

**Wow!** Did you catch all that the last passage that Linda read mentioned. *“People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God-- having a form of godliness but denying its power.”* What a way to describe people! And I bet that as that was being read, you had someone in mind, right? Paul says, “Have nothing to do with them.” But the problem is that we see these behaviors just about everywhere! Even in the church, how sad is that. This is the culture we live in.

**And the key is how that begins, “People will be lovers of themselves”.** The term we use for that is Narcissism and today we are going to focus on overcoming this. The purpose of this whole series is to get us to realize that we are not the center of the universe, and to get us to reject the idea that our culture perpetrates that everything is all about you. *We went to become othercenteredness, and not selfcenterdness.* Now when we think of Narcissism, we tend to think more along the lines of vanity, someone who is always looking at themselves, taking a thousand selfies, doing that little duck face...*(what are folks going to think a thousand years from now when they look back at the pictures from this generation...boy they loved Donald duck...)*. But Narcissism is more than just loving how you look, but rather it is more where you have an inflated or grandiose sense of self and that yourself is at the center of all things, and everybody else should recognize that. It’s all about you, so the message is to Get over yourself.

**And that is hard to do, because everything and everybody is saying that it all about you.** *It’s all about you, and we tend to think it is. I was trying to think of an example of what this may look like that some would recognize, someone who was so self-absorbed and a lover of self, and I came up with this guy (show picture of Ron Burgandy). Some of you know who this is. This is the Anchorman himself, Ron Burgandy. And if you have seen the films, then you know that this is the most self-centered, egotistical, vain, uncompassionate person there is, and everything is always about him. In his mind, he is the greatest, and should be treated as such.*

**Now he is an absurd characterture of someone who is a lover of themselves, but the traits he exhibits is something that to be honest is so prevalent in our society (we are a very self-absorbed culture that likes attention and over inflates our own importance) and it is also in all of us.** *For example, and we have said this before, but when there is a group picture...who is the first person you look for? You. And we all envision ourselves as the important*

person. Think of it this way, when you were a kid, did you dress up like Batman or Robin? Who wants to be robin, we all want to be Batman! No one wants to be the sidekick, because in our mind we are the important one.

**Now this is not new.** Humanity has always had narcissist, but what is new is that we live in a culture that embraces this way of thinking and encourages it as the normal behavior. What happens is that Narcissist tend to stand out, and then others want to be like them, and so they start to mimic these behaviors, and so the narcissist goes even further, and the culture keeps getting dragged along.

**And it has gotten worse.** Studies has been shown that in the last 20 years, we have become an increasingly narcissistic culture. Not only are we less empathetic, we are more egocentric than ever before, and more entitled than ever before. (Tell story about woman at Fast food place who didn't want a deluxe burger, but she wanted it with cheese, lettuce, and tomato. Wouldn't listen, demanded manager, and made a scene, and eventually manager gave in). Everybody is the most important, everybody is special, everybody stands out, and everybody deserves special treatment.

**Throw in the internet, and now everyone is an instant celebrity.** It used to be that people become famous for accomplishing something, (you walked on the moon, you were a missionary, you cured polio) now there are people who are famous for being famous. Some have labeled it the "Kardashian culture." And the more outlandish, the more self-absorbed, the more you cry out "Look at me", the more people do and the more people immolate. Think about this. At one time, only Hollywood types did things like get plastic surgery, whiten their teeth, and shape their eyebrows; now these appearance enhancers have trickled down to ordinary people where grandma is getting her teeth whitened.

**So our focus today is this, and this is our big idea for today.** "Our culture says it is all about you and the way to achieve joy in life is to make it about you, but true joy comes from losing ourselves in the love of God and in the love and service of others." When we place God and others ahead of ourselves, things go better. When we place ourselves above all else, things go from bad to worse. In fact, in the 2 Timothy text, all those things that come after, that list of bad behaviors, are really the result of being a lover of self.

**So let's ask this question.** How did we arrive here? We've already said that this is not new. Narcissism is named for the Greek mythological character Narcissus. According to the myth, Narcissus is an attractive young man who sets out looking for someone to love. Narcissus goes on searching for the perfect mate. Finally, one day he sees himself reflected in a pool of water. He falls in

love with his own image, and unable to pull himself away he gazes at it until he dies. This is something that we have always dealt with.

**Second, and I won't say much on this because we will say more about it next week, and that is that we live in a time of peace and prosperity.** It's amazing how during times of hardship, we tend to become more empathetic of others, and think less of ourselves.

**Now the next one is something that was put forth by Dr. Jean M. Twenge and W. Keith Campbell in their book "The Narcissism Epidemic: Living in the Age of Entitlement" and they claim that we are now dealing with the results of the self esteem movement of the 80's and 90's.** If you recall, during that time there was an influx of ideas on the importance of self esteem, how you feel about yourself, and there was some validity to this...if a child thinks he is smart he will act smarter), but what happened is that it got overused and became the focal point of everything. It was thought that most people's problem was low self-esteem. In fact, people who seem the most self-absorbed are probably just overcompensating for their poor self-image. What everyone needs to do better is to learn to love themselves. Now, like I said, there was some validity to this, but what happened is first, the data just didn't support the idea. They found that the connection between low self esteem and all these ills just wasn't there. They found that some narcissist just really like themselves, and there are some bullies who just are really mean.

**But the big thing, and what is important for us, is that this idea got really abused.** The idea of self esteem became the excuse for people to make it all about yourself. Focus on yourself, it's all about how you feel about you, make you be happy, you, you, you. So pride, arrogance, selfishness, all had a basis...it was me making myself better. But again, those who focus on themselves the most tend to be the most miserable!

**So how can we fight this?** How can we go against this narcissistic culture? First, remember it's not about you. (one of best sermons was retirement ceremony and preacher preached on the donkey on palms Sunday. They not clapping for you) Listen to what Paul wrote in **Philippians 2:3-4**, "*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*"

**Second, make it about Him!** Love God with all your whole heart, mind, soul, and strength. It is for God's glory, but it has to be more than must love for God. (Tell story about the Pharisee praying and Lord, I thank you not like...). We can easily become spiritual narcissist.

**Third, Make it about Others.** Love neighbor as yourself. Dr. Karl Menninger, a famous psychiatrist, was once asked, “What would you advise a person to do if he felt a nervous breakdown coming on?” Menninger replied, “Find someone in need, and do something to help that person... generous people are rarely mentally ill people”. The antidote to narcissism is service. And yet, we can even become prideful about how much we help others. While helping others and being generous can take the edge off of our narcissism a little bit, it does not address the root of our narcissism, because our narcissism is rooted in our original sin. Thankfully, Jesus doesn’t stop there. After telling His disciples, “whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all,” Jesus points to the cross: “For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

**So let me close with this.** In Max Lucado’s book TRAVELING LIGHT (p. 75) he gives seven suggestions for living with the sober judgment that God desires. They are so good that I want to share his points with my comments on each of them.

1. **Assess yourself honestly.** True humility is not a matter of putting yourself down. It’s not saying, I’m no good at something you ARE good at. It is seeing yourself truthfully. It is recognizing your strengths and your weaknesses. The humble person is able to say, I can do that! and also say, this is not something I am good at.
2. **Don’t take success or yourself too seriously.** Learn to laugh at your own weaknesses. In the times of success, rejoice; also remember that there will be times of failure. When you taste fame, remember that it is fleeting.
3. **Celebrate the significance of others.** Columnist Rick Reilly gave this advice to rookie professional athletes: Stop thumping your chest. The line blocked, the quarterback threw you a perfect spiral while getting his head knocked off, and the good receiver blew the double coverage. Get over yourself.
4. **Don’t demand your own parking place.** Max writes, **Demanding respect is like chasing a butterfly. Chase it, and you’ll never catch it. Sit still, and it may light on your shoulder. Too many people insist that they be respected because of their title or position.** While it is true that we are to respect those in authority over us, it is also true that respect and honor are things that must be earned.
5. **Never announce your success before it occurs.** C.H. Spurgeon had a student who went up into the pulpit with an arrogant attitude and then failed miserably. He came down humbles and broken. Spurgeon said to him, If you had gone into the pulpit the way you came out, you may have been able to come out

[the way you went in](#). As believers we must always keep in mind that our work will not be totally finished until we stand before the Lord in Heaven. We cannot say that we have been successful in the Christian life until we have FINISHED the course and kept the faith.

6. **Speak humbly.** There is no reason to be cocky. We should let our words be few. In **Proverbs 27:2** Solomon advises, “*Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; someone else, and not your own lips.*” When you are tempted to blow your own horn, resist.

7. **Live at the foot of the cross.** Paul said, “The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is my only reason for bragging” (Gal. 6:14). We must constant remind ourselves that who we are and where we stand is not the result of our greatness.it is the result of His grace. If we continually remember His mercy, humility will be easier to find.