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- *What does it mean to love oneself?*

It is the loving God that is in community and communication with you and all people. You're blessed when you recognize that presence, and you're blessed when your response to that awareness is directed towards an acceptance and love of self, and an acceptance and love for all.

You seek to be responsive to life around you with care, love, and insight. That is, of course, the objective that belongs to the path of everyone. What we would like to open your hearts and your spirit vision to at this time is a further understanding of what it means to love oneself, for it is in the experiencing of loving and accepting oneself that there is a perspective of how to be loving toward others.

It is our understanding that those who have the greatest difficulty in relating to others in a loving manner have even more significant challenges to face in loving and accepting themselves. Service to others is offered only from a position of strength. If you wish to serve others in spirit, in faith, you need to continually work toward accepting yourself in spirit and faith. There is no point in emphasizing the truth you already know, that being the sacredness of all, but that, of course, is a fundamental beginning. By accepting your own sacredness, you are able to take the initial steps toward responding in the same manner to others.

But what does it mean to love oneself? First, it is best to delineate what it does not mean. Love of self can never imply a sense of uniqueness, an emphasis on difference, a concern about status. If one feels unique and thinks of separateness, that is not loving oneself. That is building a wall. That wall blocks out any vision beyond its midst. So loving self can never imply separation from the sacredness of others.

Loving self also does not mean one has blessings that are deserved, that are earned, and that one is entitled to. You do not earn a gift; you are given a gift. You do not earn love; you are given, you are offered, that love. You do not earn blessings. You do not earn status in the eyes of God. You do not earn value through your influence. The whole idea of separateness flies in the face, as it were, of what it means to be a reflection, an extension, of God's loving presence.

If you accept having a relationship with yourself that is not described as being special, as being separate, as being above or beyond others, what then does it truly mean when we urge you to love self? What are the reasons for that love? To be loving of self requires a growing acceptance of a sense of being on a path that is illuminated by God. You cannot truly love yourself without bringing to that recognition an understanding or at least an acceptance of the reality of God belonging to that relationship. You love yourself through the light that comes from God.

It is much like an actor on a stage who is illuminated by the lighting, but that lighting has many possibilities. It can be filled with color. It can be blinding in its brightness. It can

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be very brooding in its darkness, but the nature of what takes place on stage is given context in great measure by the lighting. Even without scenery, the lighting provides much context. The actor portraying a character is therefore influenced much by the lighting, by the feel of the place.

So it is with your life. The context of your life in its most significant way is not the presence of lots of people. It isn't given context by how people see you or interpret what you say or do. The context of your life, the character of your life is significantly influenced by the light on your pathway. If you see yourself illuminated by God's presence, you are more able to illuminate the lives of others with that presence, for you are really a reflector. You reflect the light that is upon you. If there is no light, then you are without the illumination. If you reject the presence of God, what you reflect outward is equally empty. If you are bathed in a red light, you reflect some of that light.

Light has its own energy, and that energy belongs to part of what is issued forth from you. Your life has meaning not because of what you do for others. Your life has meaning for how you become receptive to God's light, for in that receptivity, in that openness, you absorb light and you reflect it.

If you wish to transmit God's power of love beyond the confines of your own space, if you have a message you wish to get out, you don't just act or speak. It's the kind of actions you take. It's the ideas that motivate your speech. The source for that is your receptivity to the light that is on your pathway.

Loving oneself, therefore, is an act of loving yourself as God would love you. It is not an abstract idea or a collection of comforting words. Loving yourself as God would love you means above all fully accepting your own divinity and then pursuing, as you can, whatever your path may provide that takes that love and reflects it outward. A musician may have extraordinary technique, but the music is not in the technique. The music is in the message. It is what happens beyond such technical issues. If you are an orator, it isn't just reciting words. It's what those words actually mean. If you wish to convey meaning, you must experience the meaning that those words are intended to convey.

If you wish to act as a reflection of God's love, you have to know what it means to be loved by God. To love yourself, you must love yourself as God would love you. What are we talking about when we speak of love in this sense? We are speaking of a recognition that you and all human beings have within you a spark of the love of the Spirit Center of all. You have within you part of that light, and that light within provides a means for you to eventually reflect the light from God to others.

You can truly never communicate what you have not experienced. All human beings communicate through their own experiences. If you perceive life from your experiences to be judgmental, you will be judgmental. If your experience in life is one of jealousy, then that's what you will communicate. If you experience only difficult personal relationships, you are not equipped to offer a deeply meaningful relationship. How often can you think of those who have been abused becoming the abuser? That is a clear

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example of the human being reflecting what has been experienced. If you wish a heart vision that sees the world beyond, then you must first have a heart vision that sees the light within from God. It all begins with what you experience through the presence of God, through the presence of God's many guides.

You must grow in your perception of God's presence in your own life. It's not a matter of just feeling blessed, for it is easy to feel blessed and feel you are special because you have been blessed, special because you feel others have not been blessed. So, feeling that you are blessed, feeling the benefits of what you see as blessings, in itself does not equip you to communicate God's presence to the lives of others, for as we said, you are not blessed because you deserve or have earned the blessing. If you recognize your blessings as a result as being given such blessings from the loving Spirit Center of God, then you recognize the meaning of that gift and its source, and you take your own sense of self-worth out of the equation. You take the sense of entitlement away from any considerations. You have been blessed, and it is a wonderful gift that you neither deserved nor earned, that you did nothing other than to be open to the reality of its presence.

If you pray for healing, as you know, you are healed not because you ask for God to heal you. The healing you experience is because you are open to the healing that is present. The healing can certainly be felt as a blessing, but most importantly is your acceptance of the reality of how that healing was received. It was a gift with no strings attached. It was a gift independent of who you are or what you say or what you do. It was a gift that was there, and you were open to receive it. The blessing is not that it was given from God; the blessing is that you were open to receive it and to make it your own.

When you understand that, you are beginning to understand the meaning of self-love, for it is an opening to the light which is the love that we refer to, and it is in acknowledging that gift of openness that you are given a vision of what God's blessings, God's presence, God's healing touch truly is. You love self because you are loving the openness that provides for the light around you becoming the light from you. Clearly recognizing and accepting the power of an open heart to receive the light provides the context for your reflecting that light from your pathway. Any efforts to feeling entitled denies the reality of a heart vision, its necessity, and its application.

Serving others is the highest calling, but that service only begins when a godly sense of love is directed toward self. When the heart vision is truly clear, you are filled with that light then. It is an admirable calling to seek ways of promoting a true peace among people and between nations, but communicating that peace does not come from speaking those words that seem to be necessary. They come from a commitment to the meaning behind those words. It is the meaning that you acquire through your own openness that provides the strength to communicate through the heart to others. We communicate with you through your heart vision, and it is through that vision that you find the means of reflecting that loving light.

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Find ways, therefore, of extending a loving heart to yourself. Delete any sense of entitlement. Delete any belief that somehow you have earned or you deserve what comes your way. Acknowledge that the only way of bringing light to your spirit is by openness, and that openness creates the grounds, the context, that moves you to reach out, to serve, to give light, to generate love, to encourage peace.

You are blessed through your openness. You receive light through your openness. You provide God's light to others only through that openness. Consciously seek out that light. Seek a vision of God's presence that is beyond any sense of entitlement or specialness. Avoid building any fences that separate you from others. Embrace the light and make it your own.

Amen.