

# It's Time to Start Talking to Yourself

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It's a scientific fact that humans are always talking to ourselves. (Scientists call this "self-talk.") We talk to ourselves more than we talk to anyone else. Sometimes we're our own cheerleader, talking ourselves into doing something difficult. Other times the conversation going on in our head is negative and destructive. We look into the mirror and tell ourselves we're fat, or ugly, or short, or dorky, or whatever it is that makes us avert our eyes when we see our specific reflection.

In Scripture, we can find examples of what my pastor calls "sanctified self-talk." Psalm 103 is an excellent example of this. I don't know when David wrote this psalm—while afraid and running for his life from King Saul or alone on a quiet hillside tending his sheep. Either way, David is experiencing what Paul Tripp calls "gospel amnesia."

Like all of us do at times, David loses sight of the grace and mercy found in Christ and needs a reminder of the love and hope of the Lord. So he instructs his soul to "bless the LORD," to intentionally remember how God has provided for him, forgiven him, redeemed him, and satisfied him (vv. 1–5). David is talking *about* God, but he is talking to himself.

On days you are discouraged or lonely, what do you tell yourself? Do you host an elaborate pity party, inviting insecurity, envy, depression, and anger to join you? Do you think of yourself in terms of success and failure, such as feeling good about yourself when you ace a test but hating yourself when you embarrass yourself in front of a cute guy at school?

When you find yourself like David looking down a spiral of destructive self-talk, what should you do? What should you say to yourself? Here are three ideas.

## 1. Recognize and run away from destructive self-talk.

What you habitually tell yourself shapes your beliefs, attitudes, and patterns of response. This means the conversation you carry on with yourself must be filtered through the Word of God.

A practical way to evaluate your self-talk is to take a week and spend a few minutes every day journaling your thoughts honestly. If what you find is not in alignment with God's Word (going through Philippians 4:8, for example, is a great way to do this), repent and ask forgiveness.

## 2. Stop listening; start talking.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones once said, "Most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself." Rather than letting negative thoughts run rampant, replace them with gospel truths by considering all that is yours in Christ Jesus.

If you believe in the saving work of Jesus and have surrendered your life to God, you are an adopted child of God and a fellow heir with His Son, Jesus. That means you are a chosen, forgiven, ransomed, sanctified daughter of the King, and "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" is YOURS! For a list of some of these "spiritual blessings," start with Ephesians 1:3–14.

### 3. Remind yourself over and over (and over)!

In Psalm 103, David reminds himself over and over of the varied and unchanging characteristics of God. He particularly notes God's steadfast (or unfailing) love, repeating it four times in the passage. David does this as a defense mechanism against fear, depression, and unbelief. By using this same model in Psalm 103, you can:

- Avoid “gospel amnesia” by recounting God’s faithfulness (vv. 1–5).
- Overcome discouragement by remembering God’s mercy (vv. 6–7).
- Find freedom from guilt in knowing God has removed your sins “as far as the east is from the west” (vv. 8–13).
- Conquer feelings of failure or anxiety by recognizing that Christ has already accomplished everything for you and rules over all (vv. 14–19).

If you’re not filling your mind with truth, a negative thinking pattern will infiltrate your mind, ushering in fear, resentment, pride, and self-loathing. Take an honest look at yourself. Acknowledge the sin you see. But then take that sin to Jesus, laying hold of His promise of grace and mercy.

If we could see the transcript of your “self-talk,” would it be mostly positive or mostly negative? What character trait of God can you focus on telling yourself about this week?

PS: Much of what I shared here is drawn from this sermon by my pastor, Brian G. Hedges. Here are some additional resources on this topic you may find helpful:

- *Telling Yourself the Truth* by William Backus and Marie Chapien
- *Lies Young Women Believe* by Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth and Dannah Gresh
- “Your Thought Closet Makeover” A *Revive Our Hearts* radio series with Jennifer Rothschild
- *Me, Myself, and Lies* by Jennifer Rothschild
- *A Gospel Primer for Christians* by Milton Vincent
- *Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Its Cures* by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

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Discussion questions:

- When are you most tempted to exhibit destructive self-talk or as the article says, “host an elaborate pity party, inviting insecurity, envy, depression, and anger to join you?”
- How do you practically stop listening and start talking to yourself?
- What are ways God has shown His faithfulness to you even this semester?
- What character trait of God can you focus on telling yourself about this week?
- Consider taking some time to meditate on just 1 characteristic of God—practice talking to yourself through Scriptural meditation! Get a blank piece of paper and write one characteristic at the top. Fill out the paper with scripture references, phrases from hymns, etc., elaborating on what you know about that one trait of God. Then explain how knowing these truths can change your outlook on our present circumstances.