

## 2 Timothy 3:1-4 — Danger Of Self Love

**March 14, 2021**

At CrossWinds, we generally go through books of the Bible. God wrote them so we would read them, so that is the way we study them, one verse after another. We study entire books of the Bible, because as Paul said to Timothy later in this book, all Scripture is profitable for teach and correcting. The upside of this is it makes it easy for me to know what to preach the next week. It is simply the next set of verses in the book we are studying. The downside is this forces us to face some Bible verses that are harder to teach and apply than others. Since we believe all Scripture is useful, that simply means we need to work a little harder to mine the gold found in the passages that are more challenging.

All that to say, we have a difficult passage in front of us this morning. It is difficult not because it is hard to understand but because most of the verses are simply a list of 18 descriptions. In one sense, this makes me feel like I am preaching from the dictionary. It is also difficult to preach because it is not a very comforting passage. It is a very honest and straightforward passage about danger we face in the church as the world and many people in the church move farther and farther away from God as we get closer to Christ's return.

We are in 2 Timothy 3:1-4. Turn there in your Bibles. Remember that Paul wrote this letter to Timothy from a jail cell shortly before he was executed. The purpose of the letter was to encourage young Timothy, who was pastoring the church in the city of Ephesus.

For the last three weeks in this series as we studied the final verses of 2 Timothy 2, Paul talked to Timothy about what he needed to do in order to put himself in a position in life to be most useful for God in his life.

Today, we turn a corner. This morning Paul begins talking to Timothy about the opposition we must expect to face from false teachers in the church. False teachers, teaching bad doctrine and leading depraved lives are the greatest enemies of the church. Instead of attacking the church from the outside, false teachers are used by Satan to try and destroy the church from the inside. The church has been, and will always be, plagued by false prophets, false teachers, and those who follow their teaching and lifestyles.

Jesus predicted there would be false teachers in the church. Peter predicted there would be false teachers. Jude predicted them. John predicted them. Of course, Paul predicted them. It is the universal witness of the Scriptures that the church will be attacked and undermined by false teachers working for Satan. Just as Satan masquerades as an angel of light, false teachers masquerade as preachers and teachers of God while they are following the beck and call of Satan himself. While we will only focus on verses 1 to 4 this morning, let's read 2 Timothy 3:1-9.

But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified

regarding the faith. But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men. 2 Timothy 3:1–9 (ESV)

This is a warning passage. Paul told Timothy, and us, to prepare for spiritual imposters and those who follow them. Be careful of their influence on the church. Avoid them. Verse 13 adds another wrinkle.

...evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. 2 Timothy 3:13 (ESV)

Timothy needed to be aware, and we need to be aware, that spiritual imposters will just get worse over time. There is not a time in church history when everyone gets to relax because spiritual conmen will be defeated. In Timothy's case, people like Hymanaeus and Philetus in Ephesus were to be expected. They were just the first in a long line of spiritual conmen who try to lead Christians astray. We have a lot to cover so let's begin.

### **When are the last days?**

But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. 2 Timothy 3:1 (ESV)

This verse starts by talking about the last days. We need to straighten out our understanding of this verse because our instinct is to think this only applies to the end of history just prior to the return of Christ. That is not true.

In the New Testament, when the Bible talks about the last days, it is referring to the whole period of time from the birth of Christ to the return of Christ. That means Timothy was living in the last days. It means 2,000 years later we are living in the last days. Until Jesus returns, everyone is living in the last days.

Let me prove it to you.

In Acts 2 the Holy Spirit came on the apostles at Pentecost and gave them the ability to speak different languages. Suddenly, they could communicate with people from all over the world that were in Jerusalem for Passover even though they spoke different languages. What a way to great spread the gospel when you can reach people with Jesus by speaking to them in their own language. Peter stood up in front of the crowds that gathered and said the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Joel. He then quoted Joel.

But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: “And in the last days it shall be. God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams...” Acts 2:16–17 (ESV)

According to the apostle Peter, the coming of the Holy Spirit took place in the last days.

If we turn to the book of Hebrews, we see the same thing.

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. Hebrews 1:1–2 (ESV)

So the writer of Hebrews said the last days began when God started speaking to us not through prophets but through his son. This means that since the coming of Jesus, everyone is living in what the Bible describes as the last days.

**What will it be like in the last days?**

But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. 2 Timothy 3:1 (ESV)

Paul told Timothy, and us, that in the last days will come times of difficulty. The word difficulty means dangerous times or troublesome times. The church is not to expect ease in the time between the first and second coming of Christ but difficulty and trouble in this time. When we see Christians suffering, that is to be expected. When we face persecution for Jesus, that is to be expected.

Incidentally, the word for time here is also special. If you have been around CrossWinds for a while, you know Greek has two different words for time. One is *chronos* time. It is where we get the English word chronological times. That simply means one minute passing into the next. It is not talking about special time but the unadorned passing of time. The other word for time used in Greek is the word *kairos*. Kairos time means time that is different than other times. We might use the word seasons. For instance, wintertime is more difficult than summertime.

Paul told Timothy, and us, from the coming of Jesus until the return of Jesus, the church will go through very difficult and troubling seasons. This is sort of a pulsing effect. For the church, some parts of history will be far more difficult than others. Some seasons will be summer for the church; other seasons will be like winter in the church, but the general trend line is things will get increasingly difficult for Christ and his kingdom.

How will this culminate? This will ultimately culminate in the coming of the anti-Christ. Paul wrote about him in 2 Thessalonians 2. There were religious deceivers in Timothy's time and in Timothy's church. There will be religious

deceivers in our time. They will keep getting worse over time. There will be some seasons where it is better than others, but overall, it will always be getting worse. It will culminate with the arrival of the anti-Christ who will be the ultimate religious deceiver. In 2 Thessalonians Paul said the anti-Christ will exalt himself over every so-called god. He will proclaim himself to be God. He will do false signs and wonders to deceive people and lead them away.

Where will he come from? Most likely he will arise from organized religion. He will be a false prophet that will arise from inside the church to lead astray as many people as possible.

Next, Paul described how we can recognize false teachers. He also described what people will be like in the last days.

**The last days will be characterized by people loving themselves.**

**For people will be lovers of self... 2 Timothy 3:2 (ESV)**

Paul said the root problem of false teachers attacking the church and the deception they are able to pull off in the church is they teach people to be lovers of themselves instead of lovers of God. The phrase “lovers of self” literally means to kiss yourself. It means you are living for your favorite person, and that is you. False teachers will promote self-love. Many in the church will fall prey to their teaching in thinking that life is not about Jesus but about loving themselves.

All the other sins in the list flow from this first sin of the list. When Jesus was asked what is the greatest commandment, he said it is to love God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength. When people buy into the lie about loving themselves first, they shut themselves off from God and from other people. When

people decide to love themselves first, every choice they make is for their own pleasure, not to please God and not to love other people.

I want to spend a few minutes talking about this danger. We live in a time when many psychologists are telling us the solution to our personal problems is we need to learn to love ourselves. Google “love yourself,” and your browser will give you a long list of articles by psychologists telling us to love ourselves first. They say that if we could just love ourselves more, many of our problems would go away. One article I was reading from the PsychCentral website instructs you to say positive things to yourself, think better of yourself, indulge yourself and be good to yourself. Remember to value your feelings.<sup>1</sup> This is dangerous. The Bible says putting yourself at the center of your world and living for yourself will destroy not just your relationship with God but your relationships with other people.

It is not just popular psychology that tells us to love ourselves and indulge ourselves but the Internet and social media reinforces self-love. Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat is all about portraying yourself in a way that gets the most clicks, the most likes. It is about marketing yourself so you are admired by others. It is about showing off your vacation. It is about editing your photos so you look better than you actually are. It is about loving yourself.

The Internet and our smartphones also have a way of shrinking our world, so life is not about honoring God and helping others but people confine themselves to their bedroom and amuse themselves to death on YouTube and with video games. Life quickly becomes about amusing oneself instead of

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<sup>1</sup> <https://psychcentral.com/blog/imperfect/2019/05/what-is-self-love-and-why-is-it-so-important#What-does-self-love-look-like?>

servicing others. We become turned in on ourselves, focused in on ourselves with little interest in honoring God and loving other people.

The great self-centered push to love ourselves began in our culture around 1960. At that time psychologists claimed the problem with people was low self-esteem. We needed to learn to love ourselves more. What does self-love look like in practice? The PsychCentral website I looked at described loving yourself as learning to meet your needs --- apparently before you meet the needs of others. It is learning to be assertive and getting what you want. It is valuing your feelings as opposed to others' feelings. It is pursuing your interests and goals. It is giving yourself treats.

While popular psychology tells us to love ourselves more, the Bible doesn't tell us to love ourselves more. The Bible assumes we already love ourselves. Instead of focusing on loving ourselves more, the Bible says the most important thing we can learn to do is to love God with all of our hearts, souls, minds, and strength. The second-most important thing we can do is focus on loving our neighbors as ourselves.

Since 1960, popular psychology has championed self-love while the Bible continues to tell us to focus on loving God and our neighbors. Recently, popular psychology reexamined this focus on self-love. Many psychologists realized a focus on self-love has created a narcissistic culture in which people are turned in on themselves. David G. Myers and Malcolm A. Jeeves wrote a psychology book called Psychology Through the Eyes Of Faith. Chapter 25 is a chapter on the

problem of pride. They detail the dangers of telling people to love themselves more and to focus on themselves more. Here are some of their findings.

Sixty percent of college graduates see themselves as possessing better-than-average athletic ability. Only six percent see themselves below average. Does it sound like they don't love themselves enough? They already have a high opinion of themselves. Seventy percent of college graduates consider themselves to possess above-average leadership ability. Only 2 percent consider themselves to have below-average leadership qualities. Does that sound like they don't love themselves enough?

All this to say, love of self is the foundation from which the rest of this vice list in 2 Timothy flows. The false teachers and false Christians whose focus in life is on loving themselves instead of loving God and loving their neighbors will display the vices in this list.

As we look at this list, while these are the vices of false Christians and false teachers, to some degree all of us have bought into the world's self-love lie. To some degree, the vices on this list manifest themselves in our lives. When we see them, we want to repent of them and run to the arms of Jesus where we will find forgiveness and change.

### **How can I recognize someone who is in love with himself or herself?**

#### **Those in love with themselves love money.**

Paul said someone in love with themselves is easy to recognize because he or she loves money. It is the word *philarguros*. That means a lover of silver. This is a person whose focus is on getting rich. These people want to have the

biggest houses. They want you to recognize them by their stuff because their stuff creates their identities. They would be heartbroken without their stuff because it props up their egos. They are materialistic. They don't just live to get more stuff but they covet other people's stuff.

The great hallmark of someone in love with money is not what they possess but how generous they are with what they possess. People who are consumed with love for themselves are not interested in helping others with their resources. They do not have generosity.

Loving money was a problem for people in the church of Ephesus. Ephesus was a very prosperous city. It was a very materialistic city. It was called the treasure house of the ancient world. The materialistic attitude of the culture crept into the church. This love of money is a hallmark of false teachers.

**They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. Titus 1:11 (ESV)**

Have you heard of Creflo Dollar? He was a popular prosperity preacher from Georgia. One day in 2015 he decided he needed a new private jet for his ministry, that way he could fly to poverty-ridden countries where he had his crusades in style. He only needed \$60 million dollars to make his jet need a reality. The good news is he already had \$5 million saved up for it.

On his website he promised that anyone who gave him 10 percent of their income would be guaranteed health and wealth from God.

Do you know what kind of airplane he claimed he needed? It was a Gulfstream G650. In 2015 it was the fastest, most luxurious, most technologically advanced jet made by Gulfstream. It was valued at \$65 million.

Why couldn't he ride in economy class on a regular airplane like the rest of us? He is a false teacher in love with himself instead of God. The way we recognize that is that he is in love with money. His love of money reveals that he is in love with himself. He is a false teacher.

**Those in love with themselves are proud.**

Someone in love with himself or herself is self-absorbed. These people are filled with conceit. They think they are better than others. They think all their achievements in life came from their doing. They give no credit to anyone but themselves. They disregard God's kindness in their lives giving them what they possess. They don't see the goodness of others in their life enabling them to succeed.

Where does a proud heart come from? It comes from somebody who is in love with themselves.

Proud people love to see their names in the paper. They love to get their faces in front of a camera. They want to be seen and recognized. What motivates this pride? The top item on their agendas is loving and promoting themselves.

**Those in love with themselves are arrogant.**

This is the companion sin to pride. Pride is more of an action on the outside. Arrogance is an attitude of the heart on the inside. It is how a person sees himself when he looks in the mirror.

Arrogant people looks at themselves and sees themselves as innately better and more deserving than others and a cut above the rest. Most politicians

fall into this class. The attitude of their hearts is they see themselves as superior to others.

An arrogant person doesn't look across at other people. They look down upon other people.

Arrogance is trickier to identify in a person than pride. Pride is on the outside and is seen in the way people act. Arrogance is deep inside. It is the way people view themselves. An arrogant person may appear quiet on the outside, but inside, they are haughty.

A good illustration of an arrogant person in the Bible is the Pharisee who said, "I thank you that I am not like other men, especially like this tax collector." He looked down on the tax collector because he thought he was much better than him.

An arrogant attitude comes from someone in love with himself or herself. This is why it is dangerous when pop psychologists tells us we need to love ourselves more and put ourselves first in this world. What we need is to focus on loving God with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength. What we need is to focus on loving our neighbors as ourselves.

**Those in love with themselves are abusive.**

Abusive is the Greek word *blasphemo*. We get our English word blasphemy from it. It means to abuse people with our speech. It is to hurl insults at people. It is to cut people up with our tongues. It is to speak about people disparagingly behind their backs. It is to gossip.

Where does this evil trait of a vicious tongue come from? It comes from people in love with themselves. Those in love with themselves see nothing wrong with abusing people with words and treating people as dirt in the things they say. For a person in love with themselves, all that matters is how they feel, not how they make their neighbors feel.

Sadly, this occasionally makes its way into the church. When people gossip and speak against other people in the church, many times the reasons this gossiping and backbiting takes place is because people are in love with themselves. Since they are primarily thinking about themselves, they are happy to hurt others with their tongues. They don't think twice about how their word cut people's reputations to shreds.

That gossip and backbiting comes from people in love with themselves, not people who love their neighbors as themselves. If you wouldn't want people to speak about you behind your back, then don't speak that way about others behind their backs. Love your neighbor as yourself.

**Those in love with themselves are disobedient to their parents.**

As you can guess, those who are disobedient to their parents disobey because they are in love with themselves. While children disobeying their parents has always been a challenge, it seems to be more of a challenge now than before. Children are not as sheltered as they were. The Internet exposes children to filth and darkness while they are in their youth.

As a result, children rebel against their parents' desires. If a child chooses to not honor his or her parents, if he or she will not respect authority, he or she

will not learn respect for God, who has put his or her parents in authority over him or her. He or she will not learn respect for the police whom the state put in authority over him or her.

“Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” Ephesians 6:2–3 (ESV)

It is a promise from God that if children do not honor their parents it will not go well with them. It is a promise from God that they will not live long in the land, the place of blessing. When children in the church disrespect their parents, they do that because they are in love with themselves. They are not loving their nearest neighbors, which are their mother and father.

One of my favorite stories in the news took place in 2015. A single mother of six was watching the news. The news was covering the story of a group of teenagers in downtown Baltimore who were burning cars and throwing bricks through store windows. Even though the youth wore hoodies over their head, the mother recognized her son in the crowd. She was furious. As she later said in a television interview, “This was not the way I raised my boy.”

She drove in her car to the downtown riot. She walked through the police lines. She walked into the crowd of teenagers and grabbed her son by the back of the neck, dragging him out of the crowd and giving him an earful of her frustration.



She was a good mother who loved her son and didn't want him to face the consequences of his disobedience. That is why she was willing to correct him.

Children, let me talk to you for a minute. If you are not obedient to your parents, you are not following God's will for your life. Don't fall into the self-love trap and think you are the center of the universe. Don't fall into the self-love trap and think rebelling against everyone in authority over you is a good or wise thing.

**Those in love with themselves are ungrateful.**

Ungrateful means unthankful. This also flows from focusing too much on loving yourself. Instead of being thankful for the help others give us that enables us to succeed, those in love with themselves assume success is owed them.

Ungratefulness is rampant in our society. Sometimes it makes its way into the church. One way we can see the lack of gratitude in society is the lack of thank you cards sent today. One website I checked claimed the average person intends to send 70 thank you cards a year but only gets around to sending 10. Another website I checked claims 75 percent of Americans consider thank you notes a thing of the past. They are unnecessary. Where does that ungrateful attitude come from? It comes from people who have fallen in love with themselves. They are consumed with thoughts about themselves. They can get their eyes on others to be grateful for what they have received. This is why Jesus doesn't tell us to love ourselves more. Instead he tells us to focus on loving God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. He tells us to focus on loving our neighbors as ourselves.

**Those in love with themselves are unholy.**

This word has an interesting meaning. It means overt lawlessness. It is violating an obscure detail in the Old Testament law. It pertains to violation of

what is common decency. It is having no conceptions of how a lack of common grace and courtesy impacts others.

Have you been around someone that is always 20 minutes late whenever you meet with him or her? In spite of being consistently late, he or she is unapologetic. After a while you realize this person doesn't even care that he or she wasted 20 minutes of your time. Why are some people this way? They are in love with themselves. The only people they are thinking about is themselves. They have lost the ability to put themselves in someone else's shoes.

This is why Jesus tells us we are to focus on loving God and focus on loving our neighbors as ourselves, not focus on loving ourselves more.

**Those in love with themselves are heartless.**

This means without family love. In the past I mentioned that English has one word for love. In Greek there are multiple words for love. Those words have different nuances of meaning. One of the Greek words for love is *storge*. It means family love. It is the kind of love you have for your parents or your siblings. In Greek, the word used in this verse means no love for your own family. This is people who are willing to turn their backs on their own children, their parents, their siblings and their relatives. Instead of intense loyalty to their family, they have no love for their family.

Today, this is seen in women who abuse their children because their children are making too much noise while Mom is trying to watch her soap opera. This is seen when husbands raise their voices or their fists in anger at their wives. This is seen in children who have no care for their parents.

Why do people act this way? Is it because they need to learn to love themselves more? Absolutely not! These people need to focus on loving God and loving their neighbors instead of themselves.

**Those in love with themselves are unappeasable.**

That means you can never satisfy a person in love with themselves. They will not compromise. They are unmovable. They take it as a challenge to not budge an inch from their position but will make you do all the compromising. They will never change. They have no interest in compromising to restore a broken relationship. They do not want harmony. They do not want a resolution. They just want their way.

The problem with a person who has become unappeasable because they are in love with themselves is their relationships are shallow and often lost. Their marriages will not stand the test of time.

All relationships are based on compromise. All marriages are based on compromise. As soon as you get married, you must learn to compromise. Since people in love with themselves never want to compromise, their relationships are shallow, surface deep, and never fulfilling. It is not long until they begin hopping from one broken marriage to the next.

These people do not need to be told to love themselves more. They do not need to be told to assert themselves over others. They do not need to be told to give themselves treats. They need to be told to sacrifice themselves to love the person they want as their closest neighbor, their spouse.

### **Those in love with themselves are slanderous.**

This is the Greek word *diabolos*. It is where we get our English word devil. Every time we slander someone, did you realize what we are literally acting like like the devil, who loves to slander God's people? If that doesn't help you curb your tongue, I don't know what will.

This, of course, is one of the main sins that comes from self-love. When people are focused on loving themselves, it is natural for them to use their tongues to wound. It is natural to use words like sword thrusts into the guts and hearts of others. Why is this so natural for those in love with themselves? It is because they only care about their own feelings. They don't care about others' feelings. They don't even consider treating others the way they would like to be treated.

Has anyone recently looked at the news? The news is filled with people who happily slander one another in front of hundreds of thousands of viewers. While there are real issues that need to be on the news, the personal attacks and slanderous tongues show that those acting that way are truly in love with themselves. They need to be told to love their neighbors more, not love themselves more.

### **Those in love with themselves are without self-control.**

The Greek word means lacking in self-restraint. It means to be a slave to our passions. It means to see something that tempts us but to have no ability to restrain ourselves from what draws us. There is ability for delayed gratification. Of course, the reason people have no self-control is because they are in love

with themselves. It is not what is best for my family in the future. It is not what is best for my own future. It is not the legacy and memory I want to be remembered by in the future. The only thing that matters for those in love with themselves is: How can I satisfy myself?

It reminds me of going to a Mexican restaurant when you are hungry. That is a dangerous thing to do. You order the meal, and because the restaurant is full, they take a long time to make your food. While you are waiting they keep putting chips and salsa in front of you. Once you start, it is almost impossible to stop. Like many of us, when it comes to chips and salsa, I have a hard time exercising self-control.

Those in love with themselves don't just struggle to exercise self-control around chips and salsa. They struggle to exercise self-control in front of every grading of their bodies and minds. They do not need to be told to love themselves more. The Bible tells us the truth. Focus on loving God with all our hearts, souls, and minds. Focus on loving our neighbors as ourselves.

**Those in love with themselves are brutal.**

The word brutal means savage like a wild beast. It was used to describe the way lions take down prey and eat it while it is still alive. Lions have no compassion for their dinner. They have no sympathy. There is no awareness that they should kill their dinner before they eat it, that they should put the poor animal out of its misery. They are just barbaric.

Those in love with themselves will treat other people with similar brutality. They do not care about how they make people feel. As employers, they do not

care about how much they demand out of their workers. They do not care about personal needs of family needs, just get the job done. I don't care what problems you have with your children or in your life. That is brutality. That is savagery.

When employers act that way it is because those in charge are in love with themselves. They have no sense of care and stewardship of those they employ and the families they support.

If you buy the self-love garbage, instead of loving God first and loving your neighbor as yourself, you will leave a legacy of ruthlessness in the minds and memories of people around you. Instead of your memory putting a smile on the face of others, when you are gone, they will celebrate and say, "Good riddance!" This is why God tells us the most important thing we can do is to focus on loving him and loving other people.

**Those in love with themselves do not love good.**

This means to be someone that hates good. Instead of celebrating the successes of other people, they celebrate the failures of those around them. They think that by pushing others down they are pushing themselves up.

**Those in love with themselves are treacherous.**

Treacherous means ready to betray. It means being disloyal. We serve a God that is incredibly loyal to us. When we fail him, he forgives us. No matter what we have done, he restores us. No matter what we have done, he loves us so much he died for us. He is ready to open his hands and his heart and welcome us into his embrace.

We love God's loyalty to us. It is especially sweet when that same kind of loyalty is reflected in our friendships. Isn't it wonderful when you have someone you can count on? Others may turn their back on you, but loyal friends stand beside you. They continue believing the best about you. They are faithful to you even after you fail them. Loyalty is like a deep breath of fresh air. It is refreshing.

Treacherous people are not like that. They are traitors by nature. They get close to you in order to knife you in the back. They get close to you so they can learn about you and use that information to hurt you. They have no sense of loyalty to you or to anyone else. People in love with themselves can be recognized by their disloyal and treacherous relationships. They are not the kind of people we want to be around. What does this look like in everyday life?

This past week I learned about a reporter that as part of her job tries to befriend the children of famous people in the news using social media. After she builds a farcical friendship with them by pretending to be someone she is not, she uses that fake friendship as a way to pump the children to get information about the children's parents. That information then ends up in the paper.

What a terrible betrayal of a child's trust. It is a twisted and selfish thinking pattern that betrays children to damage their trust with adults for life.

Where does that kind of warped thinking come from? It comes from someone who is in love with herself. All she cares about is herself. That is why people like this have no trouble living treacherous lives betraying other people. These people do not need more self-love. They need to learn about neighbor-love.

**Those in love with themselves are reckless.**

The Greek word for reckless means headstrong and falling forward. It means acting without regard for others around you. This is where we get the term “reckless driving.” It is driving fast or irresponsibly so that you risk taking someone else’s life. If you are late for an appointment and you speed to get there, you are reckless. You may lose control of your car. You may hit a child playing in the street.

A pattern of reckless behavior is a sign that someone is in love with himself or herself. He or she has lost sight of what it means to love her neighbor.

**Those in love with themselves are swollen with conceit.**

This means to literally be inflated with pride. The root word of this means to be filled with smoke. People in love with themselves act big. They act like they are someone special, but the truth is behind their big actions is nothing but smoke. There is no substance. There is nothing behind their actions. These people are someone special in their own minds but not in anybody else’s minds.

Of course, this all naturally comes from people in love with themselves, focusing on themselves, and preoccupied with themselves.

Finally, Paul wrapped up this list with an appropriate final description that is a crescendo to the list.

**Those in love with themselves are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.**

Those in love with themselves are only living for pleasure in this world, not for God. They have replaced the God they worship. They love themselves

because they worship themselves. They are more concerned with their own happiness than God's happiness.

### **How do we apply this to our lives?**

1. **Realize we are in a society that is teaching us through psychology, the Internet, and social media to love ourselves before our neighbors.**

Psychologists tell us to love ourselves. The Internet cultivates an isolated focus on ourselves. Social media encourages us to make ourselves the stars of our own reality shows. The problem is that the more we fall into the trap of loving ourselves, the more we become brutal, slanderous, heartless, and abusive people. The consequences of buying the self-love lie are devastating.

2. **When we see self-love and the results of that lifestyle in ourselves, we want to identify it, confess it, and repent of it. We want to ask God to help us focus on loving God with all our hearts, souls, and minds, then loving our neighbors as ourselves.** All of us, to one degree or another, find love of self, and the various vices that result from it, creeping into our lives.

Thankfully, we have an amazing God who is quick to forgive our sins when we confess our sins. He is quick to give us a new heart and mind when we call out to him for rescue. After we confess our self-love, lean into going out of your way to love others.

3. **Remember that Jesus did not love himself first.** He sacrificed himself in love for us. We honor Jesus when we live a lifestyle that echoes his in this world. I had to get Jesus into the message. Isn't it great that Jesus did not come to earth and focus on loving himself? If Jesus was all about loving himself, we would still be in our sin. We would have no hope. Jesus focused

on loving God the Father with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength, even though he know that doing that would lead to his brutal death on the cross. He also focused on loving us, his neighbors. He focused on loving us at great personal cost to save us from our sin and adopt us into God's family. This week, may we be people who echo the love of God for God and others in this world. As we do that, may we give off the aroma of Christ in all of our friendships.



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