



We Really Loved Each Other ?

Sitting in prison, Paul's greatest concern was not for himself. Instead, he thought of others. He called on the believers to complete his joy - not by meeting his needs, but by meeting each other's. Paul said to put pride away and treat each other as more important than ourselves.



Day #1: Drawn to the Light

Where can you find the most bugs when it's dark outside? They all gather around a light source. Chances are, when you arrive at home after dark, and your porch light is on, you have noticed that you have to open and close the door really quickly to keep those flying pests outside where they belong!

It's interesting how God's creatures are drawn to light. In a way, the same can be said of people. The Bible tells us there are two kingdoms: the kingdom of light, where God rules in His goodness, and the kingdom of darkness where people are separated from God by their sin (Colossians 1:12-13). People are drawn to the kingdom of light when they see it lived out the right way. Read how the first followers of Jesus lived:

✝ *All the believers were together. They shared everything they had. They sold what they owned. They gave each other everything they needed... In their homes they broke bread and ate together. Their hearts were glad and honest and true... Every day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved. - Acts 2:44-47*

People are tired of living in the kingdom of darkness where people are selfish and greedy. Selfishness comes very naturally to people, so when they see people serving and giving to others it is like a breathe of fresh air. People are drawn to this kind of life. That's why more and more people joined the believers every day! They were drawn to the light that the believers shown!

✱ What words would people in your home use to describe you? Would they say you are giving? Would they say you focused on the needs of others? Remember, it's natural to be selfish. Putting others first comes from God's Holy Spirit. If you need more light in your life, ask Jesus for it!

Day #2: Principled

Who would you say is the most important person you know? Why do you say they are important? Who's the most important person in your school? We'll see what God thinks about who is important.

Let's say your principal is heading to an important meeting with lots of official people. He's had a busy morning and is a little afraid that he might be late for his meeting. He walks quickly down the hall, past a kindergarten student. The Principal glances down and notices the little boy's shoe is untied. "Hey Buddy," he calls out, "you'd better tie your shoe so you don't trip." The little boy looks up and the look on his face tells the Principal that he does not know how to tie his own shoe. At that moment, the Principal stops rushing. He steps over to the boy, squats down, and ties his shoe.

Is the kindergartener or the Principal older? Who has more influence? Who has more power? Who makes more money? Who do you think is more respected?

The Principal was headed somewhere important, but at that moment, the child had a need. So the kind Principal treated the child as more important than himself. The Principal set aside his need to be on time for the child's need to be safe.

✝ *Don't do anything only to get ahead. Don't do it because you are proud. Instead, be free of pride. Think of others as better than yourselves. - Philippians 2:3*

✱ Sometimes we think certain people are more important than others. Often we think we are more important than someone else! The Bible says, "God treats everyone the same" (Acts 10:34). Ask God to help you treat everyone like they are the most important person you know.

Day #3: Self-ectomy

The suffix "-ectomy" means to take something away, usually through surgery. Can you figure out what a tonsillectomy is? What about an appendectomy? Sometimes, certain things need to be removed so whatever is around it can remain healthy.

Check out the word PRIDE. Circle the letter that is smack-dab in the middle of it. It's probably no surprise that "I" is in the middle of pride.

A wise man once said, "Pride isn't always thinking

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too much of ourselves; pride is thinking about ourselves TOO MUCH."

Pride can certainly come in the form of thinking, "I am better than other people," or "What I want is more important than what someone else wants."

But pride can also be found in thoughts like, "I wonder what everyone will think about what I'm wearing... I wonder if people will notice me... I wonder who will sit by me... I bet everyone knows I'm bad at Math... I... I... I..." Worrying about yourself constantly is a form of pride. These kinds of thoughts pop into everyone's mind occasionally. But if you find yourself thinking non-stop about how a situation affects you, you might need a spiritual self-ectomy. (That's the removal of your self from the center of your thoughts!)

You don't have to worry about yourself! God is bigger, stronger, wiser, and infinitely more powerful than you are, and He is watching out for you!



The Lord is in heaven. But He watches over those who are free of pride. He knows those who are proud and stays far away from them. - Psalm 138:6



Try this experiment: for the rest of the day (or if it's late, do this tomorrow) point to yourself every time you think or talk about yourself. This outward sign might just help you train your inward thoughts. Talk to God about what is revealed.

Day #4: Tale of Two Men

Go to the kitchen sink, cup your hands together and fill them with water. What happens when you squeeze your hands together? (You lose the very thing you were trying to hold onto!)

Saul was the king of the Israelites. Everyone naturally thought his only son, Jonathan would become the next king. But God had a different plan. Saul and Jonathan reacted completely opposite to God's plan.

We are not told if Prince Jonathan was told that David had been chosen by God to take the throne instead of him. But regardless of whether he was specifically told, Jonathan had an amazing attitude.



Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him just as he loved himself. Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David. He also gave him his military clothes. He even gave him his sword, his bow and his belt. - 1 Samuel 18:3-4

By handing these symbols of the kingdom to David, Jonathan proved that he would not cling to his

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"right" to be king. He supported his friend and would not withhold anything good from him. He put David first and through the years, their friendship brought both men great comfort and joy (1 Samuel 20:42; 23:16-18).

King Saul was another story all together. Saul spent years trying to hold on to his position and keep David from becoming king. Saul became so bitter and jealous of David's success and popularity that it almost drove him crazy (1 Samuel 18:6-16). Saul was filled with anger and hatred that kept him from enjoying his life and the many blessings God had given him.

The harder Saul tried to hang onto his earthly power, the less joy he had. On the other hand, Jonathan willingly gave up all this world had to offer and he was rewarded with peace and joy.



Is there anyone that you are jealous of? Is there anything you would be unwilling to give to a friend? Ask God to search your heart and, if needed, change your attitude.

Day #5: More Blessed to Give

Here's a question that requires some thought and a whole lot of honesty: If you could have \$1000 that you had to spend on just yourself (and none of it on anyone else), or \$1000 that you had to spend only on other people (and none on yourself) which would you choose? Discuss both options and in each case, how do you think you would feel after you spend all the money?

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul said his joy would be complete when his friends started to love others and put each other first. The truth is, *their* joy would be complete also!



You've probably heard this phrase before: "*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*" Do you know who said that? Jesus did (Acts 20:35). And who would know better than He? Who has ever given so much to so many? We'll talk much more about that next week!



Look at the clock and write down what time it is: _____ Set a timer in your mind. You have 24 hours to do something for someone else. Maybe it's playing your sister's favorite game even though it's not your favorite. Maybe it's doing a chore that usually belongs to someone else. But whatever it is, by this time tomorrow, you should have found a way to put someone else's wants or needs in front of your own.

After you accomplish your mission, write down how it felt to treat someone else as more important than yourself: _____