

OTHERS

What is meant by “others”? – it is a general description for anyone who, well, is not you. Others may be your family, your friends, your parents or grandparents, your children, your neighbors, your classmates and so on. You get the idea of who the “others” are; now, to elaborate on the question posed by Martin Luther King, *what are you doing for others?*

"Life's most persistent and urgent question is: What are you doing for others?"

-- Martin Luther King, Jr.

In our inherent selfishness, the notion of helping others is limited best by:

- self-indulgence – responding to our own needs and desires
- self-reliance – taking care of ourselves and *looking out for #1*
- self-centeredness – the world revolves around me; *It's all about me*

Of course, more extensions of selfishness may exist, but the three listed above provides a good start of the inherent nature to not only serve ourselves but to desire, expect and even demand that others serve us as well. Such a human trait can become so predominate or obsessive that self-deity, where one thinks of themselves as god or a perfect being, is the outcome. Therefore, the developing and increasing attention to self may eventually lead to a disregard for other people, a disposition of grandeur and a strong sense of *being above it all*.

In a very evident way, children may exhibit the extensions of selfishness described above (while they may also exhibit opposing forms of unselfishness within virtually the same hour). For children, an insatiable appetite for attention and other wants is driven by an undeveloped understanding of the needs of others and their own relationship with others. Though a child may have access to countless toys, the one toy most desired at one moment is the one toy being held by another child. Children have not yet mastered the skills of discretion; hence, the acts of selfishness can be an *open book* to the even causal observer.

As the child matures and their perspective changes, these overt acts of selfishness should subside; yet, these extensions of selfishness remain at large throughout our lives and can languish and emerge in extreme and damaging ways. Paul said: “When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.”

Our opportunity to increasingly shift our attention away from ourselves and toward others comes with an understanding of who we are in Christ. Jesus told us *to not only love our neighbors, but to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us*. A high-calling to be sure, but with Jesus all things are possible – even denying ourselves, talking up the cross, and following him.

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