

Living Selfless in a Selfie World

© 2017 Mark Beard

Text: Luke 9:23-25 NIV

Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. ²⁴For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. ²⁵What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?"

Introduction

It's no exaggeration to say we've become a selfie-obsessed culture with some damaging side-effects. Plastic surgeons in United States have seen a surge in demand for procedures ranging from eye-lid lifts to rhinoplasty, popularly known as a nose job, from patients seeking to improve their image in selfies and on social media. A poll by the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery (AAFPRS) of 2,700 of its members showed that one in three had seen an increase in requests for procedures due to patients being more aware of their image in social media. A plastic surgeon from Manhattan said, "They come in with their iPhones and show me pictures. Selfies are just getting to be so crazy." *Adapted from Craig Groeschel, #Struggles (Zondervan, 2015), pp. 57-59*

A recent study by Now Sourcing and Frames Direct reveals some surprising selfie statistics. Instagram, for example, has almost 250 million #selfies to date. The study predicts the average millennial will spend about an hour a week to take up to 25,700 selfies in their lifetime.

If you're worried about likes, the study found that gender, age, and number of faces have no impact on the number of likes you'll receive. That said, millennials definitely rule the selfie. A majority 55% of all millennials post selfies, while only 24% of Gen X and 9% of Baby Boomers get involved in the selfie game. <http://www.teenvogue.com/story/millennials-instagram-selfies-study>

1 million 'Selfies' are taken globally each day (18 to 24 year-old age demographic)

58, 425, 492 photos with the tag #selfie on Instagram

Rawhide, a nonprofit organization that assists at-risk youth in Wisconsin, examined social media users' obsession with selfies and narcissistic tendencies, and its findings included:

More people died from taking selfies in 2015 than from shark attacks.

55 percent of millennials have taken selfies and shared them via social media.

74 percent of all images shared on Snapchat are selfies.

1,000 selfies are posted to Instagram every 10 seconds.

There are 93 million selfies each day, which would represent 2,583,333 rolls of film.

19 out of 20 teens have taken selfies. <http://www.adweek.com/digital/rawhide-selfies-infographic/>

Living a selfless life requires we first live our life intentionally for the kingdom of God. We intentionally take up the cross and we intentionally follow Christ. We choose to live our life not because of what we want, but because of who we are, this is the mark of Christian integrity and commitment, and devotion. Jesus Christ seeks a relationship with us and He expects our unswerving devotion. **“Selfies” are not bad in themselves, but the preoccupation with selfies indicates an unhealthy focus on self.**

Note the clear *ironies* of living a life focused on self.

I. Ultimately Our Life is Really Not About Us.

If we're not careful J.R. Vassar warns, “We can be like a batboy at the World Series who thinks the crowd is there to watch him retrieve bats and misses the fact that the great game is bigger than him and his part in it. No baseball almanac keeps stats on batboys. Batboys are not the point of baseball, and we are not the point of life.”

A. Living a selfless life for Christ is an everyday commitment to someone other than ourselves.

B. Living a selfless life does not mean there is no joy or fun, it means God remains first in everything.

Ecclesiastes 11:9 You who are young, be happy while you are young,
and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth.
Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see,
but know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment.

C. The pattern of the kingdom of God is contrary to the kingdom of this world, thus the pattern of our life will always be contrary to the pattern of those who live for selves.

A self-centered focus is the symptom or a symptom of our society that has the privilege and opportunity of being focused on our once instead of our needs. It is symptomatic in many ways of a prosperous society.

Matthew 19:16-22 NIV

¹⁶Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?”

¹⁷“Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments.”

¹⁸“Which ones?” he inquired.

Jesus replied, “You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, ¹⁹honor your father and mother,’ and ‘love your neighbor as yourself.”

²⁰“All these I have kept,” the young man said. “What do I still lack?”

²¹Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

²²When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Jesus concludes in Matthew 19:30 by saying, “But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.”

In Luke 6:20-22 ...

²⁰Looking at his disciples, he said:

“Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.

²¹Blessed are you who hunger now,
for you will be satisfied.

Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.

²²Blessed are you when people hate you,
when they exclude you and insult you
and reject your name as evil,
because of the Son of Man.

Skipping to verse 27, “But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them.”

Skipping to verse 37, “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. ³⁸Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

II. Ultimately Our Life is About How We Live.

A. Living a selfless life for Christ means letting go of the temporal desires for self.

1 Peter 5:6 (NIV)

⁶Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

Matthew 10:39 (NIV)

³⁹Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

Luke 17:33 (NIV)

³³Whoever tries to keep their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life will preserve it.

B. Living selfless in a selfie world requires that we put away the mirror and focus first on God's will.

Our text reminds us...

Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. ²⁴For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. ²⁵What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self? **Luke 9:23-25 NIV**

C. Living selfless in a selfie world means the need to be well liked and accepted by others is secondary to doing His will.

In an article titled, "The Psychology of Selfies: Why We Love Taking and Viewing Photos of Faces" the author writes, "Self-portraits are about self-image—how we define ourselves. They're also a way to figure out who we are. The "looking-glass self" is a psychological concept that says that how we see ourselves doesn't come from who we really are, but rather from how we think others see us.

And now that we can A) take a selfie in mere moments, and B) share them with thousands of people online at any time, the impact that others have on our self-value has increased." <https://blog.bufferapp.com/psychology-of-selfies>

Matthew 6:24, "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Conclusion

This "look at me" mania was put on display at the 2013 College World Series when two young ladies rushed out on the field to take a selfie, later posting a video of themselves being tackled by security and earning Internet fame in the process. I guess it never occurred to the young ladies that the thousands of people who dropped good money to watch skilled athletes compete for a national championship were not actually there to see them. Something significant was taking place on that field, but in their minds the field was their stage and this was their time.

J.R. Vassar, Glory Hunger: God, the Gospel, and Our Quest for Something More (Crossway, 2014), pp. 82-83

Closing thought:

“The selfie--capturing a photo of yourself--is a part of our culture. But, while we are busy looking at ourselves, what are we missing? What opportunities could we see; what impact could we make, if we looked beyond the selfie?”