16:26–27)
- D. The Lord is so consistent in His values that when Jesus came to earth, for 30 years there was nothing about His appearance or achievements that attracted people to Him in a special way.
²He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. ³He is despised and rejected by men...and we did not esteem Him. (Isa. 53:2–3)
- E. Self-hatred comes from seeing our worth and success according to the flesh, and thus by comparing ourselves to others and evaluating our lives by the values of this present evil age.
¹²They measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. (2 Cor. 10:12)
⁴...who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age... (Gal. 1:4)
- F. We must love ourselves rightly or according to the Scripture. We love ourselves in Christ and “hate” the lifestyle that resists His leadership. We are to “deny” selfishness that embraces fleshly actions and attitudes contrary to God’s grace or the fruit of the Spirit and the 8 beatitudes (Mt. 5).
²⁶“If anyone...does not hate ...his own life he cannot be My disciple. (Lk. 14:26)
²⁴“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross.” (Mt. 16:24)
- G. Paul prophesied that love for oneself according to the flesh increases in the end times (2 Tim. 3).
¹But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ²For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money... ⁴lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God... (2 Tim. 3:1–4)

- H. As Christians we are to view ourselves in terms of who we are in Christ (dignity), yet acknowledge the sinful desires that result from our fallenness (depravity)—we simultaneously love and hate our life. The gospel emphasizes self-denial and the joy of fulfillment in Christ. When we clearly see this tension, we can love well; when unclear about it, we stumble more.
- I. Those who love themselves according to the flesh are preoccupied with themselves; those who love themselves according to the Spirit are not preoccupied with themselves. One evidence of loving ourselves according to the flesh is being discontent and preoccupied with wanting to be someone else. Paul was content in doing God’s will, because God valued it.

¹¹ *...for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content... (Phil. 4:11)*

⁸ *...and having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. ⁹But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts. (1 Tim. 6:8–9)*

- J. Paul had great accomplishments in the flesh, but did not evaluate his life by them (Phil. 3:3-8).
- ³*For we...rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh...⁴*If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so...⁵a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee...⁶concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. ⁷But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. ⁸Yet I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ...for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain [experience more] Christ. (Phil. 3:3–8)**

III. CROWNED WITH GLORY

- A. The redeemed are crowned with glory and honor in God’s grace. Many believers despise who they are—they only see themselves according to the flesh, in comparison to others, and according to the values of this age. They have received God’s glory, but don’t see the reality of it.

⁷*You have crowned him with glory and honor... (Heb. 2:7)*

⁷*We speak the wisdom of God...ordained before the ages for our glory...” (1 Cor. 2:7)*

- B. The glory of our life *in Christ* is hidden from our eyes and the eyes of others (Col. 3:1-4). We died, i.e., in God’s eyes *our old life, failure, and identity outside of Christ is gone*. The full truth of our life is hidden in this age.

² *...set your mind on things above ...³You died, and your life is hidden with Christ...*

⁴*When Christ...appears, then you will appear with Him in glory. (Col 3:2-4)*

- C. Our many small acts of obedience, including our prayers, are glorious in God’s eyes. Our life may seem uneventful but every act of obedience matters to God. He remembers and rewards every act of obedience, even giving a cup of water (Mt. 10:42). When we see the value of our small deeds, we’re empowered to love who we are in Christ and see our life as successful.

¹⁷*“Well done...you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.” (Lk. 19:17)*

- D. We pray to see how God sees and values us as His glorious inheritance (Eph. 1:18). We love ourselves for God's sake, so that He fully receives His inheritance in our lives. I encourage us to pray, "Lord, let me see what You see and feel what You feel about my life."
¹⁷...the Father of glory may give to you...revelation in the knowledge of Him...¹⁸that you may know...what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints... (Eph. 1:17-18)
- E. The beauty that Jesus possesses is the very beauty that He gives His people (Ps. 90:17). Seeing this beauty empowers us to overcome the spirit of heaviness and to love ourselves (Isa. 61:3).
¹⁷Let the beauty of the Lord...be on us, and establish the work of our hands for us. (Ps. 90:17)
³...to give them beauty for ashes...the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness... (Isa. 61:3)
- F. In Luke 15, Jesus told three parables, revealing God's personality and how He pursues us, enjoys us, shows us mercy, and feels deep affection as He rejoices over us. The truth most emphasized here is that God rejoices over us and enjoys restoring people (Lk. 15:4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 23, 24, 32). The Father enjoys His people even in the process of restoring us to relationship with Him.
³²It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive." (Lk. 15:32)
- G. Our greatest emotional need is to have the assurance that we are enjoyed by God even in our weakness. Every person was created with a longing to be delighted in and enjoyed by God. A prevailing stronghold in many today is related to rejection and shame. This stronghold hinders our ability to receive God's love and to enjoy Him, His Word, and the work of the kingdom.
- H. We are to love all those whom God loves, including ourselves. We embrace His will by loving ourselves as He loves us. This is one aspect of His will being done on earth as it is in heaven.
- I. As we trust Jesus' leadership related to our appearance and abilities we will trust Him in other areas of life. Most agree that "the depths of the earth" (v. 15) is a figure for the mother's womb.
¹³For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. ¹⁴I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. ¹⁵My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth [our mother's womb]. ¹⁶Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them. ¹⁷How precious are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! ¹⁸If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand... (Ps 139:13–18)

IV. QUESTIONS FOR SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION (i.e., FCF FRIENDSHIP GROUPS)

1. Which point in this session would you like more understanding of?
2. Which point most inspired or challenged you? Why? What will you do differently to apply it?
3. Which point do you want to impart to a younger believer? Why? How will you elaborate on it?
4. What is one point in this session that needs to be emphasized to the larger Body of Christ? Why?