

Unselfish¹ Service



MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘Watch out and guard yourselves from every kind of greed; because a person’s true life is not made up of the things he owns, no matter how rich he may be’ ” (Luke 12:15, TEV).



GERMAN PHILOSOPHER² IMMANUEL KANT SUMMARIZED life in three great questions: (1) What can I know? (2) What ought (should) I do? (3) What can I hope?

This week’s lesson looks at the second question, What ought I do? This question is connected to the answers to the other two questions. We can know that Jesus died for our sins. We can hope in the promise of eternal³ life because of His death. Meanwhile, we ought to do what God asks us to do. We should live our lives in selfless⁴ service for other people, just as Jesus lived His life for us. As John said: “This is how we know what love is: Christ [Jesus] gave his life for us. We too, then, ought to give our lives for our brothers!” (1 John 3:16, TEV). Living for other people is not always easy, because it is easy for people to think only of themselves. Only through Jesus can we change to think of other people.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE: What have we received from God that we can share with other people? How can we not be selfish? Why is death to self so important? How do we die to self? What should be our reasons for service? What kind of sacrifices must we make for other people?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 21.

¹unselfish—not selfish.

²philosopher—person who studies philosophy (truth, knowledge).

³eternal—forever; without beginning or end; lasting forever.

⁴selfless—not selfish.

SUN FREELY GIVEN; FREELY GIVING.

“Go and preach, ‘The kingdom of heaven is near!’ Heal the sick [people], bring the dead [people] back to life, heal those [people] who suffer from dreaded skin diseases, and drive out demons. You have received without paying, so give without being paid’” (Matthew 10:7, 8, TEV).

Heal sick people, cleanse lepers, raise dead people, cast out devils, preach about the kingdom of God. Jesus told His disciples to do important things. But more important are the reasons why they were to do these things. Jesus said to them, “Look what God has done for you. Now use God’s power to do the same for other people.”

Jesus has saved us from eternal death. This is something we cannot do for anyone else. But we can give ourselves to other people, just as Jesus gave Himself to other people. What Jesus has given us, He has given to us freely, even though it cost Him so much. So we should be willing to give freely to other people. Giving freely to other people is the heart of Christian service.

Write out what we have received from God and the verses you find that show what we have been given:

Example: Forgiveness of sin (Ephesians 1:7).

We think about all that Jesus has done for us. We think about the security (safety), the hope, the promises, the peace, and all that we have received by grace. Then how could we not want to give to other people? We make Jesus real in our lives. We experience for ourselves His grace, mercy,⁵ and forgiveness. We know for ourselves the joy of what it means to love and serve God. So we have the right reasons for wanting to share our blessings with other people who need Jesus too.

Which of the blessings Jesus has given us can we share with other people? Which blessings can we only tell other people about?

MON THE SPIRIT OF SERVICE.

“If one of you wants to be great, he must be the servant of the rest [of you]; and if one of you wants to be first, he must be your slave—like the Son of Man [Jesus], who did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life to redeem [save] many people’” (Matthew 20:26-28, TEV).

If you want to be great, you must become a servant? If you want to be first, you must become the lowest, even a slave? Think about how Jesus’ words disagree⁶ with worldly ideas of greatness and power.

⁵mercy—kindness we do not deserve.

⁶disagree—do not agree.

Jesus spoke these words when a mother asked that her two sons have the two positions of honor in His kingdom (Matthew 20:20-23). She was covetous (jealous) for her sons' success. But yet the mother of James and John did not ask this favor of Jesus without their knowledge. The Bible says that they came with her (Matthew 20:20). They shared her desire that they receive position and power. How the other ten disciples acted shows that they had the same desire. The disciples' anger shows that they were jealous of John and James.

Did all those years of being with Jesus and seeing His self-denial for the good of other people not have any influence on the disciples?

Read Matthew 20:26-28 again. Jesus used Himself as an example of what He meant. How did Jesus lower Himself to serve other people? How can we copy Jesus' example? Mark 6:37-44; Luke 22:31, 32; John 13:5.



If we want to be great, we must become servants.

Jesus made it clear that greatness does not come from being first, from being the richest, the smartest, the most spiritual, or the most religious. Instead, greatness comes from a willingness to serve other people.

Think of Jesus' words against the background of the great war with Satan. Sin began with Satan trying to have more than he already had. Satan wanted a greater position for himself. Here is the basis of sin. Jesus told us that true greatness comes from being willing to help other people and being willing to become a "slave." Being a "slave" is being on the lowest rung on the ladder.

Who wants to be a slave? Being a slave is against human nature. What is the only way we can be a slave to other people?

TUE DYING TO LIVE.

“Whoever does not take up his cross and follow in my [Jesus'] steps is not fit to be my disciple. Whoever tries to gain his own life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for my sake will gain it” (Matthew 10:38, 39, TEV).

How much easier our religion would be if we had only a few simple rules to follow. Do not steal. Do not kill. Do not commit (do) adultery. Et cetera. But Jesus brought the law to a level, above a few “do’s” and “do not’s.” Jesus “promoted” the written law to where it reaches the inner part of our soul.

Jesus honored the law by making the law greater than the words themselves. By ourselves, we can never follow the law. The law's requirements are too high for us to meet without God's help. Something has to change in us in order for us to obey the law. That change comes when through the power of God, we die to self and become new creatures (people) in Jesus.

What does it mean to lose our life for Jesus' sake? Why must we "die" in order to serve Jesus? Also read Luke 9:23; Romans 6:1-8; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 2:13, 20; 2 Timothy 2:11.



Baptism symbolizes that we die to self and arise to a new life in Jesus.

We are sinners. Our basic nature is selfishness. We are all big babies. Babies think only of themselves and their needs. That is why we need to die to self to be a servant to other

people. We die to self only at the foot of the cross. At the Cross, we choose to surrender all that we have and all that we are to Jesus. At the Cross, we die to ourselves and live, instead, for Jesus.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we experience death to self. Then we can live in Jesus and through Him, serve other people. But this is a choice we have to make. This is a choice that often comes with a hard battle against our weak human nature. But only then will we be able to help people as Jesus has helped us. When we are filled with the fullness of Jesus' Holy Spirit, we will share Jesus with other people.

Jesus said we need to lose our life in order to find our life. What does it mean to find our life? How is service to other people connected with finding our life?

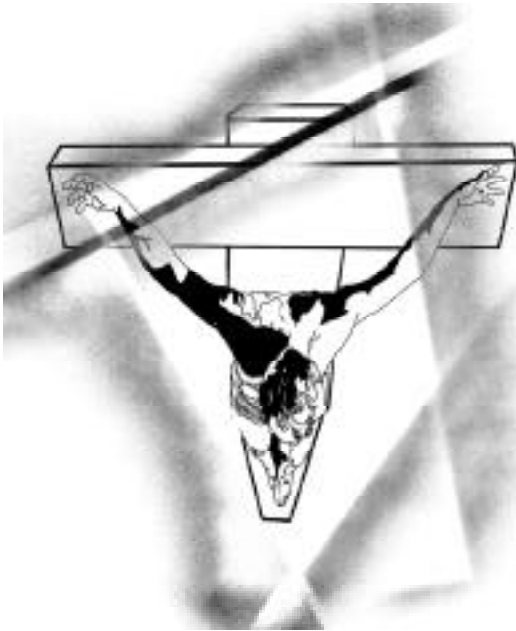
WED GIVING INSTEAD OF GETTING.

"The people asked him [John the Baptist], 'What are we to do, then?' He [John the Baptist] answered, 'Whoever has two shirts must give one to the man who has none, and whoever has food must share it [food].'" (Luke 3:10, 11, TEV).

As the words of Luke 3:10, 11 show, John the Baptist was involved in a challenge with the spirit of worldly people. Their motto was to get all you can out of life for yourself. John an-

swered “That spirit is the spirit of Satan, the spirit of fallen human nature. The spirit of your Master (Jesus) is not to get all you can but to give all you can give.”

How is Luke 3:10, 11 similar⁷ to Romans 8:32?



God gave us His Son. So He will freely give us all things.

Look what has been done for us as sinful people who need God's help. God sacrificed Himself completely for us. He did for us what we could never do for ourselves. So He asks us to do for other

people what they cannot do for themselves in their present condition.

How would you answer someone who says, “Look, I give a lot of money each year to charity. That is enough”?

Giving to charity is fine. But that is not the principle⁸ of Christian giving. Even atheists⁹ give to charity. In some ways, giving to charity is easy. Just write a check, and your conscience¹⁰ is “covered.”

But the Bible shows that the spirit of giving includes more than just giving money. The spirit of giving involves giving of ourselves—our time, our talents, our compassion (mercy), and our love. The spirit of giving involves caring. And caring means spending your own time and energy for someone else. Caring means suffering with people who suffer and weeping with people who weep.

Jesus told a story about the good Samaritan¹¹ (Luke 10:30-37). The injured man needed more than sympathy.¹² He needed someone's time, someone's care, someone's money. The priest and the Levite¹³ were too selfish to give the injured man their attention. Perhaps they were in a hurry to do some religious work. Maybe they were in a hurry to get home in time for the Sabbath!

⁷similar—almost the same.

⁸principle—a truth that is the basis for all rules, standards, and other truth.

⁹atheists—people who believe that God does not exist.

¹⁰conscience—a knowledge or sense of right and wrong with an urge to do right.

¹¹Samaritan—a person from Samaria. The Hebrews and the Samaritans were enemies.

¹²sympathy—sharing another person's sorrow or trouble.

¹³Levite—a Hebrew from the tribe of Levi.



Giving involves much more than just giving money.

How does giving to other people help us understand what God has given us? How does unselfish ministry (work) for other people make our faith stronger?

THU THE APOSTLES' CHRISTIAN SPIRIT.

Read Acts 2:44, 45; Acts 4:34, 35. The members of the early church were doing the right things. To them, the things of the Holy Spirit were more important than worldly things. Worldly matters were less important than eternal matters. The needs of the group were more important than the individual's needs. The church and its mission were their main interest. It amazes (shocks) the mind to think what could happen if the church today were to have the spirit of the early church.

Read again Acts 2:44, 45; Acts 4:34, 35. What were the people doing? What principles are behind their good works that we can learn from and use in our own experience?

The important thing to remember is what good the giving of money did for both the receivers and the givers. To sell what you have and give to other people is an act of faith. Every act of faith can only make faith stronger. The act of giving could not save the givers. The giving just showed that the giver understood what they had received from God. The act of giving was the giver's way of thanking God. These people were so close to God that they trusted Him for everything. They even would be willing to sell property to give money to other people. That is faith! These early church members had experienced a death to self!

How does paying a faithful tithe show that we have died to self?

The spirit shown by these early Christians is alive today. How many people have listened to the Holy Spirit's leading and have given up all their worldly comforts to spend years of their lives as missionaries in jungles or cities? The giving of our money and comforts could be even one of the lesser sacrifices we make in service to other people.

Giving up property and money to help other people involves sacrifice.

What are other more valuable things people have sacrificed to help people? Explain why you think these are even more of a sacrifice than money and property?

FRI **ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 190, 191; *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 93–101.

“The spirit of unselfish work for other people makes a Christian’s character stronger and more lovely. Unselfishness also brings peace and happiness to the Christian. The ambitions are more noble. There is no room for laziness or selfishness. People who live by Christian principles will become strong to work for God. They will have clear spiritual goals, a steady faith, and a growing power in prayer. The Holy Spirit of God moves upon their Spirit and calls forth the holy feelings of the soul in answer to God’s touch. People who devote themselves to unselfish work for the good of other people are sure to be working out their own salvation.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* [Jesus], p. 80.

At the Passover feast, “Jesus would have His disciples understand one thing. He had washed their feet. But this did not take dignity (honor) away from Him. . . . And being so infinitely¹⁴ great, He gave grace and meaning to the foot-

washing service. No one was so honored as Jesus. But He was willing to do the humblest duty. Jesus Himself set the example of being humble so that His people might not be selfish or self-serving. Being humble is so important that He Himself, One equal with God, acted as servant to His disciples. While the disciples were fighting for the honor of the highest place in Jesus’ kingdom, Jesus, whom people and angels shall bow down to worship, bowed down to wash the feet of people who called Him Lord. He washed the feet of Judas His betrayer. . . .

“Jesus’ whole life was under a law of service. He served all people, ministered to (helped) all people. He lived the law of God. By His example, Jesus showed how we are to obey God’s law.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 649.

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

Why are motives¹⁵ so important for the Christian? Can we serve other people for the wrong reasons? What could some of those wrong reasons be? Also, if motives are important, why must we have a proper understanding of salvation by grace alone so that we serve from right motives? Could there be the danger of thinking that our kindness to other people is a way of earning salvation? Explain.

¹⁴infinitely—without limit.

¹⁵motives—reasons why we do what we do.