



# Selfies: Searching for the Image of God in a Digital Age

*Craig Detweiler*

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Selfies are ubiquitous. They can be silly or serious, casual or curated. Within moments, smart phone users can capture their image and post it across multiple social media platforms to a global audience. But do we truly understand the power of image in our image-saturated age? How can we seek God and care for each other in digital spaces?

Craig Detweiler, a nationally known writer and speaker and an avid social media user, examines the selfie phenomenon, placing selfies within the long history of self-portraits in art, literature, and photography. He shows how self-portraits change our perspective of ourselves and each other in family dynamics, education, and discipleship. Challenging us to push past unhealthy obsessions with beauty, wealth, and fame, Detweiler helps us to develop a thoughtful, biblical perspective on selfies and social media and to put ourselves in proper relation to God and each other. He also explains the implications of social media for an emerging generation, making this book a useful conversation starter in homes, churches, and classrooms. Each chapter ends with discussion questions and a photo assignment for creating a selfie in response to the chapter.

## **Selfies: Searching for the Image of God in a Digital Age Details**

Date : Published April 3rd 2018 by Brazos Press

ISBN : 9781587433986

Author : Craig Detweiler

Format : Paperback 240 pages

Genre : Science, Technology

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# From Reader Review Selfies: Searching for the Image of God in a Digital Age for online ebook

**Victoria W. says**

In *Selfies* Craig Detweiler seeks to examine the current obsession with selfies and what makes this trend appealing: psychologically, theologically, and culturally.

Throughout the material I appreciated Detweiler's ability to weave in material from multiple sources and disciplines. While I anticipated the theological and cultural aspects that were drawn in as support, I was pleasantly surprised to see a strong historical foundation utilized from the fine arts and art history as Detweiler formed his argument's background and foundation. Although not his specialty, Detweiler adds a level of interest to art history (far more than I experienced in college) showing strong patterns of development and making good connections for readers to trace the history of the selfie and place it into a historical context over a recent fad.

One thing for readers to consider is that Detweiler's educational background really comes through in his presentation of material. The book felt like a text book and I could see it stepping into that role quite easily (for what would surely be an interesting class). That said, the material is definitely aimed at a higher education level, perhaps high school seniors, for those wondering about homeschooling options.

4 out of 5 stars

"Book has been provided courtesy of Baker Publishing Group and Graf-Martin Communications, Inc."

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**Eva says**

I have taken perhaps twenty selfies in almost as many years of my life. Only twenty. So in some ways I found it difficult to grasp Craig Detweiler's points regarding how obsessed the average teen can be with taking selfies, editing selfies, using selfies to tell a story, and looking for affirmation through selfies. On the other hand, this book wasn't *just* about selfies, but dealt with social media in a broader sense as well as narcissism - its origins and its dangers.

I found direct parallels between *Selfies* and the writings of Francis Schaeffer, particularly in Chapter 3 - "A Renaissance of the Self" (of course, because Schaeffer is well-know for writing about the Renaissance). Like Schaeffer, Detweiler looks at popular culture (both past and present) as a lense through which we can interpret our ideas of God, Christianity, and the world in general.

There were some theological points that I didn't agree with as I read *Selfies*, the one that sticks out most in my mind being the idea that God is not confined to being masculine, but can also be perceived as being female. I just...I have a lot of issues with that personally. There were also a couple photos of nude statues in the second chapter and some language I didn't appreciate.

However, I still thoroughly enjoyed *Selfies*. It was a thought-provoking read with a lot of good things to say about how we are created in the image of God, how God sees us, how we see God, and how there should

always be mercy and grace extended in our dealings with each other. Excellent book, recommended to mature readers who would like a Christian perspective on how social media - and selfies/images in particular - have a place in our lives and our worldview.

*I received this book for free in exchange for my honest opinion. Book provided courtesy of Brazos Press and Graf-Martin Communications, Inc.*

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## **Laura says**

I have always thought my husband and I were probably among the first people to take selfies. We dated in the pre-digital era so we used disposable cameras pre-loaded with film. If we wanted to remember a moment, Paul would reach one arm out with his finger on the button and I would snuggle in so he could capture the moment with both of us together. There was no instant feedback or retakes so we had to wait until the film was developed to discover that he was actually a really great self-photographer.

We didn't know at the time that they were called "selfies," of course. That word was officially adopted in 2013 by the Oxford English Dictionary after the invention of the rear-facing camera on smartphones popularized the practice. But the history of self-portraiture actually dates back much further. I was captivated by the way Craig Detweiler explored the depths of what I assumed would be a shallow subject in *Selfies: Searching for the Image of God in a Digital Age*.

By recognizing that each human is made in the image of God, Detweiler explores the good intentions behind our desire to take our own picture. He sees each selfie shared online as a form of "visual query" meant to ask "Who am I?" As a Christian, he recognizes that we need "a more reliable source for our confidence and courage than each other." Nonetheless, he dignifies the act of self-portraiture by connecting it to the history of portrait painting and the ever-present human longing to control the narrative of our lives. Detweiler recognizes that we can use selfies as a tool to spur us towards self-reflection or to turn our lives into clickbait, and he lingers over the existential questions that will help us to "approach that selfie, that seemingly silly selfie, with reverence."

Detweiler considers thoughtfully our enthusiasm for photography. I particularly appreciated his observations, including his thoughts on how modern wedding trends prioritize photography. Instead of emphasizing the sacred ceremony of marriage, many couples spend the majority of their time and money preparing so their wedding will look great in photographs. Detweiler considers that perhaps "we use photographs to do what the church used to do—provide meaning at significant signposts along our journey."

Some chapters resonated more strongly with me than others, but I consistently appreciated the way he was willing to take selfies seriously. He celebrates that "photography may be the most democratic of art forms," thereby offering the power to present yourself as you want to be seen to more people than ever before. He reminds Christians that we can do better than just scoffing at this seemingly self-absorbed practice. We can see and love the people in those pictures.

This book is saturated with self-reflection. Detweiler seeks to understand the subject of each selfie and invites readers to do the same. He offers a gracious interpretation of selfies and sets an example for a gracious way to navigate our image-saturated culture.

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## **Audrey Adamson says**

Selfies Searching for the Image of God in a Digital Age appealed to me because I am interested in how theology changes as technology does. But this book wasn't for me; I read the intro and the first three chapters, but never really saw a way to create a "thoughtful, biblical perspective" on the topic. The book is mostly art history which might be interesting to some. I might have even enjoyed that if i was looking for art history. But I was looking for spiritual context and the biblical stories and thoughts I saw in each chapter seem to be thrown in and don't fit smoothly;y into the topic. Maybe the deep biblical perspective comes later, but I have a list of other spiral books I want to read and I feel will benefit me more, so I decided to move along. I received an ARC from NetGalley; all opinions are my own.

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## **Filip De Cavel says**

Such a well informed and researched look at self-imaging. Detweiler takes the reader on a cultural, philosophical, and theological journey through the ages, looking at 'selfies' from all possible angles. Balanced and provocative. Highly recommended.

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## **Michelle Kidwell says**

?Selfies?Searching for the Image of God in a Digital Age?  
by Craig Detweiler  
?Baker Academic & Brazos Press  
?Brazos Press?Christian ,  
Entertainment?Pub Date 20 Mar 2018?

I am reviewing a copy of Selfies through Brazos Press and Netgalley:~We live in a generation of selfies, anyone with a smart phone or tablet can post a selfie on social media from just about anywhere in the world, but do we truly understand the power of a selfie? It can capture a happy moment, a silly moment but there are times they can breed controversy.~

The Smiling Selfie in Auschwitz was a way for Breanna to connect with her deceased Father, but after it was posted online outrage ensued. Was a smiling Selfie in Auschwitz disrespectful, or distasteful.~

There are times that Selfies can be downright dangerous, stopping to take a selfie while crossing a busy street is never a good idea.~

Selfies can be good or bad, it's up to us how we use them.

I give Selfies five out of five stars!

Happy Reading!

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## **Alex Rea says**

Insightful and thought-provoking.

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## **Readnponder says**

When I saw the title of Craig Detweiler's latest book, I was expecting to read a screed about today's technology craze. Instead, it was a thought-provoking investigation into the history of self-portraiture and what our current obsession may reveal about the heart. I confess being late to the party, having acquired my first cellphone 4 months ago. I'm more likely to take a photo of my thumb than a bona fide selfie.

Detweiler begins with the the Greeks and the legend of Narcissus. He moves on to the Renaissance painters and their enthusiasm for self-portraits once the mirror was perfected. He talks about writers and autobiography and memoir-ish novels. Even the Puritans practiced documenting their lives in the form of diaries. The development of photography warrants its own chapter. All of this is thoroughly documented in the footnotes. About 25% of the book is footnotes.

The author considers selfies as a search for God via the imago dei. The preoccupation with self-imaging reveals a yearning for understanding and approval. Not all selfie takers are narcissistic. Some want to communicate with family spread far and wide geographically. Some are journaling in a new medium much as the Puritan diarists.

Instead of criticizing youth for their selfie galleries, Detweiler urges us to look beyond the photos to what the images reveal about the person. What are their hurts? their dreams? how they see themselves? Young people today are forced to grow up in public. Photos may go viral to a teen's great shame. Impression management is a 24/7 exhausting burden.

At the end of each chapter the author has discussion questions AND selfie photo exercises. I would love to read this book again within a small group. There is much to discuss and try out.

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## **Miriam says**

A very interesting and great book for group discussions. Lots of detailed information on history of selfies as well images, mirrors, painting, sculptures, photography, narcissism, and what the messages are to us and about us today. Lots of research in this book to help ask questions and navigate the discussion of this topic. Well laid out, and full of excellent content useful for dialogue and discussion, but still concise enough that it helps spark discussions without becoming a heavy academia style textbook.

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## **Herminia Chow says**

About the book: It's about selfies but also photography, writing, and so much more. Each chapter starts with

an image and ends with some questions as well as an activity or a challenge.

Book has been provided courtesy of Baker Publishing Group and Graf-Martin Communications, Inc.

First impressions: As a media student, I felt like it would be a relevant read. Interestingly enough, the author explored a lot of concepts I had already learned in university. I also enjoyed all the photos, especially the selfies.

“Writing is a form of time travel, snapping back to scenes we may have forgotten (or wish we could forget).”

Writing: The author quotes a lot of texts such as the Bible. I learned quite a bit about God, Jesus, and other religious figures.

The book proceeds in chronological order, beginning with the history of paintings and concluding with present day photography.

One of my favourite chapters is the one about writing and memory. As a writer, I found myself agreeing with the author.

Final thoughts: Had I read Selfies at any other point in my life, I probably wouldn't have appreciated it as much as I did.

Kudos to Detweiler for not bashing technology or teenagers. He made many insightful points and brought up ideas I hadn't considered before. Even if you're like me and you don't take a lot of selfies, you might still enjoy reading about them.

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## **Ginae B. says**

Before Selfies, we hadn't much pondered the selfie. What we know is that we no longer have to pay for image prints, disposable cameras or flash bulbs to take photographs. We shoot with digital and excepting equipment, the costs are entirely less-then they otherwise would have been.

Nowadays, most everyone has a constantly perched hand phone. It emits song files, reading files and snaps quick pics and why not? It's right there!

What prompted the author to write this book were instances of selfies gone bad. Detweiler viewed "inappropriate selfies." Oh man, we wished we hand't gone and looked. Taste less?

For us, we do not believe that selfies are the problem, as there are so many ways to display bad taste and disrespect. Selfies are a vehicle. View with caution.

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