

It's Not About YOU! Dying to Self

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me." Galatians 2:20

Selfishness. Self-centeredness. Self-absorption.

The young couple, whose marriage was on the rocks, looked at me, with tears in their eyes, honestly declaring "We are both very selfish". No wonder they had a rocky relationship that was on the verge of dissolution. Selfishness was sinking their marriage.

The bad news is that all of us are selfish. The good news is that we don't have to be selfish because we can die to self.

Through a restoration process, this couple's marriage was healed, restored and renewed. A major key to their breakthrough to a healthy, happy marriage was their willingness to surrender themselves to the Lord and live for Him and their mate, not just for themselves.

When they died to self, they could live for God and the people they love.

The World's Focus: It's All About ME!

Let's be honest: you and I live in a world system based on selfishness. "It's all about me" is the modus operandi of the world. Self is the center and focus of worldly living.

Self is priority twenty-four seven in a world that is enamored with itself.

Advertising, marketing, packaging, promotions of products and services is targeted to me...my selfish needs and wants. Marketers are slick and smart. They know that if their product pulls the string of selfishness, the sale is made. Why wouldn't self-centered consumers want to purchase our product when we make it look like it will make them feel good about themselves.. and they just can't do without it!

Selfishness abounds in the hearts of most people. Many people are a tiny island bordered on four sides by I, me, mine and myself. What a small island self is. And not many people want to visit selfish people. Why? Because most people love their own selfish island! And, to be truthful, selfish people are not fun to be around. Caring only for themselves, they don't care about me, so why bother?

In the Disney hit movie Finding Nemo, there is a classic scene where a flock of hungry seagulls are hovering over a school of fish. Seeing a sushi bar right before their eyes, the wide-eyed birds squawk loudly “Mine!” “Mine!” “Mine!” Those fish are mine, not yours, or yours, but mine. My fish...my meal. It’s all about ME!

You and I are not much different than those seagulls are we? As infants we learn the word mine early. In a room full of toys, two children will fight over one toy because they are selfish. “Mine” is their cry. Parents don’t have to teach kids how to be selfish. Self-centeredness comes with the sinful nature we inherited from our first father Adam.

As adults, we are no less self-absorbed than children. My career, my money, my hobby, my house, my car, my relationships, my dreams, my promotion, my stuff...”Mine!” “Mine!” “Mine!”

Selfishness doesn’t work for seagulls, children or for you and me.

Selfishness Hinders Healthy Relationships

How can two selfish people who establish and maintain a happy, mutually-satisfying relationship? The answer is obvious. It doesn’t work. Self-centered relationships are like two ships colliding in the night on the ocean of life.

Healthy relationships require give and take. If one or the other or both persons in a relationship believe it is all about me, they will take and not give. A taking philosophy has a short shelf life. Most people can only take “takers” for so long. Giving means that I set aside my wants and needs to focus on the wants and needs of the person I say I love. I lay down my right to myself in order to show my loved one how much I value them. I value them by giving and serving...to bless them and make their life a little easier.

Self-centered relationships are a perpetual tug of war. Self-willed individuals push and pull against the other person, trying to drag them to their side of moat. Time and time again I have witnessed selfish people destroy their relationships because they think it is all about them. It is about the boss, not the employees. About the husband, not the wife, and vice versa. About me winning, and others losing. About my standing, not the status of others. On and on selfish people go...taking advantage of, manipulating, intimidating, pressuring, oppressing, controlling and often abusing those who don’t agree that “It is all about Me!”

Selflessness must supersede selfishness for us to experience the healthy relationships that God can bless.

The Kingdom of God's Focus: It's Not About ME!

The Lord Jesus Christ came to show us what the kingdom of God is like. Study His teaching in the New Testament books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John to get a picture of God's way of doing things. A central theme in Christ's life was simply: It is not about Me!

Jesus, God's only Son, did not come to earth for Himself. He came to show us the Father and to do His will (John 14:9, John 4:34). He also came to seek and save lost sinners like you and me (John 3:16-17, Luke 19:10). Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve and give His life for the purpose of redeeming mankind (Matthew 20:28). As God's Son, Jesus certainly could have come for Himself...lived for Himself...ministered for Himself. His earthly life could have been all about Him...but it wasn't.

Jesus' life was all about His Father and us....what He could do to save us from sin and give us abundant and eternal life.

God's eternal kingdom is an unselfish kingdom. God's family is an unselfish one. Heaven will be a place where selfishness will be no more. What a relief, blessing and joy it will be to go to heaven and be done with our selfishness!

Symptoms of Self-Centeredness

- I use the personal pronouns "I", "me", and "mine" more than "you", "yours" and "ours."
- It's my way or no way...or hit the highway.
- I am consumed with my wants, my dreams, my desires, my needs, my.....
- I act like I am the center of the universe. Life revolves around me.
- I tend to dominate conversations, turning attention to myself.
- Other people's needs are always secondary to mine.
- People would say that I am stuck on myself.
- My hurts and heartaches are more painful than other people's.
- I feel that people are in my life to serve and give to me.
- I burn bridges to people when they don't meet my needs.

Signs of A Selfless Life

- My first thoughts are not about me.
- Putting God's will and the needs of others above my will and needs.
- A lifestyle of giving to others instead of seeing what I can get from them.
- When conversing with people, I focus on the others in the room.

- People who know me would say I am not selfish or self-centered.
- God places people in my life so I can serve and bless them.
- I make personal sacrifices to meet the legitimate needs of others.
- My hurts and heartaches are not more painful than other people's.
- My worldview is bigger than I, me, mine and myself.
- I build bridges to people by being sensitive to their needs and meeting them.

Scriptural Principles for Slaying Selfishness

The Bible teaches truth that sets us free from selfishness, self-centeredness and self-absorption.

TRUTH: To find your life you have to lose it first.

“Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will a man be profited if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? ”

Matthew 16:24-26

- To follow Jesus Christ we must be unselfish, and live for Him.

TRUTH: To live for Christ you have to die to self.

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.”

Galatians 2:20

- Jesus Christ lives in me when, by faith, I die to self. Life is no longer all about me, but all about Christ in me.

TRUTH: To be Christlike we must have His attitude and put others above ourselves.

“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”

Philippians 2:3-4, 5-11

- Unselfishness means putting others ahead of self.

TRUTH: Serving and giving flows from unselfish hearts.

“But Jesus called them (the disciples) to Himself, and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave, just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Matthew

20:25-28

- Serving others is a sign of unselfishness.

Selfish or Unselfish....You Decide For Yourself

1. On a scale of one to ten, with ten being extremely selfish, and one being extremely unselfish, how would you rate yourself? Do you like you ranking?

2. When you enter a room full of people, who or what is the primary focus of your conversation? You or others? How often do you refer to yourself when talking with others? How much effort do you put into getting people to talk about themselves and their interests?

3. Would the people who know you best and love you most call you a selfish or unselfish person? What would they base their assessment on?

4. List the areas where you tend to be selfish _____

5. List areas where you are unselfish _____.

6. If you are more selfish than you want to be, what are you willing to do about it?
This is what I will begin doing to be less selfish and more unselfish _____
_____.

Self-Surrender Prayer

If you are serious about dying to self and living for God and others, pray this prayer right now.

Heavenly Father, I recognize that I am self-centered and selfish. I realize that my selfishness hinders my relationships with You and others. I confess that my selfishness hurts me and the people I care about.

I come humbly and wholeheartedly to You to surrender myself to You. I repent and let go of my tendency to focus on me. I choose today to crucify my flesh with Christ who was crucified for me. I call upon You to deliver me, through the power of the Holy Spirit, from my sinful nature that is self-centered and selfish.

I commit myself to live for you Lord and for the benefit and blessing of others. Life is not all about me...it is about Jesus Christ in me. Show me daily Lord how to put You and others first in my life through service and giving. May others see Jesus in me because I will do my best do live unselfishly.

Thank you Jesus for delivering me from selfishness.

Life Is Not About Me... It Is About Christ in Me!

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