

The Narcissism Epidemic

By: Pam Rehm / Blog #61 / 10-12-26

In 1971, McDonald's launched one of the most successful advertising campaigns in American history. It was "You Deserve a Break Today." The message seemed harmless enough, but it reflected a *growing cultural shift*. Around that same time, America became known as the "*Me Generation*," with increasing emphasis on self-fulfillment over duty, responsibility, and sacrifice. Today we are surrounded by messages that encourage us to put ourselves first. As Christians, as we develop the mind and character of Christ, we must ask whether this focus on self draws us closer to God or farther from Him. The Bible warned us about these days long ago.

The Biblical Diagnosis: Lovers of Themselves

Long before modern psychologists coined terms such as narcissism, Lucifer became consumed with his own beauty, power, and importance. Ezekiel tells us that his "heart was lifted up because of [his] beauty" (Ezekiel 28:17). His focus shifted from God's will to his own.

Narcissism is more than confidence or healthy self-respect. It is an excessive focus on self that puts our desires, feelings, and importance above God and pushes God and others to the side. It places "*me*" at the center and expects everyone else to orbit around "*me*." While psychologists may use clinical terms, the Bible has called this attitude exactly what it is: pride, selfish ambition, vanity, and haughtiness. And if we're honest, all of us have probably had a little bit of narcissism ourselves.

The Apostle Paul warned that this spirit would become a defining characteristic of the last days, "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!" (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

Notice how this *list begins* with "lovers of themselves." This self-love fuels every other sin on Paul's list. When self becomes our primary focus, it becomes difficult to put God first or genuinely serve others. Relationships suffer because pride and selfishness displace our humility, patience, and compassion. The more focused we become on our own wants and expectations, the easier it is to neglect the needs of those around us.

The Bible says a lot about pride because it is the root of narcissism. "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). James says, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6).

The Quiet Danger for Christian Men and Women

It is easy to recognize the self-centeredness that exists in the world around us. But we must also remember that *Christians* can be caught up in it too. The messages we hear every day encourage us to put ourselves first. If we are not careful, we can view life primarily through our own lens. It is easy to compare our lives to the carefully edited pictures we see on social media. Before long, we may begin measuring our blessings against someone else's highlight reel and become dissatisfied with what God has given us. Our worldview may grow shallow as we compare our lives to what we see displayed on social media. We may even become discouraged because we think and feel we deserve better.

The Apostle Paul wrote, "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Philippians 2:3-4).

These verses challenge all of us to stop making everything about ourselves and instead turn our hearts and minds toward God and the people He has placed in our lives. Jesus Christ set the perfect example. Though He was the Son of God, He "made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant" (Philippians 2:7). He served others, showed compassion to the weak, and ultimately gave His life for humanity. Throughout His ministry, Christ consistently placed the Father's will above His own.

In our "*me generation*" culture, we can model humility, service, and genuine concern for others. As we grow in Christ's mindset and character, we learn that fulfillment comes not from selfishness, but from drawing closer to God and serving others.

What Can We Do as Godly Men and Women?

Christians do not overcome narcissism simply by thinking less about ourselves. We overcome it by developing the integrity and demeanor of Jesus Christ. David prayed, "Search me, O God, and know my heart" (Psalm 139:23). That should be our prayer as we examine ourselves and acknowledge areas of pride and selfishness.

The world keeps pushing us to focus on what we want and how we feel, but Christ taught a better way. He willingly humbled Himself, served others, and always sought His Father's will. As we pray, study God's Word, and follow His example, we should replace self-centeredness with genuine concern for others, become more eager to serve, and focus on strong relationships. Paul warned that many would have a form of godliness while denying its power (2 Timothy 3:5), so we must guard the influences in our lives and homes and instead develop the humility, gratitude, and *servant-hearted character* of Jesus Christ.

The narcissism epidemic did not begin with a successful advertising campaign, and it cannot be solved by cultural reforms. It is a *spiritual problem* that starts in the heart. The world constantly tells us to put ourselves first, but Jesus Christ taught a better way. As we obey Him,

study His Word, and follow His example. Learn to replace *self-pursuit* with a life of humility, service, and obedience. In a world so focused on “*me*,” we, as Christians, have an opportunity to develop the mind of Christ and prepare to serve with Him in the coming Kingdom of God.