Self-Care: Stewardship, Not Selfishness

Remember the safety demonstration on airplanes? “In the unlikely event of a sudden loss of cabin pressure, oxygen masks will drop from the overhead area. Place the mask over your own mouth and nose before assisting children.” Every time I fly, I am reminded that taking care of one’s own basic needs is not selfish; it enables us to give selflessly to others. Consider what would happen if a mother first put oxygen masks on her children, but lost consciousness before donning her own because she waited too long. Quite traumatic to her children, right?

We can’t give to others what we don’t possess ourselves. That includes mental and emotional energy, love, grace, and compassion. If we’re running on empty, and have nothing to give, that is neither loving nor kind.

God’s gift of the Sabbath in the Old Testament (Ex. 16:29), and His invitation to enter His Sabbath rest in the New (Hebrews 4), is His intention for us to be blessed by recharging our batteries, feeding our souls, refilling our tanks. It’s a form of self-care. That’s going to look different for various people, but it’s all God’s provision of what He knows we need.

For my husband, self-care means walking our dog, listening to his music on these walks, working out, and getting off by himself. For me, self-care is enjoying a cup of high-quality coffee first thing in the morning while I meet God in His word, leaving my phone in another room and unplugging from the world for several hours, and getting to a place where I can drink in the beauty of crystal-blue Caribbean water. Both of us have learned that we emerge from a time of self-care ready to focus on other people and the tasks before us. Self-care

enables us to be self-forgetful, which is a wonderful place to be!

In the gospels, we see the Lord Jesus' self-care as getting up early to spend time with His Father. He would no longer think of ministering in His own strength than we could successfully complete a road trip without stopping to refuel our gas tank. I think hanging out with His dear friends Martha, Mary and Lazarus may have been a form of self-care as well.

If God has created our bodies, minds and souls and thus they belong to Him, then we are responsible for taking care of them. Caring for His creation honors God and fulfills the duty of a steward: "Now what is sought in stewards is that one be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2).

Self-care is not selfishness, it is stewardship. How are you caring for God's treasure that is you?

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