
Words of Truth

Don't Become Selfishly Inconsiderate

By: Brian A. Yeager

Life in this world is not easy for faithful disciples of the Lord for various reasons (Matthew 5:10-12, John 16:33, Acts 14:22, II Timothy 3:12, and I Peter 5:8-9). When adversity comes, it is easy to be preoccupied with one's own feelings, interests, or situation. That is what it means to be self-absorbed.

Paul, in a context we will revisit in this article, said this: *“But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s”* (Philippians 2:19-21). Selfishness is therefore not a new problem. It was and is a huge problem. It is promoted in our culture. It is infectious. It is easy to fall into, especially when difficulties arrive in our lives. Yet, selfishness is ungodly!

Throughout the Scriptures we are taught to care about, love, and be mindful of others. We are going to be judged on our care for our brethren (Matthew 25:31-46). Even beyond our brethren, the command to “love thy neighbor as thyself” is found throughout the Scriptures (Leviticus 19:18, Matthew 19:19, Matthew 22:34-40, Luke 10:25-37, Romans 13:8-10, Galatians 5:14, and James 2:8-12). How can I accomplish that abundantly clear instruction if I become preoccupied with myself and unaware of what is going on with others?

If you live long enough on this earth you are going to get ill, be treated badly, get taken advantage of, have a financial challenge, lose someone you love, etc. The list of bad things that eventually happens to all of us is long. Yet, in any number of those things, we are never excused by our Lord to become self-absorbed. When Jesus was facing a terrible death at the hands of ungodly people, He was still concerned about others more than Himself (Mark 14:32-42 and Luke 23:26-43). How Jesus thought and acted is our pattern to follow.

Consider Jesus' Ability To Be Considerate Of Others As Our Example

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being

found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:3-8).

When you look at instructions concerning us, as Christians, you find similar language as was quoted above concerning Jesus. We are supposed to be servants to others (Mark 10:35-45 and Galatians 5:13). We are supposed to look on the things of others (I Corinthians 10:23-33). In a context concerning authorized liberties and how we can carefully receive those with a weak conscience (Romans 14:1-15:7), we read this: *“Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me” (Romans 15:2-3).* Just as Jesus came into this world with a mindset to surrender Himself to our Father’s will (John 4:34 and John 6:38), we should have surrendered our self-will upon conversion into Christ.

When You Were Converted, You Should Have Stopped Living To Yourself

Please think through these words: *“Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences. For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart. For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (II Corinthians 5:11-17).*

When Paul was in prison, he thought about others (Philemon 1:1-25). He was so mindful of others that he even taught and help convert a man charged with keeping him in prison (Acts 16:20-34). Stephen was so mindful of others that he besought the Lord on behalf of his persecutors and murderers (Acts 6:8-7:60). What does that teach you?

Conclusion

If Jesus can think first of others while being crucified, Paul can when imprisoned, and Stephen can when being stoned, can’t you during the small things (in comparison) we face in our lives? Think of how it is not only helpful to others, but also to yourself when you are more concerned with the affairs of others than your own plights. I will conclude with something Paul said to the Ephesians when he sorrowfully left their company: *“I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).*