

How to Care for Self Without Being Selfish

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | July 26, 2010



I do have a matter that presses on my heart that I would like some clarification on. It is that of self-care.

I know you encourage self-care and I do understand the importance of what I think self-care is, however, in this day and age of people crying out for “me” time, are there any biblical principles that clarify what self-care is?

Thanks and many blessings

You have asked a question that has troubled many good Christians over the years. How do we care for ourselves, without being selfish? How can a selfish being love themselves in healthy ways?

As I have explored this question the real issue is rarely, if ever, behaviour, but instead is always about the attitudes and motivations of the heart.

All too often we focus only on outward appearance. We make a list of sanctioned behaviours which when performed are acknowledged by many religious communities as beneficial. But when we “caring”

for ourselves, we must inquire, “What is my motive? Why am I exercising and eating right?” Is it to obtain a beautiful physique to attract sexual partners? Is it to have the healthiest mind and body possible in order to fulfill God’s purpose in my life?

The only possible way to care for oneself in a healthy way is to first surrender oneself to Jesus Christ. When we have come to know God and Christ, as Jesus revealed them to be, and through our connection with Them overcome our inherent fear and actually place our lives into their hands, then we can begin self-care as God designed.

Self-care, as God designed, is the process of caring for the Temple in which His Spirit dwells. It is using one’s abilities and resources to promote His kingdom – which is the kingdom of love and truth. When we recognize we are not live only to ourselves, but our lives impact and effect others, then we begin to awaken to the awesome privilege of participating with God to witness for Him.

The real issue in self-care is motive. When we have surrendered self, placed Christ first in the heart and seek to honour Him with our lives, then self care becomes more easily focused. Christ, who came to bless and save, took time away from the crowds, not for self-indulgence, but for strengthening, refocusing, and for physical and spiritual strengthening so He would be more able to bless when with the crowds. Likewise, when our hearts are surrendered to Christ, we set healthy boundaries, we seek to use our energies to uplift and bless, we don’t become doormats exploited and walked upon by others, but make intelligent choices to maintain the physical, mental and emotional health of God’s creation for the purpose of fulfilling His calling in our lives!

In summary what are some Biblical principles in self-care?

1. Keep the focus on God – do all to His honour and glory. Is the activity in caring for self one that will be honourable to Him? Would God be smiling with you in the activity?
2. Keep the focus on others, will the activity rejuvenate, restore or equip you for further ministry?
3. Practice healthy living, which includes God’s dietary guidelines, exercise, sleep, avoidance of toxins, all of which promote the health of the Spirit Temple. God’s love for you doesn’t change if you choose to not follow His design for physical health. However, when we violate God’s health principles we become sick and less capable of ministering to others and instead often need others to minister to us.
4. Meditate and daily commune with God. Only in a vital personal connection with God can we know our duty for each day.
5. Live up to the truth you know. When we live outside of the truth, the conscience convicts us of guilt and this has a heavy physiological and psychological toll and undermines our usefulness for God.
6. Set healthy boundaries. Learn to say no. One of Satan’s traps to destroy God’s workers is to get them to accept more burdens than they can actually fulfill. Self-health requires avoiding over taxation of the self, avoiding over extending oneself and maintaining time for both physical and psychological rest and recovery.

If others have discovered practical principles for healthy self care please share them so we may all learn from each other.