

INNER PEACE #4

The problem of selfishness

Intro: Our inner peace can not only be destroyed by material anxiety, guilt, and doubt, it can also be diminished greatly by selfishness.

Selfishness results in lost inner peace.

Selfishness is having too much concern for one's own welfare or interests and having little or no concern for others.

I noted in the dictionary a long list of self-words, in fact, over 130 entries.

Many of these self-words will immediately suggest a loss of inner tranquility (self-absorption, self-advancement, self-aggrandizement, self-consciousness, self-doubt, self-hatred, self-pity).

Selfishness is rooted in a wrong evaluation of self.

It is the outgrowth of too high opinion of one's self and feelings of superiority to others.

It is the outgrowth of too low an opinion of one's self and a constant need to be validated by others.

Selfishness is manifest in angry attitudes.

It is anger that responds to desires not met or goals not achieved. It may be frustration due to the belief that others have in some way stood in our way.

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. (Ephesians 4:31)

Selfishness is actualized in hurtful actions.

Verbal abuse, strife, physical abuse

Passive hostility (withholding love, approval, appreciation, or forgiveness)

Selfishness destroys our inner peace, contentment, and happiness.

Managing selfishness brings inner peace.

We must come to terms with our place in big picture.

John in Revelation gives us a proper picture of where we fit into the universe. We are not the center of the universe; God is!

Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne. And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance.

(Revelation 4:2-3)

We must be honest about our sins and failures.

Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins. (Ecclesiastes 7:20)

Often we inflate our righteousness while diminishing others'. Feelings of superiority are often the result of a dishonest evaluation of how good we are!

We must affirm our value to God regardless of how others may treat us or respond to us.

Our personal worth is implied in God's creation statement:

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness;" (Genesis 1:26)

It is affirmed in God's great sacrifice for our redemption.

We must manage anger in godly ways

By seeking reconciliation

"And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. (Matthew 18:15)

By developing a heart of forbearance and forgiveness

And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. (Colossians 3:12-13)

Trust God to meet our needs

We must learn to find joy in doing God's will rather than expecting others to do our will. By so doing, we will experience an inward joy that is free of all selfishness.

"In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" (Acts 20:35)

We must submit to whatever circumstances God in His providence has planned for us, seeking to learn the valuable lessons not only of receiving but also of deprivation.

I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:12-13)

Conclusion: Selfishness is hard to ferret out in our souls. We can easily justify it by blaming others for their failures and short-comings. Let us all make sure that our personal unhappiness and loss of peace is not rooted in a wrong view of who we are and a wrong manifestation of it toward other people.

A self-love life may produce great esteem and love by others. But even if not, we can expect God's approval and reward by being giving and sacrificial.

Remember that all our hopes for this life and the life to come are based on a self-less act of God toward us!