

LifeSavers Lesson 13: A Cure for Selfishness

Do you ever wonder about the craziness of our world? On every side people scramble for power. Wealth is flaunted, while in contrast, millions live in heart-wrenching poverty! Justice is perverted by terrorists and slippery politicians.

Where do these conditions come from? Why are some people so selfish and uncaring? Will things ever change for the better?

The primary cause for our ills can be summed up in one word: *Selfishness*. Throughout all of creation, there is nothing, except the selfish human heart, that lives only for itself. God planned that everything in His creation would be a blessing to others. But His plan first met defiance in Heaven when Lucifer entertained the desire to be above everyone else (see Isaiah 14:14).

The tenth Commandment is God's warning against harboring an attitude of covetousness, self-seeking, looking out for number one, and the desire for selfish gain (Exodus 20:17).

To fully appreciate the devastating effects of covetousness we need only contrast the two main players in the Great Controversy (the struggle between good and evil).

A. Lucifer (later known as Satan) said, "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God...I will be like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:13-14).

B. Christ, "being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:6-7).

In reading Scripture we find a clear picture of what heaven values most. In John 13:3-17, Jesus washed His disciples feet to illustrate His plan for people to serve one another with dignity. Giving to benefit others is the bottom line of God's kingdom. "For God so loved the world He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16).

Along with salvation, God gives other blessings and gifts for us to manage and use in compassionate ways.

Check one answer for each question:

I. We are God's Managers

1. According to Scripture, we are joint owners of the earth with God.

Psalm 24:1: TRUE FALSE

2. When God created humans and placed them upon the earth, their role was to manage His wealth and creation responsibly.

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15: TRUE FALSE

The preservation of this planet and its valuable resources is the God-given responsibility of every person. This earth is our home. Along with it, God gave us the wisdom, resources and creativity to care for it. But through greed and mismanagement, humanity has corrupted the environment for the purpose of selfish gain. Our planet is dying, and God will hold humanity responsible (Revelation 11:18).

II. God's Cure for Selfishness

3. God owns everything!

Psalm 50:10-12: TRUE FALSE

4. Our survival depends upon God's love and care.

John 15:4-5: TRUE FALSE

5. We acknowledge our dependence upon God when we give some of our means (time and earnings) back to Him.

Proverbs 3:9: TRUE FALSE

6. Actually, God requests that we return one tenth of our increase.

Leviticus 27:30, 32: TRUE FALSE

This helps prevent selfishness and greed from taking root in our hearts.

7. Really, when we give to God we are actually giving Him back what is His. Everything we have, including our lives is on loan to us.

1 Chronicles 29:14-16: TRUE FALSE

8. Some might say, "I work hard for what I get." But even here, it is God who gives us the ability to earn a living.

Deuteronomy 8:18: TRUE FALSE

9. People who decide not to bring any tithes or offerings to God live under a curse.

Malachi 3:8-9: TRUE FALSE

God doesn't need our money as much as He longs for us to possess the qualities of generosity that reflect His character. People who fail to embrace the joy of giving in this life would find heaven a repulsive place.

10. A tithe, or one tenth of our income should be given to God.

Genesis 28:22; Malachi 3:8: TRUE FALSE

The word "tithe," both in Hebrew and Greek, actually means "tenth." We are to return tithes and give offerings. Giving has not begun until we have first returned to God what is rightfully His. Malachi 3:8 indicates that we rob God by not bringing both tithes and offerings. In 2 Chronicles 31:5 the Israelites brought both offerings and tithes.

What's the difference?

Tithes are for the support of those who are called to preach the gospel and who work in the "house of God" (Numbers 18:20-21; 1 Corinthians 9:11-14). Offerings are for the support of ministries within the church (Psalm 96:8; Romans 15:25-27).

11. God wants our tithes and offerings because he wants us to be in poverty.

1 Timothy 6:10: TRUE FALSE

12. Putting wealth first in our lives can prevent us from obtaining eternal life.

Matthew 19:23-26: TRUE FALSE

13. God promises to bless those who follow His counsel.

Malachi 3:10; Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7: TRUE FALSE

Read the inspirational story of the Macedonian Church. Note their giving attitude. 2 Corinthians 8:1-15; 9:6-15.

It's tempting to gauge our giving by how much money we have after we've paid our bills and bought what we want.

14. Those who apply God's principles and make them first in their lives will have all their needs supplied.

Matthew 6:25-34: TRUE FALSE

15. Do you wish to acknowledge God's ownership of your life and all that you have? And do you accept His promise to supply all of your needs?

YES NO

III. Family Management

16. Jesus said we should honor our parents throughout our lives (regardless of our age)?

Matthew 15:3-9: TRUE FALSE

Jesus quoted the fifth commandment (Exodus 20:12) and also a Mosaic law (Exodus 21:17). He said that not only by God's law, but even according to Hebrew law, one should never show dishonor or renounce responsibility for one's parents. *"Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old" (Proverbs 23:22).*

17. God intended for Adam and Eve to have a helping relationship with one another.

Genesis 2:18: TRUE FALSE

Speaking of Eve's creation, the King James Bible says, "I will make a help meet for him," that is to say, one who is suitable for Adam. Other Bible versions use the phrase "corresponding to." Man's companion was to be like himself, each one suitable to the other.

18. The creation of Eve illustrates that she and Adam were to be co-equal partners.

Genesis 2:21-24: TRUE FALSE

Men and women are both created in God's image and are equal before God. Eve was not created from a piece of skull, or a piece of foot. She was created from a rib, symbolizing that both are to live and work side by side. He created male and female to be a matched pair and declared that when a man and woman are united in marriage they become one flesh!

There are valuable spiritual lessons in the marriage relationship. For God is Himself, a plurality; that is, three persons perfectly united into one Godhead (see John 17:21 and Genesis 1:26). In like manner, husbands and wives are to live together in unity and harmony, different as individuals, yet co-operating with each other as a team that works toward the same goal.

19. Husbands should love the church more than their wives.

Ephesians 5:25, 28-29: TRUE FALSE

It makes good sense that happiness and faith can be best maintained where both husband and wife share the same faith.

20. Wives should be able to look to their husbands for support and leadership.

Ephesians 5:22-24: TRUE FALSE

Every team needs a captain, but even the captain must be accountable to the team owner. This becomes a major spiritual challenge for some husbands. When a God-fearing husband gives himself completely to his wife, as Christ does to the church, what fear would there be for a wife to submit to him for the sake of unity and harmony in the family? In this way, not only will peace and harmony encircle our homes, but a living illustration is provided of Christ's own commitment to His church.

IV. The Divorce Dilemma

21. Unfortunately, every couple is not part of a God-fearing husband and wife team. When one partner is at odds with the other, they should make every effort to win them by their godly influence.

1 Peter 3:1-4: TRUE FALSE

Divorce is not forbidden to the Christian, but it should not be viewed as the "easy" way out. In the first place, it is not easy for either person, and secondly, it is seldom a remedy. Often it causes many heartaches of its own.

22. Scripture permits divorce for marital (sexual) unfaithfulness.

Matthew 19:7-9: TRUE FALSE

Because sex is such an intimate experience, adultery violates the fundamental bond that ties a couple together.

23. According to Christ, adultery begins in the heart (where we nurture covetous, lustful thoughts).

Matthew 5:27-28: TRUE FALSE

From a spiritual perspective, feeding and harboring lustful thoughts destroys our hunger for spiritual things. When we act out our thoughts and indulge in activities that violate our partner's trust, we release them from their life long pledge to us.

God does not easily give us up (Ephesians 5:29-32). Through His grace, even if we make terrible mistakes, we can start over.

24. Even when a man and woman are madly in love, marriage requires deliberate effort. 1 Corinthians 13 provides sound advice to those committed to making their marriages last.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8: TRUE FALSE

This sort of love is not natural to us. It can only be found when we accept God's love and are born anew (1 John 4:7-8).

Keep in mind that an unloving or self-loving spouse *may be changed* if they are introduced to the Author of love by a patient, God-fearing husband or wife.

25. We shouldn't worry about who we marry because we can just change them after the honeymoon is over.

2 Corinthians 6:14-15: TRUE FALSE

Scripture doesn't teach that those who find themselves in unhappy marriages should separate (see 1 Corinthians 7:1-16). However, if a spouse or the children are being abused in a relationship, appropriate action may need to be taken for physical safety.

It's no secret that Satan is ripping apart the fabric of civilization by destroying the relationships that God intended should bring joy into our lives. It was predicted,

"But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God," (2 Timothy 3:1-4).

26. In today's world Scripture's wisdom no longer applies.

2 Timothy 3:10-15: TRUE FALSE

The Bible is a book for all times. Even though contemporary life may seem far removed from the ancient past, the principles and promises of Scripture still apply!

27. By God's grace, I accept my responsibility as a Christian to love others, including my parents, spouse, and children.

YES NO

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