

DON'T LOCK YOURSELF DOWN TO "SELF" IN LOCKDOWN

It's been more than a month since we are in lockdown due to Covid-19 pandemic. The purpose is to prevent the spread of the virus. But there are adverse, negative effects too, i.e. people have become preoccupied with their own safety and security without concern for others.

Secular Writer (paralytic patient): I contemplated the whole night about how social distancing has affected our social relationship. It could have been – rather it should have been – called “physical distancing” but the word “social distancing” continues to be used officially.

As trained Psychologists and also Motivational Trainers know, I know that if one is interested in cultivating certain good habits, it is adequate if one practices what one wants to cultivate continuously for 21 days.

We have been practicing social distancing for more than 21 days, which is likely to be continued for another 21 days! I am afraid that the 42 days of our seclusion/ social distancing will cause indifference and accelerate irreversible social conflicts which will tear down the social fabric, eternally.

Social interactions, the bedrock of our social fabric, are getting weakened and likely may fade away, in the long run... If we imbibe the social indifference as a CHARACTER in us, we will be doomed.

If the social distancing is extended for two more months, we will live to see the consequences in the coming years and will be wondering how the society would become utterly indifferent and callous towards the rest in the humanity.

If this is a scary situation of the secular society, imagine the plight of the church?

- ❖ **Philippians 2:3-4**, “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

In this passage, Paul's primary concern is with the believers' attitude toward one another.

SINFUL MODE:

- ⇒ **Selfish ambition:** A person who persistently seeks personal advantage and gain, excessive self-love

- **This is quite opposite to the cost of discipleship**, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” (Luke 9:23)

John MacArthur, “No church, even the most doctrinally sound and spiritually mature, is immune from the threat of this sin, and nothing can more quickly divide and weaken a church.”

⇒ **Conceit**: A person who is self-absorbed with overinflated self-image

⇒ John Chrysostom (4thc), “There is nothing so foreign to a Christian as arrogance.

Timothy Lane and Paul David Tripp in “How People Change”: Sin causes us to be more committed to ourselves than to anyone else...Sin causes us to be more concerned about our own welfare than anyone else’s. Such self-centeredness destroys relationships and does great harm.

SPIRIT’S MODE:

⇒ But in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

⇒ **Sinful mode**: Look only to one’s own interests

- **What are they?** Own job, own house, own family, own money, own happiness, own cares, own dreams and expectations...

⇒ **Spirit’s mode**: Look not only to one’s own interests but also look to the interests of others. “LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF.”

Note: Humility is not thinking less of ourselves; it is thinking more about others. Humility is not feeling worthless of oneself; it is being concerned for the welfare of others.

The KJV Bible Commentary writes that believers are to... Keep an eye for the good of others. Have respect for, fix your attention upon with a desire for an interest in others. They were to be attentive to the interests of others as well as their own. Every member of the church should practice unselfishness and due consideration for all the others. “OTHERS” is the keynote of these verses.

Note: Those who are not concerned for one another, however nice they may appear, they are selfish and arrogant people. Concern for others is a great mark of humility.

Remember: Some devote themselves to much prayer, some devote themselves to much study, but remember, we may pray for hours and may earn double “Ph.D” in theology and doctrines, but we can’t move an inch further in our Christian life if we don’t follow Philippians 2:4—“concern for others.”

Three examples in the book of Philippians who exemplify NOT self-centered BUT other-centered life:

i. THE LORD JESUS

- ❖ **Philippians 2,** ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus [IN YOUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH ONE ANOTHER, HAVE THE SAME MINDSET AS CHRIST JESUS]

i. CHRIST’S HUMILITY IN HIS HUMANITY:

- ❖ ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself [He made Himself nothing], by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. [WHY DID CHRIST LEAVE HIS GLORIOUS PRIVILEGE IN HEAVEN AND BECAME A SERVANT ON EARTH? FOR OUR SAKE]
 - **John 17:4-5,** I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, **glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.**

ii. CHRIST’S HUMILITY IN HIS DEATH:

- ❖ ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. [WHY DID CHRIST DIE ON THE CROSS, ENDURING BRUTAL SUFFERING? FOR OUR SAKE]
 - **Romans 5:8,** but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, **Christ died for us.**
- ❖ ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Application:

- ❖ **Philippians 2:4,** “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” **2:5,** “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus...”

- ⇒ Did Jesus seek His own comfort than the welfare of others?
- ⇒ Look to Christ and learn how to leave our comforts for the welfare of others.
- ⇒ Look to Christ and learn how not to seek to be served but to serve others.
- ⇒ Look to Christ and learn how to live a sacrificial life for others' sake.
- ⇒ Look to Christ and learn how to suffer for the good of others.
- ⇒ Look to Christ and learn how not to look not only to one's own interests, but also to the interests of others.
- ⇒ And remember, those who humble themselves and serve others, God exalts them highly.

Kent Hughes: Serving others is to be the vocation of every Christian, poor or rich. Counting others as more significant than ourselves is to be the constant and sincere attitude of our souls. Looking out for the interests of others is to be descriptive of all who are part of the Body of Christ. Jesus said, "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him." (John 13:14–16)

ii. PAUL, AN APOSTLE OF CHRIST

- ❖ **Philippians 1,** ²¹ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²² If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³ I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. ²⁴ **BUT TO REMAIN IN THE FLESH IS MORE NECESSARY ON YOUR ACCOUNT.** ²⁵ **Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, FOR YOUR PROGRESS AND JOY IN THE FAITH,** ²⁶ so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.

Note: Paul is writing this letter from prison to encourage the church at Philippi.

- ❖ **Philippians 2:4,** "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."

Application:

- ⇒ Was Paul seeking his own comfort or the welfare of others?

⇒ Look to Paul and learn the importance of serving others. **DON'T LIVE FOR YOURSELF. DON'T LIVE FOR YOUR OWN INTERESTS. THINK ABOUT OTHERS. DO SOMETHING FOR OTHERS IN THE CHURCH AND BEYOND.**

iii. **TIMOTHY**

❖ **Philippians 2,** ¹⁹ I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. ²⁰ **For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare.** ²¹ **For they all (others) seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.**

Note: The interests of Jesus Christ are the welfare of the church, which He bought by His blood.

There are two kinds of people in the church: [examine yourself who you are]

- i. Some are like Timothy who are concerned for the welfare of the church and are interested in things of Jesus Christ.
- ii. Some are like others who seek their own interests and not those of Jesus Christ.

❖ **Philippians 2:4,** “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

Kent Hughes: Timothy had learned the art of putting others before himself. In a bygone day when a prominent soldier was returning from foreign duty, a newly hired driver was sent to the station to pick him up. When he asked how he would recognize the soldier, the soldier's aged mother said, “Look for somebody helping someone else.” And sure enough, when the train pulled in, the driver saw a man assisting an old woman, and it was the soldier! So it was with Timothy.

Is this how God and His people think about us?

Don't do little and become complacent; give your best.

Think:

- ⇒ Some of you are working hard in your jobs from your homes (about 10-12 hours a day). Very good. But, can't you, in obedience to God's Word, also take some time, just 10-15 mins, to think about others in the church and beyond?
- ⇒ Some of you are working hard at your homes (like house wives). Very good. But, can't you, in obedience to God's Word, also take some time, just 10-15 mins, to think about others in the church and beyond?
- ⇒ Some of you have no jobs at this time, how are you using your time to invest in others in the church and beyond?

- ❖ **Philippians 2:4**, “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

In view of what Christ has done for us on the cross, in view of Paul’s sacrificial life, in view of Timothy’s other-centered life,

PRACTICAL GUIDELINE TO APPLY PHILIPPIANS 2:4 IN LOCKDOWN:

1. Pray regularly for others (better ask others their prayer requests)
 2. Jot down a few names every day to call and encourage one another
 3. Have a video call and connect to each other
 4. Read a book or a book from the bible with someone
 5. Write words of encouragement to someone
 6. Participate in online gatherings for personal and corporate encouragement
 7. Genuinely ask, offer and seek how to help in any way possible
- ⇒ Praise be to God for your generous giving to help others at this time.

- ❖ **Philippians 2:3-4**, “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

John Piper: One of God’s purposes in the coronavirus is that his people put to death self-pity and fear, and give themselves to good deeds in the presence of danger.

Prayers:

- ⇒ Confess to God our selfishness
- ⇒ Ask God to open our eyes to understand the Gospel
- ⇒ Seek God to enable us to serve others and not be self-absorbed

Finally,

- ⇒ Only one life; don’t waste it by living a self-absorbed life.
- ⇒ By God’s enabling grace, make every effort to practice Philippians 2:4 in lockdown. Don’t lock yourself down to “self”; lock yourself to “service”.