Christian self-love: get curious, compassionate, creative

Joyce Meyer is one of the world's best-known Christian teachers. She experienced abuse growing up: physical, emotional, sexual, neglect, and psychological. She carried shame, fear and low self-esteem.

For decades, she believed God did not love her personally. She condemned herself and was often impatient, harsh, judgmental, rude, selfish and unforgiving towards others.

Then she spent time praying and speaking aloud the truth of God's love for her.

She began to love herself as Jesus loves her.

Instead of condemning herself when she failed, she got curious.

She began to understand that the reasons why she failed was because she was trying to meet an unmet childhood need for love, safety, protection, affection, and attention that wasn't given in childhood, in unhealthy ways.

Getting curious and compassionate enabled her to understand her true needs and to find healthier ways to have them met.

When she encountered other people at their worst, she wouldn't respond with anger, be a doormat, runaway, or people-please. She began to get curious about their behaviour. She was able to communicate her needs appropriately about their behaviour.

She began the journey of Christian self-love: get curious.

I wonder if that resonates with you?

Have you ever felt like you can be harsh or judgemental with yourself and others when you fail?

Do you ever feel like a doormat for others, allowing them to walk over you?

Do you struggle with people-pleasing?

Do you sometimes run away in moments of confrontation?

If so, that is normal. That's what original sin does.

However, you and I and we need greater self-love: to get curious, compassionate, and creative.

Jesus talks about 3 types of love in the Gospel: love of God, self, and neighbour.

I'm focusing on Christian self-love. Catholic Christians are generally aware of love of God and neighbour. But less aware of Christian self-love.

You and I might think: isn't self-love selfish? Doesn't being a good Catholic mean putting others first and not thinking too highly of ourselves?

St Augustine: "Love the Lord and so learn to love yourselves."[1]

Aquinas: "The love with which a man loves himself is the form and root of friendship."[2]

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[1] St Augustine, Sermon 40 on the New Testament, §7.
[2] St Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, II–II, q.25, a.4

Jesus says: "You must love your neighbour as **yourself**."

Love of self comes before love of neighbour.

Don't we know how to love ourselves naturally?

Romans 7:15, St. Paul asks why he does what he doesn't want, and fail to do what he does want.

In Romans 7:23, St. Paul says that there is a war within us.

You and I know this.

For example, a part of you and me wants to eat all the chocolate or biscuits in the tin.

Another part wants to be healthy and virtuous.

If (or when!) we eat all the chocolates and biscuits, we might feel guilt and shame. Or we might ignore those feelings altogether, and open the other packets!

How does Jesus respond to you and me in those moments?

Look at Jesus encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well.

She had 5 husbands.

Jesus didn't avoid that. He got curious.

Jesus didn't condemn her either. He was compassionate.

Jesus set her free to live a new type of life. Jesus got creative.

What is one thing you keep thinking, feeling, saying or doing that you either avoid or condemn yourself for?

Don't avoid. Get curious.

Don't condemn. Get compassionate.

Don't stay stuck. Get creative: find new ways of meeting those needs.

Self-love: Love yourself as Jesus does.

You will have a natural (supernatural) capacity to love your neighbour, and your enemy.

Prayer

Father, thank you that through Jesus, I know that you love me.

Picture Jesus looking at you with love.

Jesus, come into my heart.

Help me love God with all my heart, soul and mind.

Help me love myself as you love me.

Help me love all people as you love me, too.

To revitalise the Church and transform the world.

In Jesus' name, amen!