



## THE DECEITFULNESS OF SELF-HATRED

I was speaking at a large women's event in Texas. During the break, a woman asked if she could speak with me.

"I need to know if there is hope for me," she asked. "I'm a narcissist and from what I've read on-line, there is little hope for me to ever get better."

Curious, I asked her a few more questions about what led her to think she was a narcissist. She said, "I'm selfish and self-centered."

"Give me a few examples of what you mean," I asked, wanting to see where she was going.

"I don't want to babysit my grandchildren like my daughter wants me to," she said. "I don't always want to put other people's needs first. I try, but I end up feeling resentful."

By now tears were streaming down her face and it was obvious she was distressed exposing her very human character flaws.

This woman's problem wasn't excessive self-love and desire for admiration (which narcissists never notice about themselves anyway), but rather destructive shame and self-hatred. In our brief conversation I learned that she lived by an internal script that dictated that she should be better than she was. She failed to live up to her idealized image of herself as a selfless person and after numerous attempts at change, she felt hopeless.



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People who are perfectionists may not demand perfection in every area of their lives and often have a hard time admitting that they think they should be perfect, but deep down that's what they crave. And when they fail to live up to their own idealized standards, they grieve deeply. Their internal shame, self-hatred, and self-reproach can be lethal.

These individuals rarely feel happy because although they might achieve a moment of perfection, it's entirely unsustainable. Eventually they mess up, can't do something, aren't all-knowing, fail, make a mistake, or put their own needs or desires ahead of someone else's.

This woman was not my client and we weren't in a session, but I had something to offer her in that moment that provided a real solution to her pain. I had the privilege to show this hurting woman a glimpse of what God is like and surprise her by the good news of the gospel of Christ.

He is the answer to this woman's pain because he gives her what she cannot give herself. Real forgiveness, radical acceptance, grace, peace, hope, love, and true truth.

What I said to that woman at the conference was something similar to what Jesus said to the rich young ruler who asked if he was good enough to inherit eternal life. (See Luke 18:18-27 for the story).

I pulled her to the side, wrapped my arms around her and whispered, "You could never do enough, love enough, give enough, or be selfless enough to earn God's forgiveness or his love. It's not up to you. It is a gift. Now go, and thank and love the giver."

Later on in the day she caught my eye and her countenance was transformed. She believed God and found hope.