

YOU'RE NOT ENOUGH



(AND THAT'S OKAY)

Escaping the Toxic
Culture of Self-Love

ALLIE BETH STUCKEY



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By Allie Beth Stuckey

12-minute read

Synopsis

You're Not Enough (And That's Okay) (2020) explores why self-love culture doesn't bring us the happiness, peace, and fulfillment it promises. Rather than continuously battling our feelings of insufficiency, author Allie Beth Stuckey suggests we accept them and embrace another source of love – God.

Who is it for?

- Conservative women struggling with self-acceptance
- Believers looking to reconnect with their faith
- Christians wanting to live God's Word more fully

About the author

Allie Beth Stuckey is the host of podcast *Relatable*, which tackles political, social, and theological matters from a conservative, Reformed point of view. She frequently offers commentary on Fox News and speaks to students, businesses, and political and religious organizations across the United States.

What's in it for me? Discover a better way to bring love into your life.

Self-love is the ultimate destination, or so self-help gurus, bloggers, and influencers would have you believe. They promise that when you finally arrive at self-love, you'll know in the core of your heart that you're perfect. You'll feel happy and complete.

Yet, if you follow their advice, you'll find yourself hitting a dead end time and again. You'll be so exhausted from trying to love yourself that there's no way you can love anyone else. This, in turn, will make you lonelier than ever before.

The problem is that you're being fed a lie. You'll never "be enough" because total emotional or spiritual self-sufficiency is impossible. However, that doesn't mean you have to live without joy and meaning. To bring endless love into your life, you just have to stop searching for it inside yourself. As these blinks show, you can instead turn to an abundant source that will never let you down – God.

In these blinks, you'll learn

- why following your heart isn't the path to happiness;
- how to change your life's focus to find true joy; and
- the reason you shouldn't hold off from loving others.

Aspiring to self-love won't bring you peace or fulfillment.

How many pathways of self-betterment have you followed? Perhaps you've read some books, changed your diet, and listened to podcasts. But nothing you try yields a lasting result. So you embrace the next remedy, looking for the key that will unlock the perfect you, the version of yourself that will bring you the happiness you deserve.

If that sounds familiar, you're not alone. In America, many people are on this hunt for self-love. It all started 50 years ago when psychologists identified self-esteem as a way to solve society's problems, from crime to poor education. But unfortunately, shifting our focus onto how we feel about ourselves has actually made us less happy.

The key message here is: Aspiring to self-love won't bring you peace or fulfillment.

When you were young, you probably had some grand aspirations. Maybe you were going to be the next Britney Spears. But as you grew older, you came to understand that your dream might actually be a delusion. As much as you longed to be a pop princess, you just didn't have the talent. You weren't *enough* –

who you were as a person just wasn't sufficient to make your dream a reality.

And yet, as an adult, you're hearing a different message from lifestyle bloggers and spiritual Sherpas. According to them, you *are* enough. You have what it takes to achieve everything, from fulfilling your responsibilities at home to acing it at work.

In the moment, this may comfort you. But eventually, something will contradict what you're being told. Perhaps your toddler won't sleep during nap time, or you miss an important deadline. Or maybe you find that you just can't love that reflection in the mirror, no matter how hard you try. Then, feeling like a failure, you'll convince yourself that the next practice or life change will be the one that finally works.

But here's the catch: a problem can never be its own solution. If you feel insecure, you won't find the cure to that inside you. You'll need to look outside yourself for an antidote. That's why striving for self-love leaves you feeling exhausted, hollow, and purposeless.

There is a place to find the peace you're seeking, though: God's love. Self-love can deplete you, but God's love is eternal and steadfast. When you accept that God will love you despite your shortcomings, you no longer need to love yourself obsessively. With God as your source of sufficiency and purpose, you no longer need to worship your imperfect self.

Trying to be enough can cause you serious harm.

Not long after she graduated from college, the author, Allie Beth Stuckey, was told she was going to die. But she wasn't in the ER or being held up at gunpoint; she was sitting in a counseling session. She'd sought counseling when she realized that some self-destructive habits had become a way of life.

Through counseling, Stuckey unearthed the root of her harmful behavior: a devastating breakup in her senior year. To cope, she had started using flings and alcohol to mask the pain of rejection. She also became fixated on the idea that she wasn't enough – and that she should be. If she wanted to attract men, she convinced herself, she needed to be skinnier. Soon, she was throwing up everything she ate.

This behavior did nothing to help her. In fact, as her therapist said, it was threatening her life. But the problem wasn't that she wasn't enough – it was thinking that she needed to be.

The key message here is: Trying to be enough can cause you serious harm.

After the appointment with her counselor, Stuckey broke down in her car. She'd embraced Christianity in her final semester at college but had distanced herself from God in order to focus on herself after the breakup.

She'd been afraid that having to really experience her sadness while she waited for God to heal her would be too distressing.

Alone in her car, Stuckey asked God to help her. She saw that the only way to conquer her eating disorder was to accept that she couldn't heal herself – she simply didn't have what it would take. This acknowledgment that she wasn't enough was the first step toward a healthier life.

To get her life back on track, Stuckey needed support from something bigger than herself. For her, that was Jesus Christ. Instead of letting herself be defined by who she was or dwelling on why she was alive, she refocused on Jesus – who she believes is the true source of peace and fulfillment.

Jesus reminds you that you don't *need* to be enough. He can provide you with the identity and purpose you'll otherwise search for endlessly. Since Jesus can give you everything you need, you don't have to have all the answers inside yourself. This frees you from the myth that you possess some mystical inner force that can solve all your problems, if only you could learn how to unleash it.

Following your heart won't lead you to truth.

Chloe was on the adventure of a lifetime. She'd left her Texan hometown and was backpacking through Europe on a journey of self-discovery. But she wasn't just traveling to see the sites. Back home, she had survived a brutal rape and then developed addictions to drugs and alcohol, which she'd used to numb her pain. Now, having overcome those addictions, she was bravely walking the path of inner healing, asserting her self-worth every step of the way.

Authors, travel bloggers, and friends had told Chloe that following her heart would heal her; she just needed to be true to herself by living in the moment. For Chloe, this meant getting together with a new guy in every town she visited. But all that did was make her feel ashamed and used when her lovers inevitably disappeared. Living her truth wasn't leading to happiness at all.

The key message here is: Following your heart won't lead you to truth.

Motivational speakers, like best-selling author Brené Brown, claim that your heart contains the truth about who you are. All you need to do to discover that true self, they claim, is follow your heart. But a lot of the time, your heart will just lead you to quick fixes, like Chloe's impulsive dating. This won't heal past hurts or help you confront past mistakes – most of the time, it just leaves you feeling incomplete.

This happens because you're human, meaning your feelings and thoughts are often unclear. If you determine your own truth, you're at risk of building it on unstable ground. And a truth based on things as

changeable as your mind and heart will never give you the clarity you long for.

But the author believes that if you look to God for truth, you'll find a constant standard that will give you the stability you seek. By studying the Bible, you can grow your understanding of God's truth. Because it's God's Word, the Bible isn't influenced by the latest social media trend or anyone's self-interest. This means it'll help you distinguish between what's really true, and what you hope to be true.

Once you've accepted that truth comes from the Bible, you'll be better able to evaluate how to live according to God's wishes. Instead of being persuaded by fads and feelings, you can choose the path God wants you to walk.

There's no such thing as the perfect person.

When she was in middle school, Stuckey was desperate to get her eyebrows waxed. But her mom wouldn't let her. So Stuckey took matters into her own hands. Using her mom's razor, she attempted a DIY brow shape. The end result? She accidentally cut off half an eyebrow. And, of course, school pictures were being taken the next day.

Like many girls, Stuckey had been told from a young age that she was perfect. But, at the same time, she was consistently being told that she needed to *do* something to make herself perfect. She had to shave her legs, and wear makeup, and crimp her hair. That way, she'd be able to unleash her true perfection. But perfection – inside and out – is nothing but a delusion.

The key message here is: There's no such thing as the perfect person.

Online self-love culture is brimming with assertions that you're perfect, exactly as you are. If you can manifest your innate perfection, you'll feel complete. To do this, you'll have to take some action: organize your closet, live by some principles, switch your diet.

But even if you follow such a program, you never seem to reach that promised destination – true self-love and acceptance. "It's not you!" your perfection guru insists. Instead, there are all kinds of external forces preventing you from fully realizing your perfection. Capitalism, your parents, your boyfriend, and maybe even planetary movements are working against you to stop you living your best life. This shifts the responsibility off your shoulders. It's no wonder you haven't discovered your authentic self! You're constantly being sabotaged.

In reality, your mission for perfection is doomed. No one is perfect, not even people who *do* take responsibility for their lives, so trying to be perfect won't give you the happiness you long for. Instead of working so hard to attain the impossible, you should refocus your efforts on fostering a close relationship with God – something that *will* bring you fulfillment.

God doesn't expect you to be perfect. He knows that's unrealistic. What he wants you to do is embody the universal characteristics of his spirit, striving for goodness, love, joy, peace, and self-control. By making this your aim, instead of trying to be perfect, you'll avoid the disappointment you'll otherwise feel by constantly trying to be the smartest, the most accomplished, and the most beautiful person you know.

Your dream job won't complete you.

From a young age, Stuckey knew that public speaking was her professional calling. She just wasn't sure how to make it happen. But her interest in politics eventually gave her the entry point she needed. In 2015, she started talking to sororities about the importance of voting in presidential primary elections. By 2017, Fox News was booking her on its shows.

Now, Stuckey is living her dream career – writing books, hosting a podcast, and commentating on TV. She works from home and gets paid to do something she loves. But that doesn't mean every workday is filled with joy. Her happiness ebbs and flows with the successes and challenges her job brings. Even the perfect job isn't enough.

The key message here is: Your dream job won't complete you.

Jump on any social media platform and you'll find people endlessly saying you deserve everything you want. And that you're entitled to all of it, including your dream job. Venture a little further into the digital world, and the #girlboss community – ambitious, professional women online – will explain what this job looks like. It should unite passion and income with meaning, they'll say, and guarantee your happiness. And it must be something that you're simultaneously obsessed with and satisfied by.

This view doesn't just set you up for disappointment. It also dismisses the fact that meaning can be found in many jobs – even those that fall short of being what you might call "perfect." A job can still be valuable to society, even if it doesn't tick every box on the #girlboss list. And by doing it well, you can still find great satisfaction.

Work brings you purpose and dignity, whether or not you're in your ultimate career. People who could work but choose not to often end up suffering emotionally and spiritually – not just financially – because humans need to be needed. Work fulfills this need.

But that doesn't mean that work can make you complete. No single thing can achieve that – not even your dream job. In a society that insists you're entitled to everything you want, you can easily start thinking of God as a kind of genie who should grant your every wish. But you're here to serve God, not the other way around.

Knowing that he'll always be there for you – no matter what your job title is – will bring joy into your life.

Your capacity to love others isn't related to how much you love yourself.

In the summer after junior year in high school, Stuckey volunteered at Camp Barnabas, a camp for people with special needs. She spent the week helping her assigned camper have the best time possible. It was hard work, but more rewarding than Stuckey had ever imagined. She loved the experience so much that, the following year, she worked at Camp Barnabas for six weeks.

During those weeks, Stuckey helped campers in all kinds of different ways. She fed, bathed, and comforted them. It was the first time she'd ever been called on to love another person without expecting anything in return. Stuckey was a typical teenager, insecure and self-focused. She certainly wasn't flooded with self-love. And yet, that didn't stop her from tending to the needs of the campers in her care.

The key message here is: Your capacity to love others isn't related to how much you love yourself.

The idea that you need to love yourself before you can love someone else emerged in the 1970s. Books by several Christian preachers, like Walter Trobisch and Cecil Osborne, claimed that without healthy self-esteem and self-acceptance, you can't love others well.

But self-love often blinds you to your selfishness. If you hurt someone, you're likely quick to give yourself the benefit of the doubt. But if someone hurts you in exactly the same way, you'll probably condemn them ruthlessly. Giving yourself a pass is a strategy that allows you to avoid being honest about your shortcomings. Perhaps you're afraid to face those shortcomings, worried that you'll end up in a state of self-loathing.

Luckily, as a Christian, you don't need to choose between this type of self-hate and the exhausting pursuit of self-love. By embracing *self-forgetfulness*, you can create inner peace.

Self-forgetfulness means shifting your focus to a point outside yourself. Instead of seeking your value through things that are constantly in flux, like work or relationships, you can place God's eternal love at the center of your life. This will release you from the need to love yourself, so you can turn your attention to others.

Since nothing is greater than God's love for you, that love is more than sufficient. Without the burden of being your own love factory, you can tend to the needs of others. That way, they can benefit from your support, regardless of how you feel about yourself. And by helping them, you'll flood your life with joy too.

Final summary

The key message in these blinks:

The self-love culture preaches that you're enough just as you are. But this is a delusion. All humans, by our very nature, are flawed and changeable. So, instead of bringing you peace and fulfillment, self-love practices leave you feeling like a failure, or blaming the world around you for not finding the happiness you're told you deserve. The truth is, you'll never be enough, but that doesn't matter. By embracing God's boundless love for your imperfect self, you can let go of your exhausting hunt for perfection and start feeling at peace.

Actionable advice:

Learn how to read your Bible.

Studying the Bible can be intimidating if you've never read it before. But it's the truest way to learn about God and how to live in a way that will bring you joy. Start by getting a study Bible, like the ESV Study Bible, and begin with John. As you read, consider the historical context of each passage, why you think it may have been written, and what it reveals about God. You can also reflect on your own behavior, to determine whether there's anything you need to do to better live God's Word.

Got feedback?

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What to read next: *Get out of your Head*, by Jennie Allen

As you've just found out, you can flood your life with endless love by shifting focus from yourself to God. But even when you're committed to living God's Word, negative thoughts can still crop up in your mind. And if you're not careful, these thoughts can overwhelm and confuse you. But by learning how to surrender your fears to God and give your mind to Jesus, you can silence those negative thoughts. To steer yourself down a more positive pathway by changing the way you think, check out our blinks to *Get Out of Your Head*.