



God's secret plan has been revealed to us; it is a plan centered on Christ, designed long ago according to his good pleasure.

Ephesians 1:9 (NLT)

HEARING THE WORD OF GOD:

²⁸One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"²⁹"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.'³⁰Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.³¹The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater these."

Mark 12: 28-31 (NIV)

RESPONDING TO THE WORD OF GOD "Being overly critical of ourselves sabotages our ability to love ourselves and others. Lord, bless me with the ability to love you, myself, and my neighbor. Amen."

I recently watched a few Bible based ministries on television. All had important messages, but the one that resonated with me the most was this reading of Mark and the concept of loving our neighbors *as ourselves*. We must first love our self before we can love others. This sounds simple enough, but do we really love ourselves?

The minister discussed Satan's abilities to convince us to not love ourselves. He plants seeds of doubt and insecurity in our lives: he tells us that we are stupid, ugly, bad, no good, worthless, etc., and before long, we are telling ourselves the same thing. When we think so negatively of ourselves, we do not love ourselves, which is exactly what Satan wants. For, if we do not love ourselves, we can not love others. Where is Christ if not in the love we show toward others? To a certain extent, if Satan can keep us from loving ourselves and others, he has succeeded in keeping Christ out of our lives.

What an enemy we have, people! He is at war with us and here we are, helping him out! Did you know that Satan does not have the ability to read minds? I didn't either until we discussed it one day in Bible study. Instead, he watches *us* and listens to *us* to see where *our* insecurities lie. Then he makes it his mission to convince us that we are what we fear becoming the most. He gets his information from *us*. The next time you want to call yourself a name, or say something derogatory about yourself, just remember that you are literally helping Satan keep you from being the person God knows and wants you to be. Tell Satan (and those thoughts) to get lost!

ASANA (POSE):

Tree Pose (Vrikshasana)

When our lives are firmly planted like a **tree in God's word**, we are more resistant to speaking negatively about ourselves. From Mountain Pose, find a focal point. Balance on one leg, drawing the opposite foot onto the ankle, calf, or thigh of the standing leg. Hands can be in prayer position, or can extend toward heaven, fingers reaching overhead. Hips should be level. If they are not, move the foot further down the leg until hips are level again. Do not place foot on inside of knee: thigh, calf or ankle only. If the foot is placed high on the leg, press the foot into the thigh and the thigh into the foot. Draw energy up towards heaven, and firmly root the standing leg. Keep the core stabilizer muscles strong, and lift out of the standing leg. Begin to think about ways you show love toward yourself. Do you eat right? Get enough rest? Do something for yourself daily? How do you internally speak about yourself - positively or negatively? Prayerfully ask God to show you ways to love yourself, so you may love others. Ask the Holy Spirit to alert you when the enemy stands in your way.

Emmanuel, Becky