

The Selfish Spirit That's Destroying Relationships

If I asked you to reflect on our culture and observations you've made about people, what would you tell me you noticed?

You might comment on how judgmental you've noticed people have become. That's not all though. You might continue by sharing your curiosity about why people think they need to share their opinions and judgments with everyone. Maybe you'd voice your frustration over so many people's need to convince others that their opinions are right.

Maybe you would talk about how many people are on their phones texting, gaming or scrolling Facebook, even when they're with others.

Maybe the quick pace concerns you, and you wonder if anyone goes to the park anymore. Maybe you just went, had a blast and realize slowing down and spending quality time with family is good for everyone. You wonder if others would agree.

People have told me selfishness concerns them. Entitlement. Lack of respect. Few positive role models of strong and healthy leadership. Terrorism. Selfishness.

Yes, yes and yes. I would agree with you.

Chances are, if you've read one or more of my books or heard me speak, you're aware that I believe being other-centered is important. In fact, could other-centeredness be an antidote for much of what's wrong?

If we were other-centered, would we not be so demanding if others don't agree with our opinions? Would we respect their right to disagree? Would we put our phones down to more fully engage with others? Would we slow down and pay more attention

to people than to tasks? Would we be more grateful and less entitled? More respectful? Better leaders, truly looking out for what's best for others? Less selfish?

Getting our eyes off ourselves and onto others would do us all a world of good! Maybe making a list of advantages with our children would be a valuable dinner-time conversation.

When reading Eric Metaxas' new book, *If You Can Keep It: The Forgotten Promise of American Liberty*, I discovered another reason to raise children to be other-centered. Or maybe I didn't "discover" it as much as he gave words to what I've known to be true. I think you'll also agree that this reason, too, is important. At this time in our country, I'd say it's very important.

Here are some quotes, from pages 43-44, that I highlighted in yellow, starred in the margin, and am determined to remember:

Don't we as voters bear a serious responsibility to think about the whole country and about its future? We have to voluntarily balance that weighty responsibility with pure self-interest.

For democracy to truly work, not just for one or two elections but for dozens and for hundreds, requires much more than people merely voting. The ordered liberties given to us by the founders work together as part of a fragile mechanism. People must understand that their responsibilities as citizens are so serious as to be vital to the democracy itself. If the voter is not voluntarily selfless to some extent, and does not merely think of himself but of others, and if he does not think just about the present, but about the future, it all falls apart over time. Self-government will not work unless the citizens bear the responsibility to vote in such a way that continues their freedoms and their ability to have free elections, and that continues their economic prosperity. They have to vote in a way that does not

trade the future for the present.

What do you think? Is our country in trouble partly because of the self-centeredness that's increased over the past 10 years or so? Is this a conversation we can have with those we influence? I think so.

Dr. Kathy Koch is *the author of* Screens & Teens: Connecting With Our Kids in a Wireless World.