TO LOVE MORE THAN SELF

The foundation of creation was love. Unlike the creator in other creation narratives from ancient texts, the God of the Bible did not create the world so He could be served; He created it because He is love. His love can be seen in every aspect of the creation story, but it is perhaps most powerfully expressed in the manner in which He created Adam and Eve and the purpose He instilled in them to achieve. Love is also the foundation of redemption. “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). The story of redemption teaches us that God loved us more than He loved Himself.

Since love is the basis of creation and redemption, it is also the basis of real education. To love God with heart, mind, soul, and strength means that in the whole being, every aspect of development is to reach its highest attainment in unselfish love for God.

“Like the first is the second commandment, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.’ Mark 12:31. The law of love calls for the devotion of body, mind, and soul to the service of God and humanity. This service, while making us a blessing to others, brings the greatest blessing to ourselves. Unselfishness underlies all true development. Through unselfish service we receive the highest culture of every faculty. More and more fully do we become partakers of the divine nature. We are fitted for heaven, for we receive heaven into our hearts” (Education, 16).
Write out Luke 10:25–37 from the translation of your choice. You may also re-write the passage in your own words, outline, or mind-map the chapter.
**THE PLAYERS**

The parable of the Good Samaritan speaks of at least six key characters: the lawyer, the injured Jew, the priest, the Levite, the Samaritan, and the innkeeper. The implied question that Christ answered was, Whom should the priest and Levite regard as neighbor? Assumed in the way that Jesus tells the parable is the idea that, to the Jews, strangers and Samaritans are automatically excluded from this definition. This is inferred in the detail that the man who fell among thieves was none other than a Jew traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho.

The pressing question was how to distinguish a neighbor from among their own people. “Contact with the ignorant and careless multitude, they taught, would cause defilement that would require wearisome effort to remove. Were they to regard the ‘unclean’ as neighbors?” (*The Desire of Ages*, 498). This question lingers today among those who call themselves followers of Christ. Who is worthy to partake of the gifts entrusted to the Christian through the grace of God? The characters in the parable teach us that how we answer the question Who is my neighbor? will declare whether our religion is real or merely a vain profession.

**Deformity of a Self-Centered Heart**

The purpose of Christ’s parable is to show His people the deformity of a self-centered heart by contrasting it with His unselfish love represented in the actions of the good Samaritan. “The way to dispel darkness is to admit light. The best way to deal with error is to present truth. It is the revelation of God’s love that makes manifest the deformity and sin of the heart centered in self” (*The Desire of Ages*, 498). The priest and the rabbi claimed to be followers of God. However, when the opportunity presented itself to act out their religion on behalf of an injured countryman, they considered their own safety and convenience instead of the critical condition of a man wounded by an enemy. In so doing, their actions exposed them as lovers of self (2 Tim. 3:2) instead of lovers of God.

Selfishness lies at the very foundation of every sin. It is an attitude completely antagonistic to everything that the kingdom of God stands for. In true education, as in true religion, this attitude cannot co-exist with real success. It is the purpose of real religion and real education to eradicate this trait from the Christian and replace it with a love that “does not seek its own” (1 Cor. 13:5).
REAL RELIGION

“In the story of the good Samaritan, Christ illustrates the nature of true religion. He shows that it consists not in systems, creeds, or rites, but in the performance of loving deeds, in bringing the greatest good to others, in genuine goodness” (The Desire of Ages, 497). Through the parable, Christ shows us two things: (1) who is our neighbor, and (2) what it means to love him/her as ourselves. There are several factors that make this Samaritan good in the eyes of Jesus.

He Came and Saw

One of the distinctions between the Samaritan and the priest/Levite is how they approached the injured man. Regarding the priest, the Bible says, “When he saw him, he passed by on the other side” (Luke 10:31). The Levite, as well as the Samaritan, came and saw (Luke 10:32–33). The difference is that the Samaritan didn’t just come, he came over to the injured man. The Samaritan is contrasted with Levite, who avoided the man, failing to recognize an injured neighbor worthy of compassion. One of the key elements that distinguishes the Samaritan is that he came and saw the wounded individual while not drawing back in disgust. Likewise, the real child of God will look for and come to people who are wounded and see in their wounds their humanity as sons and daughters of God.

Unselfish Compassion

Jesus also tells us that when the Samaritan saw the certain man who fell among thieves, he had compassion on him, bound his wounds, poured oil and wine on them, and set him on his own beast to carry him to an inn. What is noticeable about this response is what the good Samaritan does not do. He does not question whether this man is a Jew or a Gentile. He doesn’t consider what would happen if the roles were reversed. He doesn’t even consider the fact that by remaining there to help his injured man, he is putting himself in danger. All that he considers is the need and suffering. This is enough to arrest his attention and support a person in need. Religion that does not manifest itself in unselfish love for others even at the expense of personal inconvenience or even harm is not the religion of Christ.

“Thus the question, ‘Who is my neighbor?’ is forever answered. Christ has shown that our neighbor does not mean merely one of the church or faith to which we belong. It has no reference to race, color, or class distinction. Our neighbor is every person who needs our help” (The Desire of Ages, 503).
What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

1 Corinthians 13  
Colossians 3:12–15  
Ephesians 5:25–29

What other verses come to mind in connection with unselfishness?

THE PERMANENCE OF LOVE

The Nature of Giving

It is God's nature to give because it is His nature to love. In the beginning, God revealed Himself in every aspect of creation from the smallest atom to the largest galaxy. Everything testified of His great power, wisdom, and love. But it was Christ who unrolled the heavens and established the foundations of the earth: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:1–3). It was Christ Himself who wrote the name of the Father on and in everything He created. He did this because it is in the nature of love to give.

After sin marred the image of God in creation, the culture of heaven did not change. Even now, nature still retains its selfless quality. The precipitation that falls upon mountains is not withheld but passes through the valleys as vibrant roads of water that bless plants and animals. Flowers give forth fragrance; trees deliver food and shelter; birds sing songs for listeners to enjoy. The only thing that lives for itself is the selfish heart in humanity.

Likewise unfallen angels are constantly dispatched through divine order to care for fallen humanity. With unselfish patience and great care, they bring humanity into communion with God that surpasses what they themselves can experience. However, when it comes to expressing His love for us, God goes beyond nature and angels. He shows us Immanuel, God with us.

The Nature of Change

To fulfill the plan of salvation, Jesus could have momentarily taken upon Himself the nature of humanity, died on a cross, and returned to who He was prior to His incarnation. However, “by His life and death, Christ has achieved even more than recovery from the ruin wrought through sin. It was Satan's purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken. Through the eternal ages He is linked with us” (The Desire of Ages, 25). When God gave His Son, He did not merely lend Him to us. When speaking of Himself, God did say: “I am the Lord, I do not change” (Mal. 3:6). While His character never changes, His nature indeed changed forever for humanity's salvation and its eternal connection to divinity.

The Nature of Love

Speaking of God's love for us, John invites us to behold it (1 John 3:1) rather than merely understanding it. It is impossible to comprehend how an unselfish God can ever be willing to adopt a people who are so unlike Him. “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). “In Christ the family of earth and the family of heaven are bound together. Christ glorified is our brother. Heaven is enshrined in humanity, and humanity is enfolded in the bosom of Infinite Love” (The Desire of Ages, 25, 26).

The insanity of the love of God is that He would be willing to give us His Son, change His nature, and then adopt humanity in the Son, so that a third of the Godhead would now have divine-human representation. This is love.
inSight

Review the memory verse. How does it apply to your life this week?

After this week's study of the chapter, what personal applications must you make in your private life regarding unselfishness?

What practical applications must you make in your social life regarding unselfishness?

BY HIS HUMANITY

“By His humanity, Christ touched humanity; by His divinity, He lays hold upon the throne of God. As the Son of man, He gave us an example of obediency; as the Son of God, He gives us power to obey. It was Christ who from the bush on Mount Horeb spoke to Moses saying, ‘I AM THAT I AM... Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.’ Exodus 3:14. This was the pledge of Israel’s deliverance. So when He came ‘in the likeness of men,’ He declared Himself the I AM. The Child of Bethlehem, the meek and lowly Saviour, is God ‘manifest in the flesh.’ 1 Timothy 3:16. And to us He says: ‘I AM the Good Shepherd.’ ‘I AM the living Bread.’ ‘I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life.’ ‘All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.’ John 10:11; 6:51; 14:6; Matthew 28:18. I AM the assurance of every promise. I AM; be not afraid. ‘God with us’ is the surety of our deliverance from sin, the assurance of our power to obey the law of heaven.

“In stooping to take upon Himself humanity, Christ revealed a character the opposite of the character of Satan. But He stepped still lower in the path of humiliation. ‘Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.’ Philippians 2:8. As the high priest laid aside his gorgeous pontifical robes, and officiated in the white linen dress of the common priest, so Christ took the form of a servant, and offered sacrifice, Himself the priest, Himself the victim. ‘He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him.’ Isaiah 53:5.

“Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. ‘With His stripes we are healed.’

“By His life and His death, Christ has achieved even more than recovery from the ruin wrought through sin. It was Satan’s purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken. Through the eternal ages He is linked with us. ‘God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son.’ John 3:16. He gave Him not only to bear our sins, and to die as our sacrifice; He gave Him to the fallen race. To assure us of His immutable counsel of peace, God gave His only-begotten Son to become one of the human family, forever to retain His human nature. This is the pledge that God will fulfill His word. ‘Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder.’ God has adopted human nature in the person of His Son, and has carried the same into the highest heaven. It is the ‘Son of man’ who shares the throne of the universe. It is the ‘Son of man’ whose name shall be called, ‘Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.’ Isaiah 9:6. The I AM is the Daysman between God and humanity, laying His hand upon both. He who is ‘holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,’ is not ashamed to call us brethren. Hebrews 7:26; 2:11. In Christ the family of earth and the family of heaven are bound together. Christ glorified is our brother. Heaven is enshrined in humanity, and humanity is enfolded in the bosom of Infinite Love.”

(The Desire of Ages, 24–26)
Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

What are some obvious ways that humanity loves selfishly?

What are non-obvious ways of selfishness that are often unmentioned?

How would Christ’s manifestation of unselfishness address the above?

How does unselfishness underlie all true development? Give secular and biblical examples.

Who is your church’s neighbor? Who is your personal neighbor that you can stop avoiding, start seeing, serving, and loving?

How can we inspire more good Samaritans?

In what way did your education prepare you for unselfish service? In what way did it fail?

Why is the incarnation of Christ connected to an education for service?