

# Self-Centeredness

## Introduction

God sends no one away empty except those who are full of themselves (D. L. Moody).

The smallest package in the world is a person wrapped up in himself (Selected).

### Philippians 2:1-4

1. **Self-centeredness is a very, very old problem. The first sin in the world was committed when Satan talked Eve into thinking that her own will was autonomous.**

#### Genesis 3:1-6

2. **Yet, self-centeredness is a peculiarly modern way of thinking, too.**
  - A. **Humanism, the prevailing philosophy of the modern era, elevates the human being to the pedestal once occupied by God and teaches the preeminence and autonomy of the human “self.”**
  - B. **The 1980's were called the “Me Decade” — when many of the idealistic hippies of the 60's and 70's turned into materialistic yuppies.**
  - C. **In the late 70's, Robert J. Ringer’s book, “*Looking Out for Number One*”, was the best-selling book in America for 46 weeks.**

- D. Few words in our vocabulary are used any more than self and its combinations, like self-fulfillment, self-expression.
  - E. Barbara Walters can get interviews that nobody else can get because nearly all her questions give interviewees a chance to talk about themselves.
  - F. There's even a woman's magazine called "*Self*".
3. When a person is preoccupied with himself, that can show up in various ways:
- A. Self-absorption (narcissism).
  - B. Self-glorification (vanity, arrogance, boastfulness).
  - C. Self-service (selfishness, greed).
  - D. Self-will (stubbornness).
  - E. Self-obedience (lawlessness).
4. All of these things are deplorable to the person who takes the Scriptures seriously — they are things that are very destructive.
5. To see just how destructive self-centeredness is, let's look at what happens: to **our relationship to God**, **to others**, and **to ourselves**.

## Religion Toward God Turns Into Idolatry

1. **Idolatry consists of anything which “dethrones” God and puts someone or something else in His place**

Colossians 3:5 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

2. **The substitution of self-will for God’s will is the very essence of sin:**

**Genesis 3:1-6** (previously read)

- A. **We have a vivid picture of what happens when men begin to worship the “creature” rather than the “Creator.”**

**Romans 1:18-25**

- B. **The worship of self is the ultimate idolatry — and it is the direction that all other idolatries are headed.**

3. **“Humanism” is a frightening form of self-worship — but there are many more so called “respectable” forms, equally idolatrous and equally destructive, that “religious” people had better watch out for.**

## Relationships with Other Human Beings Degenerate

1. **When we come to the point of caring for nothing but ourselves, others inevitably suffer.**
  - A. **This is so because the world is “put together” such that society and personal relationships “work” only when human beings act like human beings: outward-oriented personal beings who serve the needs of others.**

Genesis 1:27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Acts 20:35 I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

### 1 John 4:7-11

- B. **When human beings deny their basic nature, turn inward, and act with primary regard to the fulfillment of their own desires, the fabric of society begins to tear apart.**
2. **What is happening to the marriage relationship is but one evidence of the destruction in human relationships that results from the Me-First philosophy.**  
(James Dobson, Straight Talk, pp. 43-45)
3. **In contrast to all of this, the New Testament teaches that personal relationships thrive only when we “submit” ourselves to the needs of others.**

### Philippians 2:3-4

## We Detest the Very Self We Have Come to Worship

1. Self-respect comes from one thing and one thing only: **doing our duty**.
  - A. Doing our duty involves serving the needs of others — selflessly.
  - B. When we become preoccupied with ourselves, we quit serving the needs of others and begin to diminish the foundation on which our self-respect is built.
2. Ironically, the person who is obsessed with “finding himself” and “liking himself” is the very person who is going to do fewest of the things that would truly make it possible for him to like himself.
3. Modern psychiatry or psychotherapy is doing precisely the thing that will make the problem worse: encouraging us to think and talk more about ourselves.  
(Garth Wood, *The Myth of Neurosis*, pp. 3-4)
4. “How can a man come to know himself? Never by thinking, but by doing. Try to do your duty, and you will know at once what you are worth” (Goethe).
5. This is the truth embodied in Jesus’ words that a wholesome self-concept comes not from the Be Somebody philosophy, but the Serve Somebody philosophy.  
**Matthew 20:25-28**

## Conclusion

### 1. Paul predicted a time when “men will be lovers of themselves.”

2 Timothy 3:2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

### 2. Could there be a more apt description of our own age?

### 3. Elders, who are to serve as an example for all of us, are not to be self-willed.

Titus 1:7 For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money,

### 4. Jesus' example is that of selflessness.

**John 13:14-15**

**Philippians 2:5-9**

