

Sin 101

Lesson 1

Selfishness

PART I EXPLANATION

Introduction: The sin of selfishness is the exact opposite of what a Christian is supposed to be. The first step in following Christ is a denial of self. Because of that, in order to be victorious or successful in the Christian life selfishness must be dealt with. Failure to mortify and temper our inordinate desire to please ourselves poisons every aspect of life. For example, it is impossible to be a good spouse if you are seeking your own interests and not the interests of your spouse. It is impossible to be a good parent if you are placing your own interests ahead of your children. It is impossible to be a good employee or boss if you are placing your own interests ahead of everyone and everything else. It is impossible to be a good Christian if you are placing your own interests ahead of others. The ultimate example of unselfishness is Christ, who came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many.

A major key to success in our Christian life is unselfishness. If you make it a habit to constantly place the interests of others ahead of your own interests, every relationship in your life will improve instantly. The source of strife in the home, the church, and the business world is a number of people pursuing the advancement of their own interests. Strife by definition is contention for superiority. As individuals contend for their own advancement and advantage they must disregard the interests of others. Continuance in this behavior is very unhealthy to our lives.

Selfishness is an addiction to self pleasing that if it is not dealt with will lead to destruction. It is a desire that can never be satisfied. That is why children of wealthy parents, who have been handed everything they have ever wanted since birth, are often more selfish than those who were given much less. The more they are given, the more they expect to be given, and it creates an insatiable appetite for self pleasure. Extreme selfishness is what leads to the ultimate act of selfishness, which is suicide. Any individual who commits suicide, regardless of the many extenuating circumstances, is ultimately placing their own happiness ahead of the best interests of their family. When a person is unable to see outside of their own circumstances and are smothered in self pity, their perspective becomes so warped that seemingly the only way of escape for them is self murder. They are unable to see the circumstances of life outside of the prism of their own interests.

Again selfishness is the exact opposite of true Christianity because the ultimate expression of love is to lay down your life for others. Suicide is laying down your life for yourself. It is a very deceptive sin because the remedy is the opposite of what the mind thinks. The mind thinks that the path to true happiness is self advancement when the true solution is the exact opposite, self abasement. That is why it is essential to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. As long as we are guided by a sin cursed mind, we will be unable to find happiness.

The Scriptures challenge us to have the mind of Christ. This mind is one that looks not on its own interests but on the interests of others. It does not strive to build its own reputation but humbles itself to be the servant of others. It is willing to surrender the rights of self even to the point of sacrificing its very life. This is the mind that God promises to exalt in due time and is the mind that needs to permeate the life of the Christian and the church.

Definitions: *For English use the Webster's 1828 Dictionary and copy all appropriate definitions for each word. For the Greek and Hebrew use a Strong's Concordance and copy the definition. The Strong's number is in parenthesis.*

English: **Selfish** -

Selfishly -

Strife –

Greek: (829) **authades** - *ow-thad'-ace*

Hebrew: (7522) **ratson** *raw-tsoné'*

Quotation:

Strife = "secret murmurings and complaints against your fellow men arising from selfishness:" JFB

"Rest assured, that if you put Christ in the second place, and your own things in the first, you will hear of it at the Judgment Seat." William Lincoln

"Selfishness is that detestable vice which no one will forgive in others, and no one is without in himself." Henry Beecher

"If you seek in the spirit of selfishness, to grasp all as your own, you shall lose all, and be driven out of the world, at last, naked and forlorn, to everlasting poverty and contempt." Jonathan Edwards

"The selfish man suffers more from his selfishness than he from whom that selfishness withholds some important benefit." Ralph Waldo Emerson

"No indulgence of passion destroys the spiritual nature so much as respectable selfishness." George MacDonald

"Beware of no man more than of yourself; we carry our worst enemies within us." C.H. Spurgeon

"To be saved is only this,--salvation from our own selfishness." John Greenleaf Whittier

"We are too much haunted by ourselves; we project the central shadow of ourselves on everything around us. And then comes in the gospel to rescue us from this selfishness. Redemption is this--to forget self in God." Frederick William Robertson

Confessions (Look up and read these articles)

The London Baptist Confession of 1689

Chapter 6 Of the Fall of Man, Of Sin, and of the Punishment - paragraphs 1-5

PART II EXPLORATION

Key Questions (*Answer in writing*)

1. What is selfishness the exact opposite of?

2. What is the first step in following Christ?

3. What makes it impossible to be a good spouse, parent, or employee?

4. What will make every relationship in your life improve instantly?

5. What is the source of strife?

6. What is selfishness an addiction to?

7. What is the ultimate act of selfishness?

8. What is the ultimate expression of love?

9. How does selfishness lead a person to suicide?

10. Why is selfishness a very deceptive sin?

Key Scriptures: *(Look up these verses and fill in the blanks)*

Matthew 16:24-25 In order to be a disciple of Christ a man must ___ ___ ___ ___

___ ___ ___ ___ ___ which means to ___ ___ ___ ___ your life in order to ___ ___ ___ ___ it.

Matthew 22:36-40 The ultimate goal and measure of Christianity is to love God but and the standard is to love your

neighbor as _____ implying that we naturally have a high measure of self love.

Romans 15:1-3 The value of a strong Christian is their ability to bear the

_____ of the weak and not to _____ themselves rather to please their _____
_____ for his _____. The example we are given is Christ who _____ not _____
_____.

I Corinthians 10:23-24 The determining factor of whether the apostle Paul engaged in any behavior that was questionable was not whether it was _____ according to the Bible but whether it served to _____ others. He then charged us to _____ not our own, but the benefit of others.

II Corinthians 5:14-15 The love of Christ in His death _____ the Christian not to live for _____ but for Him which died for them.

Galatians 5:13 Our _____ should not be used to satisfy our _____ rather to serve others.

Philippians 2:20-21 Paul was thankful for Timothy because he knew that he would care for others _____. Paul attributed not seeking our own advantage but that of others as an example of the mind of Christ.

Philippians 2:29-30 Epaphroditus is an example of the mind of Christ because for the _____ of Christ he was close to death because of his _____ to others.

Titus 1:7 A qualification for a bishop is that he must not be _____.

II Peter 2:10 Peter gives the identifying marks of an apostate and one of them is that they are presumptuous and _____.

Key Chapter(s) (*Read daily and summarize in your own words the meaning of the chapter*):

Philippians 2

PART III EXPECTATION

Memory verse: Philippians 2:4

Personal definition: (*Write a definition in your own words*)

Selfish -

Personal application: Identify an area in your life that is selfish and change your behavior to advance the interests of others instead.

Meditation question: (*be prepared for discussion*) Why is self denial essential to following Christ?

Extra Credit: Identify the most unselfish person that you know and list five ways they are unselfish.