

The Tough Choice for Happiness

One of the greatest lessons I've learned is that you cannot be both selfish and happy. I know this is true through my own personal experience. But more importantly, the Bible has some things to say about the attitude we should have about "self."

For example, love is not selfish. In the Amplified Bible, 1 Cor. 13:5 says, "...Love (God's love in us) does not insist on its own rights or its own way, for it is not self-seeking..." In 1 Cor. 15:31, the apostle Paul said, "...I die daily [I face death every day and die to self]" (AMP), which basically means he was not self-seeking but instead focused on doing what God called him to do with his life.

There are also Scriptures that teach us the importance of having self-control. Gal. 5:23 lists self-control as a fruit of the Spirit, and 2 Tim. 1:7 says that in Christ, we have a spirit "of power and of love and of calm and well-balanced mind and discipline and self-control." If you've lived very long, you realize that not being selfish requires self-control, because we're all born with a human nature that is selfish. Think about how babies act: They are only concerned with what they need and usually cry when they don't get their way.

Thankfully, when we experience new life in Christ, we die to sin. Rom. 6:11 (AMP) says, "Even so consider yourselves also dead to sin and your relation to it broken, but alive to God [living in unbroken fellowship with Him] in Christ Jesus." But even though we die to sin, sin does not die. That's why we have to continually make the decision over and over again to choose to do the right thing on purpose. And we have what it takes, in Christ, to do what's right—whether we feel like it or not.

Discover Your True Destiny

As Christians, we are destined to be molded into the image of Jesus Christ (see Rom. 8:29). Jesus is the greatest example of what it means to love others and not live a selfish life. First John 3:16 (NIV) says, "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters."

This Scripture shows us that Jesus gave everything when He demonstrated His love for us. And we are to follow His example. The truth is loving others is not always easy, and it always costs us something: time, money, convenience, etc. But through our relationship with Him, we can find the strength and ability to love others, even when it seems to cost more than we think we can give. God is faithful to give us His love, grace and wisdom to reach out and be a blessing to others. And when we do, we end up receiving more joy and peace than we had before.

Now it's important to understand that God doesn't expect you to take this to such an extreme that you don't take care of yourself. We need to use wisdom so we can be healthy emotionally, mentally and physically while we're helping others. In following Jesus' example, remember to make your relationship with God your number-one priority and do what He puts in your heart to do.

Get the Right Mindset

The world is full of lonely, hurting people who are hungry for the love of God and the hope that is only found in Jesus. I want to encourage you to get rid of a "What about me?" mindset and instead pray, "God, show me someone who needs a blessing. Show me someone I can help."

We all have room to grow in our relationship with God, and learning how to reach out to others is a big part of that process. Selfishness and always trying to meet your own needs

puts you in a position of weakness. But the more you trust God to meet your needs, the more you'll be free to help the happier you'll be.

I used to be self-centered and focused on getting my way all the time. And I was miserable! But now I am happier than I've ever been, because I don't spend all my time thinking about what I want, what I think, and how I feel. The truth is, you *cannot* be happy if the center of your life is you!

Imagine how different the world would be if everyone would just do one nice thing to help someone else every day. It can be so easy to put a smile on someone's face. Give a compliment, give something away, take the time to listen, open a door for someone, let someone go before you in line at the list could go on and on.

Make it your business to regularly reach out to people around you, encouraging them and meeting their needs as you are able to do it. Be determined each day to do at least one thing for someone else that makes their life better. Trust me: You'll discover that serving God by loving others is the most wonderful, exciting thing you can do!

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