

The enemy works very hard to keep people from being their true selves. He uses rejection, pride, vanity, public opinion – anything that will keep us from knowing, enjoying, and *being* our true selves. Because our *true* selves, uncluttered by our attempts to mold ourselves into models of what we think others want us to be, unfettered by any squelchings from unkind authorities in our lives or from our own self-loathings – those selves God creates when He breathes His own Spirit into the clay of humanity – those selves are pure expressions of our Creator. The fact that no two human selves have been alike in the entire course of mankind is a glorious testimony to the infinite love and creativity of the Father. And Satan detests that testimony. He works to keep us from loving ourselves, because when we love ourselves, then the true miracle of God-breathed life and personality within us is free to make its eternal mark. When we regard ourselves with hatred or dislike or shame, we work to cover up what God created, and we work with the enemy and against our Creator.

God *wants* us to love who we are, not from any sense of superiority (glad that we are not as these other mortals), but simply *because* we are an expression of our Creator. When we can learn to love and be thankful for ourselves because God created us and because we delight in His creation, then is not a beautiful meaning lent to the command to love our neighbors as ourselves? The love of our neighbors becomes not only a desire for their good, but a delight in yet another unique expression of our Father, another reason to worship and rejoice in Him. If we truly learned to love ourselves, then we could truly love our neighbors, and not just love them, but delight in learning who they are, in what makes them unique.