



☺ Our first and last love is... self-love. ☺

By Jordan Hopson

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I've never been one for the whole self-doubt thing. I mean, don't get me wrong – you're allowed. It's just not for me.

Sure, I have my faults, but I've always been one to question. Early on Sunday morn, I was squashed in the middle of the pew with Mr. I-haven't-washed-in-four days and Mrs. Coughing-up-a-lung with the most skeptical look on my face. Yeah, that was directed at you, Mr. preacher-man (no offense intended at all; it's all for the sake of humor). In the classroom, I'd be the kid with my arm stretched so high I was nearly dusting the ceiling, desperately trying to ask "are you sure?" And when I read books, the love of my life, where I am at my most vulnerable and accepting, I still take everything with a grain of salt.

Call me what you will, the bottom line is: before I think I'm wrong, I'm going to see if you are first.

That statement screams horrible character flaw, but fear not: I use my supreme powers of self-confidence for good.

I can't remember one time thinking who I am or what I feel was wrong, and it's not. Every bit of it is, was, and will always be irrevocably me. I'm not taking any credit away from my parents or a teacher or any influential authority figure in my life, but I believe that I am inherently perfect the way I am (Side note: that doesn't mean that I *am* perfect, nor is anyone).

And thank god I've always felt that way. People have and will and can call me anything they want: I don't care. I'm not fazed – it'll only affect my opinion of you. But don't worry, go ahead and say whatever your heart desires – who am I to judge?

I feel myself getting more and more diverse every day, crawling further and further down my rabbit hole of obscurity, and I love it, so much so that I'm probably doing it subconsciously. But hey, that's me.

Just think of a category, be it politics, religion, sexuality, whatever, and I'm probably one of the rare and subversive little morsels in the bunch, but I don't care.

I've never let the differences make me feel different. Why try to stratify everyone when in the end, we're all so painfully the same? I've never felt that I'm any different to my fellow human being.

But that's just my prerogative.

And being so different I've been an outsider, looking in. My naturally observant and quizzical nature has led me to watch, analyze, and process the inner workings of society, how dubious and maniacal they may be (here mad insidious laughter rings in the background), and I feel it's made me all the better.

My golden rule? Always question. Never accept unwillingly; never go down without a fight. That may be a little too intense, but you have every right to choose to be free. I say you are right, as is everyone. But that also means you'll be wrong at some point, so humble yourself – no one has the answers. I may be talking out of my ass right this moment, but that's for you to decide.

So decide – are you, whoever you are, happy with the who that you are? If not, is it unhappiness possibly provoked by personal purposes? Because that's a totally different issue, and I'm not a doctor. But is it because someone – your friend, your neighbor, or even society (buzz word, sha-zam!) – said you weren't good enough? If so, stop it.

You are wonderful, so much so that it's heartbreaking. Reader, this author is telling you that they unconditionally love the good, the bad, and the ugly of you just because you are you, whether you believe it or not. As that one person said, you were born this way.

That you are that one unique person you are is a miracle.

So embrace every centimeter of who you are. I pride myself on loving who I am. Yeah, I've faltered; I'm nearly perfect and I have days that I wish my stomach was leaner or my teeth were whiter. But that's me. All jokes aside – if you're a sexual orientation minority, racial minority, religious, political, social, philosophical, anything-you-can-think-of-ical minority, it's cool.

Embrace it.

It's yours – your beliefs, your genes, your mind, body, and soul. No one else's.

And that's truly beautiful.

Acceptance of yourself and others is the key. These have been some wise words by yours truly.