

Lovers of Self

Do you ever look at the culture around you and ask, “How did we get here?” We have to use God’s word in order to make sense of the world around us.

❖ **2Ti 3:1-2 (ESV) But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. [2] For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy,**

See if some of these terms sound familiar:

- A. Self-centered
- B. Self-conscious
- C. Self-doubt
- D. Self-harm
- E. Self-pity
- F. Self-service
- G. Self-absorbed
- H. Self-made
- I. Self-help
- J. Self-esteem
- K. Self-control
- L. Self-care
- M. Self-aware
- N. Self-image
- O. Self-love
- P. Self-obsession
- Q. Self-assured
- R. Self-conceited
- S. Self-promoting

“We live in a culture of self love, to put it simply, a culture that is consumed with self love, ego building, self esteem, feeling good about yourself, thinking you’re important, thinking you’re valuable, thinking you’re a hero, thinking you’ve achieved something, thinking you’re worthy of honor. We’re drowning in awards for everything imaginable and unimaginable. Parents are consumed with boosting the egos of their children with every imaginable means, as well as boosting their own sense of self value. This is the generation of self lovers.” **(John MacArthur, The Gospel: Self-Love or Self-Hate?)**

“**Self is the new god**, the new spiritual authority, the new morality. But this puts a crushing weight on the self—one it was never designed to bear. It must discover itself. Become itself. Stay true to itself. Justify itself. Make itself happy. Perform and defend its fragile identity. As my Peloton instructor would say, ‘Validate your greatness.’ But what about the many days when we’re not all that great? The pressure is exhausting. Cue the stats of burnout, anxiety, and mental health.” **(John Mark Comer, Live No Lies)**

“**Be true to yourself.**”

“**Be your authentic self.**”

What is the benefit of being your authentic self

When we are authentic, we stay true to ourselves, and who we genuinely are. We are present in the here and now. **We do what makes us happy**, we follow our passions regardless of who we disappoint, or how it may be perceived by others. Living a life of authenticity is a constant effort, and means sacrifice. Not everyone in our lives will respond well to our authentic self, because of how it may impact them. **We have the opportunity for others to love us and accept us for who we are at our core.** thecenterforgrowth.com

The question we need to consider today as we think about our current cultural climate—is this the correct evaluation of our true self?

What happens when a society is given over to the flesh?

“Theology becomes therapy...The biblical interest in righteousness is replaced by a search for happiness, holiness by wholeness, truth by feeling, ethics by feeling good about one’s self. The world shrinks to the range of personal circumstances; the community of faith shrinks to a circle of personal friends. The past recedes. The Church recedes. The world recedes. All that remains is the self.” **(David Wells)**

The world around us wants to elevate self. The old adage was, “If it feels good do it.” The mantra today is, “If it feels right to me, it is right.” The self now reigns supreme and the result is that, “whatever a person thinks or feels is truth.”

Isaiah, in speaking God’s truth to the nation of Babylon, revealed the heart of the nation, and I believe he puts a magnifying glass on the culture of self we are experiencing now.

❖ **Isa 47:10 (ESV) You felt secure in your wickedness; you said, “No one sees me”; your wisdom and your knowledge led you astray, and you said in your heart, “I am, and there is no one besides me.”**

When we combine the idea of loving ourselves with the idea of whatever I think or feel is true, then we create a culture of expressive individualism, where whatever we think or feel is the governing right of the day. This has led us to a day where sex is politicized, gender is independent of physical biology, the Bible and its truth is canceled because it is seen as outdated, bigoted, and oppressive. If self is god, then anything and everything that tries to dethrone me, must be eliminated. As Isaiah said about Babylon, so can be said about us—**“I am, and there is no one besides me.”**

The problem with this idea of the authentic self is that we cannot be our authentic self or know our authentic self apart from Christ and the truth of scripture. **This is one of the reasons Jesus came in the flesh. He came to reveal to us what our “authentic self” was supposed to be like.**

The actual definition of truth, is that which corresponds to reality. So, ask yourself, is what the world and the culture are telling me about myself, what actually corresponds to the reality inside me? Or is it a man made myth perpetuated by the deceptiveness of sin and Satan? A myth that is meant to enslave me and distract me from seeing my real need for the Lord?

What does scripture tell us about the true nature of the heart of man and ultimately the true nature of self?

The very first reference in God's word to the thoughts of the heart of man is found in Genesis 6:5:

❖ **Gen 6:5 (ESV) The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.**

We are told to love God with all our heart, soul, and might (**Deut. 6:5**), but pride and arrogance can lead our hearts to forget the Lord and lead to our destruction (**Deut. 8:14; Ps. 78:8; Pro. 16:5; Pro. 18:12; Pro. 21:4**). We think we know ourselves, our authentic selves, but the word of God makes it clear that our hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked (**Jer. 17:9; Oba. 1:3**). The only One who truly knows us as we are is the Lord (**1 Sa. 16:7; 1 Ki. 8:39; 1 Ch. 28:9; Pro. 21:2**).

The heart of man is described as hard, hateful, stubborn, unfaithful, hiding iniquity, anger-filled, double minded, denying the reality of God, evil, going astray, perverse, arrogant, unfeeling, inclined to evil, crooked, proud, deceitful, distant from the Lord, sin engraved, sick, false, the well-spring of all kinds of evil, and unbelieving.

Return to the Isaiah 47 passage. The entire passage is the Lord's pronouncement of destruction for Babylon over their love of self, that led to love of pleasure and love of power. It led to a lack of mercy and a deep seated arrogance. Their love of self created within them a stubbornness to listen to correction. In verse 8 and verse 10, the Lord records the same phrase:

- ❖ **“I am, and there is no one besides me.”**
- ❖ **I am—I exist. I am reality. All that I think, all that I feel is all that is real.**
- ❖ **There is no one besides me. All that remains is self. If we are lovers of self we struggle to even see that there is anyone else around us. If there is no one besides me then my needs must be met, my thoughts must be heard, my wishes must be followed. It’s not just that I will be first, I am first.**
- ❖ **Also, since Scripture describes God as the “I AM,” we are in direct conflict. There cannot be two competing “I AM’s.” In order for my self to reign, there can be no other God to compete with me. That’s why “The fool says in his heart there is no God.” In order for myself to truly reign and to truly be free, there can be no other God but me.**
- ❖ **Lovers of self are not capable on their own, of truly loving others and God. It’s ironic, isn’t it, that the two things the Lord told us life was supposed to be all about (Loving God, Loving Others), we are incapable of on our own. Left to ourselves we will only love ourselves. We can give the appearance of loving others, but the moment our little kingdom of self is opposed, we become the victim and the one opposing us must be corrected or removed.**

When you tie this to what Paul describes of the end time days we are living in, it really is a kind of parallel passage:

- ❖ **2Ti 3:1-4 (ESV) But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. [2] For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, [3] heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, [4] treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God...**
- ❖ **Everything we struggle within our own nature, everything we see in our culture, all of these things Paul describes for our times—they are all an issue of the heart and the revelation that our self is broken.**

- ❖ Gender identity is not the issue—self is. Racism is not the problem—self is. Sexuality is not the issue—self is. Substance abuse is not the problem—self is. Human trafficking is not the issue—self is. Discrimination is not the issue—self is.
- ❖ Every issue is a self issue, a heart issue.
- ❖ **Pro 27:19 (ESV) As in water face reflects face, so the heart of man reflects the man.**

So, what is the solution?

We need the Lord to give us a new heart.

- ❖ **Eze 11:19-20 (ESV) And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, [20] that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.**
- ❖ **Eze 36:26-27 (ESV) And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. [27] And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.**
- ❖ **Psa 40:8 (ESV) I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.”**