

**Selflessness vs Selfishness**  
**or**  
**"How can I help?" vs "What's in it for Me?"**  
**Mike Baird Aug 2003**

**Introduction**

- Wouldn't trade youth of the ward for any other ward in the stake or Church
- Do so many good things
- Have so much goodness about you
- Focus tonight on something to help you
  - Be happy
  - Sure foundation for gaining exaltation
- Let me give two examples that illustrate the two sides of what I want to talk about
  - Pondered much on Sister Davida Dalton
    - Share feelings when I visited her when dying
      - Didn't have much in way of honor, praise and things of the world
      - Not know as a scriptural scholar
      - Spirit bore witness to me
        - Rich in what counted
          - Beloved daughter of our Father
          - Beloved of those who know her
          - Legacy of service and family
      - Concluded she had learned and lived what I want to teach tonight
    - James E Faust:  
Many years ago I was in a professional association with two older, more experienced men. We had been friends for many years and found it mutually beneficial to help one another. One day, one associate sought our help on a complex matter. As soon as the issue had been explained, the first thing the other associate said was, "What's in it for me?" When his old friend responded so selfishly, I saw the look of pain and disappointment on the face of the one who had invited our help. The relationship between the two was never quite the same after that. Our self-serving friend did not prosper, as his selfishness soon eclipsed his considerable gifts, talents, and qualities. (James E. Faust, "What's in It for Me?" Ensign, Nov. 2002, 19)
  - Topic: Selflessness vs Selfishness or "How can I help?" vs "What's in it for me?"

## **Pre-existence**

- Plan provided for Agency
- Obvious we would depend on others
  - Look at a baby – need a family
  - We would die – need a Redeemer
  - We would sin – need a Savior
- Satan opposed the plan
  - Most Selfish statement ever (Moses 4:1)
    - "What's in it for me?" (selfishness)
- Christ
  - Most Selfless statement (Moses 4:2)
    - I'll do it for others (Selflessness)
    - I don't need recognition from others (Selflessness)
  - Christ was sent to do all that we cannot do for ourselves

## **Earth life**

- Requires we *work* through the process of growth and maturing
- Elder William R Bradford:  
"The work is one of serving and being served. The pattern is clear. Our eternal destiny is welded to our service to others." (William R. Bradford, "Selfishness vs. Selflessness," Ensign, Apr. 1983, 49)
- Happiness
  - Requires proper balance between serving and being served - selflessness
  - Refusal of either can be expressions of selfishness
- Review so far

## Selfishness

- To be happy we then must become selfless
- To understand selflessness we need to understand its opposite – selfishness
- Selfishness - keeping what we have power to righteously share
  - **Ask what?**
    - Material things
    - Time
    - Talents
- D&C 56:15-17

“Wo unto you rich men, that will not give your substance to the poor ...  
Wo unto you poor men, whose hearts are not broken, whose spirits are not contrite, and whose bellies are not satisfied..”
- Selfishness leaves us spiritually starved and malnourished
  - We seek to appease the mortal appetite and are left spiritually starved
- Selfishness is sin
  - Selfishness is at root cause, raw material of almost all sins
    - **Give me examples:**
      - Greed, envy, covetousness, lust, rebellion, thievery, idleness, lying, hypocrisy, backsliding, immorality, infidelity, pride, arrogance, gluttony
      - Luke 12:15-21

“Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?”
  - Selfish behavior is the center of most divorces and personal strife in families
  - Satan tries to cloak selfishness with terms of deception so we don't see the sin
    - "You deserve it" slogan for expensive goods
    - "You need to live for yourself"
    - "I need to ... so I can find out who I am"

- Selfishness proceeds sin
  - Immorality
    - Elder William R Bradford:  
 "Immorality of every kind is founded in selfishness. Why else would a person commit an immoral act, if not to satisfy his own pleasure?"  
 (William R. Bradford, "Selfishness vs. Selflessness," Ensign, Apr. 1983, 49)
  - Breeds corruption
  - Proceeds sin of pride
    - We forsake things of eternity for praise of the world
      - Families, Friends and the Savior
  - Procrastination – "Selfish idleness"
    - "I'll do it later" leads to neglect of righteousness
- May cause us to do the right things for the wrong reasons
  - There is degree's of selfishness
  - Service to others giving grudgingly
    - D&C 33:11  
 "For behold, if a man being evil giveth a gift, he doeth it grudgingly; wherefore it is counted unto him the same as if he had retained the gift; wherefore he is counted evil before God"
  - Service giving with an eye of "what's in it for me"
    - President Steven Dalton:  
 "When I ask a prospective missionary 'why do you want to go on a mission?' and when the answer is 'because I'll be a better person', I cringe mentally and I know I have a lot of work to do" (Conversation in July, 2003)
- Church callings are not about "what's in it for me?"
  - Its about others
  - Youth Presidencies
  - Youth leaders do it for you
  - Bishop is not about honor
    - I don't do firesides so others will think – wow Bishop knows his stuff etc.
    - Its about love and service to others

## Selflessness

- Matt 10:39  
"He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."
  - Paradox of life
    - What's in it for me attitude – may gain riches, property and land but in the end will lose it
    - Person who shares talents and gifts generously with others finds happiness
- Ways can we be work to be selfless and not selfish
  - **Ask?**
    - Give service
    - Focus on giving service for the right reasons
    - Don't procrastinate
    - Don't be idle
- Priesthood is about service
- Examples we have
  - Many parents to their children
  - Many in the ward
    - Bart Welling
      - Why does Bart do what he does?
  - Stake President
  - Prophet
  - Savior
    - Served others
    - Did not seek the praise of the world
    - Do we hear of his mansions and fields and fine clothing?
      - Matt 8:20  
"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head"
    - Was served
      - John 10:3-7  
"Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus"
  - Why did the Savior do what he did for us?
    - Because he loves us

- Parable of the rich man vs the widow's mite
  - Mark 10:17-22  
"he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions"
  - Mark 12:43-44  
"this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:"

### **Conclusions**

- You do a lot of very good things
  - Make sure we are doing them for the right reasons
  - If you do service at the Temple out of love you will feel of his spirit in more abundance
  - Prepare for a mission to serve others
- Don't deceive yourselves into seeking the things of the world over that of the Father
  - We need to be as the Widow
- Happiness requires a proper balance of serving and service
- Love of others is what gives us desire for service; Love only of self (selfishness) is what leads to "What's in it for me?" attitude.
- Think – "What can I do to help?" then do vs. "What's in it for me?"
- Testimony