

#5 PROPERTIES OF LOVE: DOES NOT SEEK ITS OWN

(1 Cor 13:4-7)

A. Paul stated that “love does not seek its own”; we’re more familiar with the term “selfish”, “love is not...”

1. Learning NOT to be selfish was probably one of the first lessons our parents tried to teach us.
 - a. They taught us how to share, & how to show an interest in others.
2. The problem of selfishness is understandable, because we are naturally interested in ourselves.
 - a. For example when you pull out those old class photos who is the first person you look for?

B. God’s word does not hide the fact that even among the great men of faith there were selfish attitudes.

1. James & John were thinking only of themselves when they asked Jesus for the highest places of honor in the Kingdom (Mark 10:37).

a. Their selfishness caused the other apostles to become indignant – *probably because they didn’t think of it first.*

2. We would be hard-pressed to find a character in the Bible, who was spoken of at length, who did not manifest some degree of selfishness.

C. Selfishness is difficult to see in ourselves, but it’s not hard to pick out in others.

1. We probably have all met people who acted as though the world revolved around them.

a. What was important to them was that everything met with their approval – *selfishness is a destructive mentality.*

Jas 3:13-15 – Who is wise & understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. 14 But if you have bitter envy & self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast & lie against the truth. 15 This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. 16 For **where envy & self-seeking exist, confusion [instability, disorder, disturbance] & every evil thing are there.**

[There are churches where there is always, it seems, a state of unrest & uneasiness among the members due to the fact that some people always “seek [their] own” – *the church at Corinth was facing that struggle.*

Lenski wrote, he said, “Cure selfishness, & you’ve just replanted the garden of Eden.”

Another author wrote, “He who lives only to benefit himself, confers upon the world a benefit when he dies.”]

I. LOVE IS NOT PREOCCUPIED WITH SELF

A. “Love does not seek its own” (NKJV).

1. “Is not self-seeking” (NIV). “Does not seek what is its own” (Darby). “Does not demand its own way” (NLT)

B. The combined meaning of these various translations is that love does not seek its own interests or its own advantages; love is not preoccupied with self.

1. This is especially important today because we live in an age of radical individualism; people are consumed with their own self-interest.
2. They place themselves at the center of their lives, which is the rightful place of God.
3. This all-consuming focus on self is completely contrary to the love of a Christian.

C. What if Jesus had been a selfish man?

1. There would have been no cross & thus no redemption for us.

Luke 22:27 – For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet ***I am among you as the One who serves.***

Matt 20:26-28 – ...but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. 27 And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave — 28 just as **the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, & to give His life a ransom for many.**

Rom 15:3 – For **even Christ did not please Himself**, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me."

D. What if the apostles had been selfish men?

1. They certainly wouldn't have made the sacrifices they did to honor the name of Jesus Christ.

1 Cor 4:9-13 – For ***I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels & to men.*** 10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but we are dishonored! 11 To the present hour we both hunger & thirst, & we are poorly clothed, & beaten, & homeless. 12 And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; 13 being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.

1 Cor 9:19 – For though I am free from all men, ***I have made myself a servant to all***, that I might win the more

1 Cor 10:32-33 – Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, 33 ***just as I also please all men in all things***, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

2 Cor 12:14-15 – Now for the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be burdensome to you; for ***I do not seek yours, but you.*** For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. 15 ***And I will very gladly spend & be spent for your souls***; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved.

E. This was not an easy example for the Corinthian church to follow (or any of us for that matter).

1. They had insisted on their rights & freedoms to eat foods offered to idols, even if that liberty hurt the conscience of someone (**1 Cor 8-10**).

1 Cor 8:13 – Therefore, ***if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat***, lest I make my brother stumble

Rom 14:15 – Yet ***if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love.*** Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died.

2. They also used their spiritual gifts in a selfish way, which is obvious from... (**1 Cor 13:1-3**).

[They had not yet come to understand that a Christian is a servant who demonstrates love, & love is not selfish.

Since love is not preoccupied with self, then it must be occupied with the interests of others.]

II. LOVE IS OCCUPIED WITH OTHERS

A. **Barnabas** was a wonderful model of a Christian man who was not preoccupied with himself.

1. The first time we read about Barnabas he is selling his land & giving the money to the poor saints in Jerusalem ([Acts 4:36-37](#)).

2. But what is most impressive about Barnabas is how he included Saul of Tarsus in the Lord's work at Antioch ([Acts 11:19-25](#)).

a. Barnabas was at the center of that work, & yet he thought more about what was best for the church than what might be best for his own position & prominence among the brethren.

b. Barnabas demonstrated that love is not selfish; he was not jealous of Paul's advancement; he was not envious of Paul's apostleship – *if fact, he encouraged it.*

c. No wonder the people called him “son of encouragement” ([Acts 4:36](#); [11:23](#)).

d. He lived by the motto: “Great things can happen when you don't care who gets the credit.”

[Great things happened in the church at Antioch through the unselfish nature of Barnabas & Paul.

Great things can continue to happen in the church today, when we act as they did.

-- What can help us control the selfish urge?]

III. COMPASSION CONTROLS SELFISHNESS

A. In [John 5](#) we meet some very selfish, unloving religious people.

1. Jesus healed a man who had been lame for 38 years, & you would think that everyone would be happy about that, but the Jews were upset.

a. They were upset because Jesus getting the attention they thought they deserved.

2. They were so selfish they couldn't even show an ounce satisfaction over what had happened.

a. So Jesus laid it out the reason they could not rejoice with this man.

John 5:42-44 – But I know you, that ***you do not have the love of God in you.*** 43 I have come in My Father's name, & you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive. 44 ***How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, & do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?***

3. Jesus said “How can you believe” acting the way you do toward others.

a. In other words, you cannot even have faith in God if your goal in life is to seek your own.”

The story is told of an elderly man who spent \$50 a month to lay flowers on his wife's grave. Every time he came to visit the grave he would speak these words, “I wish I weren't here my dear. I would much rather be with you.”

One day he told someone what he had been doing, & that person said, “I used to bring flowers & say those very words at my mother's grave, but since my father has been sick & in the hospital I've gotten acquainted with a lot of living people who can truly enjoy the flowers & the words of encouragement. So now I bring the flowers to them.

It wasn't long before the elderly man was doing the very same thing, & he never again said, “I wish I weren't here.”

[The point is that none of us is really living for the Lord, or loving as He loved unless we are living for someone else, & showing compassion for others.]

IV. HUMILITY & GRATITUDE CONTROLS SELFISHNESS

A. Paul wrote, “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit” (Phil 2:3).

1. His following statement tells us how to live life without selfish ambition or conceit:

Phil 2:3-5 – In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. 5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus...

2. But let’s not overlook verses one & two, because what Paul wrote here will also help us live without focusing on ourselves all the time:

Phil 2:1-2 – Therefore if there is any *consolation in Christ*, if any *comfort of love*, if any *fellowship of the Spirit*, if any *affection & mercy*, 2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

[The cure for selfishness is to be humble minded & to focus our mental energies on the spiritual blessing we have in Christ, to foster them in a spirit of unity, & to be grateful to God for them.]

CLOSING

A. Karl Menninger wrote a book called, “Whatever Became of Sin?”

1. In that book he defined sin as “the willful disregard or sacrifice of the welfare of others, for the welfare or satisfaction of self.”
 - a. There is a lot of truth in that statement, because selfishness is at the root of all sin.
2. But those who are interested in living for the satisfaction of God will learn that “love is not rude, love is not self-seeking.”

[Jesus said in John 10:17, “The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life” (NIV). God wants children that are willing to lay down their lives for others.

Will you do that today by turning from sin, confessing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ & being baptized into His Name?]