

# Seeking the good of others

## What Does This Mean?

Humanity is capable of extreme selfishness, but we also display acts of selfless love. The Bible cites the root of selfishness as humanity's choice of self over God and others, which in turn leads to the sin that warps our world. However we interpret Genesis 3 and Adam and Eve's decision to go their own way, the reality is that we have shifted the focus to our wants and needs, and we see ourselves in competition with others. Adam and Eve's choice reflects humanity's.

*Selfishness is the making a man's self his own center, the beginning and end of all he doeth. John Owen*

Selfishness leads to other sins: for example, stealing is a way of someone demonstrating that they think their wants are more important than someone else's. Selfishness often arises from insecurity and from seeing experiences such as love as finite commodities, as if there is only so much to go around (if you get love, praise, etc., will there be enough for me?). In such a situation people look out for number one. Jesus ranked loving others as second only to loving God ([Mark 12:28-31](#)) and taught us to treat others as we want to be treated ([Luke 6:31](#)). This does not mean that Christians have to be doormats, but it does mean that it's not selfish to want to be treated with dignity.

*Self is the root, the tree, and the branches of all the evils of our fallen state. William Law*

## What Does This Mean in School?

Teachers can help students see the devastation that selfishness causes in society past and present and encourage love of others.

- Highlight examples of selfless behavior in different subjects; also highlight examples of how sin has colored human choices.

- Draw attention to the mind-set that views life as a cake, with only so much to go around. Explore whether this is true of love.
- In health, civics, and drama, explore alternative behaviors (but these should be realistic; the idea that selflessness comes without cost is a fantasy).
- Examine role plays and examples used in different subjects; are they all about personal needs, feelings, and opinions? Create alternatives that help students to move beyond self.
- When learning about the lives of others, discuss how they put God's call and others needs ahead of their own wants.

Think of a time when selfishness manifested itself in class. Find a lesson where you could encourage students to be unselfish. You might encourage them to elicit others' opinions before contributing their own. You might start by changing a topic from "our world" to "God's world" or use strategies to help students see an issue from someone else's point of view.



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