

Self-Love and the Celebrity Trap

- I. Man by nature does not suffer from a lack of self-love. **EPH 5:29**.
- A. It is to be admitted that one cannot *love neighbor as himself* (**GAL 5:14**) if one has NO love of self or who is at least so self-deceived as to act in such a way.
 - B. It may also be observed that if one has a *perverse* love of self which glories in self-destructive conduct that he cannot biblically love his neighbor as himself. The man who “loves” himself by self-mutilation or heroine addiction will not make points with God by helping his neighbor do likewise.
 - C. **MAT 7:12** is not an order for a masochist to inflict pain or humiliation on another.
 - D. The self-love which regulates “love thy neighbor as thyself” must be in accord with what God has said is good for men to have and enjoy, such as life, liberty, property and the pursuit of happiness, God Himself being the chief happiness. **ACT 17:26-28**.
- II. The first characteristic of the perilous times of the last days is that “...men shall be lovers of their own selves...” (**2TI 3:2**). Self becomes God who is all-important and whose will is ultimate. **PHIL 3:19 c/w ISA 14:12-14** .
- A. Commensurate with this is a manifestation of pride called *self-esteem*, which has been promoted as critical to healthy personal and social development.
 - 1. self-esteem: Favourable appreciation or opinion of oneself.
 - 2. esteem: (v) To estimate the value of, assign (a value) to; to value, assess, appraise. In favourable sense: To regard as valuable; to think highly of; to feel regard for, respect.
 - 3. pride: The quality of being proud. A high or overweening opinion of one's own qualities, attainments, or estate, which gives rise to a feeling and attitude of superiority over and contempt for others; inordinate self-esteem.
 - B. Scripture condemns *pride* (**JAM 4:6, 16**) and *self-esteem* (**ROM 12:3**) while promoting *humility, lowliness of mind* (**PHIL 2:3-4**) and *self-denial*. **MAT 16:24**.
 - C. Real-life empirical data concurs with Scripture against egocentric psychology.
 - 1. “People with high self-regard, the evidence says, possess low regard for others. Instead of seeking opportunities to serve others, they seek to manipulate others. Furthermore, people with high self-regard tend to anti-social behavior. People incarcerated in maximum security prisons have very high self-regard, for example...So, to the question, 'Isn't it possible for a child to have high self-esteem and a high level of respect for others?' The answer is an unequivocal no.” (Dr. John Rosemond, The Washington Times, April 12, 2009)
 - 2. “Research done by a number of objective folks, most notably Roy Baumeister at Florida State University, has clearly shown that high self-esteem is closely associated with anti-social inclinations. Unfortunately, it's taken more than a decade for the research in question to bridge the gap between academia and popular culture. At this writing, two generations of parents were persuaded to devote themselves to creating child-rearing environments that were rich in praise and reward but lacking in reality, elevating their children to idol status in the process.... Today's typical parent seems to think that his/her child is the only fish in the pond worth noticing, which is really too bad for his/her child. It's bad for all of us, actually, because the research also finds that the higher a person's self-regard, the lower his regard for others. (It is also noteworthy that high self-esteem puts the individual at high risk for bouts of severe depression.) People with high self-esteem

want to be paid attention to and served. They believe in their entitlement....today's young college graduates, by and large, are not looking for work; rather, they are looking for benefits packages (i.e., entitlements). They can't handle criticism, I'm told. (Dr. John Rosemond)

3. "Researchers have discovered that people with high self-esteem tend to overestimate their abilities. If anything, they are over-confident. As a result, they don't cope well when life deals them a bad hand or their performance doesn't live up to their self-expectation. For those reasons, they are highly prone to depression. Because they believe that anything they do is deserving of reward, they also tend to underperform. (Dr. John Rosemond)

III. A major current cultural example of the love of self and the bad psychology of self-esteem is the media-driven dynamic of the *cult of celebrity*. "Everyone" thinks they need to be famous.

A. What is the driving force behind the desire for *celebrity* (the condition of being much extolled or talked about; famousness, notoriety)?

1. "The short answer is ego. Insatiable ego...The desire to become a star requires an incredible appetite for attention and approval."
(Breitbart and Ebner, Hollywood Interrupted)
2. Biblically, this is the *pride of life* (**1JO 2:16**) which expresses itself through *vanity* (worthlessness, self-conceit and desire for admiration), against which we must fight. **EPH 4:17-18**.
3. This inordinate desire for drawing attention to oneself in competition with others is a factor in the increasing display of flesh and of outrageous behavior.
4. But for all of the glory of celebrity, the celebrity world is commonly characterized by a dissatisfied existence, emotional distress unto self-destruction.
5. "The problem is, living off approval and applause, and deriving your sense of self-worth from the praise of others, may feel great, but it also produces great problems. When it comes to being worshipped, human beings just don't make very good gods, something the Good Book warns about repeatedly. Worship is meant for God alone. But when humans are idolized and worshipped – and when they lower themselves to accept that homage and bask in its glory – major conflict mysteriously appears within the idolized 'star.'" (David Kupelian, The Secret Curse of Hollywood Stars)

B. The internet has made the cult of celebrity the stuff of the everyday person.

1. Virtually anyone can have their own website or YouTube channel.
 - a. Everyone can be a star and be the center of attention and admiration.
 - b. But if everyone is a star, the distinction of stardom vanishes.
 - c. This harsh reality is the stuff of increased self-promotion to stay ahead of the crowd and/or a feeling of desperation, insignificance and depression.
2. Social networking sites are driven by approval ratings: how many "likes" can you get? This is especially an area of concern in young people for whom the approval of peers is so important, though it is not limited to them.
 - a. Too much of what goes on with things like Facebook is little more than the auctioning of oneself for the praise and admiration of others caught up in the same quest for the spotlight. It is vain self-promotion.
 - b. What is promoted as a tool for bringing people closer together and making them happier through connections has turned out to have a backlash effect.
 - c. "Scientists have confirmed that Facebook can make you miserable. A study comparing how young adults felt at different times of the day with their

- Facebook use showed that the more they logged onto the social networking site, the less happy they were. The more the participants had other forms of contact with people, such as face to face or over the phone, they tended to feel better over time....'On the surface, Facebook provides an invaluable resource for fulfilling the basic human need for social connection,' said Ethan Kross, a social psychologist who led the work at the University of Michigan. 'But rather than enhance well-being, we found that Facebook use predicts the opposite result—it undermines it.'" (Richard Gray, Science Correspondent for The Telegraph, art. [Facebook Can Make You Miserable](#))
- d. What has been discovered is that young people in particular (who are yearning for attention, approval and admiration of peers) get caught up in a micro-celebrity game and are crushed emotionally if their lives aren't as beautiful as somebody else's life who gets all the "likes."
3. Similar observations apply to the trend of "selfies" (taking photos of oneself for personal and public admiration).
 - a. This is narcissism and vanity at work. And the hoped-for glories of celebrity and specialness come with various negative effects.
 - b. "Dr. Jessemy Hibbard, a chartered clinical psychologist, said, 'Images are a way for young people to seek approval and attention from their peers. However they can also lead to cyber bullying and issues with self confidence. The majority of teens post the photos in search of assurance and compliments, but they are making themselves vulnerable to negative comments and abuse. It's all about comparison and young people are using social media to measure themselves against others. If a teenager posts a picture and it doesn't get any 'likes' or if it is their birthday and they don't receive a certain number of posts, they see that as an embarrassment. It is seen as an indication that they are not popular. There is an expectation now amongst young people that they should get comments on all of their posts and images....Social media sites have come under scrutiny recently following the suicide of 14 year-old Hannah Smith after she was targeted by trolls on the social networking site Ask.fm.'" (Rosa Silverman et. al., The Telegraph, art. [Selfie Photographs Trend Puts Children at Risk of Abuse](#))
 4. Mind how the aforementioned researchers simply confirm what the Scripture teaches about the error of undue emphasis on self. Scripture is not unscientific.
 5. Remember what Scripture teaches against seeking the praise of men, especially when you are measuring your worth by others' opinions.
 - a. It is not good to have a heavy dietary need for other's praise. **PRO 25:27.**
 - b. It is unwise to measure ourselves among and by ourselves. **2CO 10:12.**
 - c. Paul deemed the opinion of men about himself to be of much less importance than God's opinion of him. **1CO 4:3-4.**
 - d. If your works are good works, who cares if nobody but God takes notice of them? His "likes" are the best and bring the only true satisfaction and peace to the soul. **ISA 49:4; 1JO 3:21; HEB 11:5.**
 - e. We are to love the praise of God more than the praise of men. **JOH 12:43; 5:44.**
 - f. We are particularly warned against being liked by an unbelieving world that we should rather hope would "unfriend" us. **LUK 6:26; JOH 15:19; JAM 4:4.**

- g. People that live for the recognition and praise of other men set themselves up for traps. **PRO 29:5.**
- C. The publishing of detail after detail of oneself (pictures, personal information, desires, plans, gripes, rages, etc.) has other negative implications.
1. The more your life is an open book, the more you are scrutinized. Mind that many employers now scrutinize the online admissions of job-seekers and employees.
 2. The more your life is an open book, the more you set yourself up for exploitation by people who build a fairly accurate profile of you.
 3. Remember what the Scripture says about excessive speech (and digital publishing is a form of speech).
 - a. **(PRO 10:8)** The wise in heart will receive commandments: but a prating fool shall fall.
 - (1) prate: To talk, to chatter: usually dyslogistic, implying speaking much or long to little purpose.
 - (2) One of the reasons a fool doesn't receive commandments is because he spends all his time talking, not listening.
 - (3) One social networking service is appropriately named *Twitter*.
 - AA. twitter: Of a person:...to talk or chatter rapidly in a small or tremulous voice.
 - BB. tremulous: Characterized or affected by trembling or quivering from nervous agitation or weakness, of mental or physical origin; hence, fearful, timorous.
 - CC. Mark it well: the chatterer is telling others by their chattering that they have weaknesses, fears and insecurities. And these the subtle will exploit to bring the chatterer down.
 - b. **(PRO 10:19)** In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.
 - c. **(ECC 5:3)** For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words.
 - d. **(PRO 29:11)** A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.
 - e. **(PRO 17:28)** Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips **is esteemed** a man of understanding.
 - f. **(JAM 1:19)** Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:
 - g. "Wise men talk because they have something to say; fools, because they have to say something." (Plato)
 - h. "They never taste who always drink; They always talk who never think." (Matthew Prior)