

FOTS - Wk 2

“Love > Selfishness”

8/22/21

Luke 10:25-37

### Introduction

Tim. Pastor. **Luke 10:25-37**. PRAY.

Last week we kicked off our series called “The Fruit of the Spirit in the Time of the Flesh” where we are addressing this internal war going on inside of us between these two distinct internal operating systems - God’s Spirit and our Flesh.

**The flesh** being our sinful nature apart from Christ trying to pull us away from God and the **Holy Spirit**, placed inside of us at the moment of conversion, who is working and desiring to grow fruit within us such that we look more like Jesus. That’s the war - flesh vs. spirit.

And so for the next 9 weeks we are going to look at specific battles that are a part of this larger war → Specific fruit of the Spirit God desires for us to, in step with the Spirit, cultivate in our lives, and yet the resistance and the pull away from those we experience within our flesh.

Today we’re kicking off with the first battle → **Love in a time of selfishness.**

### A Time of Selfishness

Let’s start by talking about **selfishness**.

If you look at Paul’s list of the works of the flesh from Galatians 5 that we addressed last week, really at the core of just about every single one is a focus on the self.

The CSB translates verses 19-21 this way - **19 Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, 21 envy, drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar.**

Just look at that list:

- Sexual immorality
- Hatred
- Jealousy
- Envy
- Selfish ambition

**All of these have to do with a focus and elevation of self. Selfishness is a mark of the flesh.** The flesh causes us to turn in on ourselves and focus on me, what is best for me, what do I want and need, rather than turning upward towards God and outward towards others - which was our very design as humans.

**The flesh causes us to curve inward on ourselves.** This is why early Church Father St. Augustine, and later reformer Martin Luther, instead of calling humanity “homo sapiens” or “people of wisdom” would refer to man as **“homo incurvatus” or “man turned in on himself”**. Luther said all of sin can be defined as man turning towards himself rather than turning towards God and others.

He wrote in his *Lectures on Romans*, **“Our nature, by the corruption of the first sin, so deeply curved in on itself that it...fails to realize that it so wickedly, curvally, and viciously seeks all things, even God, for its own sake.”**

Because of sin our natural bent is inward on ourselves. It's selfishness.

**My typical day.** I mean I just even think about a typical day for me. I wake up and my first thought when I open my eyes is about me. What do I have to do today, what do I want, how am I feeling?

I run basically everything that I experience through the “me” filter.

- When I walk into a room - how am I being perceived? How do I look? What are other people thinking about me?
- During interactions and conversations - how am I coming across? Do other people think I'm caring, smart, put together?
- That hangout we got invited to - do I want to go? Is it conducive to my schedule and my interests and my week?

Now here's the scariest part - this isn't even really a conscious choice all of the time - it's just my default. I don't wake up every morning with my first thought being → You know what. I can't wait to be a selfish person today. I can't wait to spend all day thinking about and focusing on myself. It's just my default.

I think very few people are walking around today saying - “You know what, I want to be a selfish person.” Maybe some. But it's just our default.

A big part of this is because of the flesh. My sinful nature apart from the Spirit of God defaults to me on the throne. But also because it's the cultural waters that we live in. **We live in a time of selfishness.**

**Let's talk about our culture for a second.** As Americans in the modern west we live in a society built on, rewarding to, and emphasizing the success of the individual. That's the whole argument of a democratic capitalistic society right? That as you thrive as an individual and I thrive as an individual then it's better for everyone and we'll be good to go.

This idea is relatively unique in human history. With a few sporadic exceptions, overwhelmingly civilizations throughout human history have been bent towards an elevation of the common good and the group as a whole over the individual.

This was different with America. This was different in the founding of our nation and the ideals it was birthed out of.

This is how Patrick Deneen, professor of Political Philosophy at Notre Dame says it,

**“What was new (in the development of America) is that the default basis for evaluating institutions, society, affiliations, memberships, and even personal relationships became dominated by considerations of individual choice based on the calculation of individual self-interest, and without broader consideration of the impact of one's choices upon the community, one's obligations to the created order, and ultimately to God.”**

What was new in the development of our nation, and only elevated and expedited with the arrival of modernity, was that we are taught to first prioritize ourselves over everyone and everything else - including our community and God.

**We are taught to and seemingly rewarded for curving inward - the very thing that our flesh wants.**

Now if that feels too broad or too theoretical let me show you how it shows up on your favorite TV show, at your job, with your friends. You may have heard this phrase before, you may have said it today or this week → I think no phrase in our society better sums this up than the phrase **“You do you”**. You do you. This sort of conversation shut down - “you do you”.

- You want to quit your job and travel the world? You do you.

- You want to date that person even though they're terrible? You do you.

Or maybe you've heard it in other ways like:

- You have to do what's best for you.
- Well I'm just doing me...
- I can't judge them if it makes them happy.
- To each his own
- The ever popular Disney mantra - follow your heart

I read an article this week from the New York Times written by novelist Colson Whitehead. The title of the article was too perfect → **"How 'You Do You' Perfectly Captures Our Narcissistic Culture."**

This is what he said, **"In a world where the selfie has become our dominant art form, phrases like "You do you" and its tribe provide a philosophical scaffolding for our ever-evolving, ever more complicated narcissism."**

The works of the flesh are evident - **selfish ambition**. So our time, our culture we live in is pulling us this way, the flesh is pulling us this way...and yet selfishness is not of the Spirit. It's not the way of Jesus. **The way of Jesus is love.**

**So what does love look like in a time of selfishness?**

#### **Luke 10:25-29 - Set Up**

For that, let's turn now to **Luke 10:25-37**. One of Jesus' more famous parables - the Good Samaritan. Let's talk about the nature of love. We'll pick it up in vs 25:

#### **Luke 10:25-29**

**25 And behold, a lawyer stood up to put [Jesus] to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"**

A lawyer gets up to test Jesus. When you hear lawyer don't think about our version of lawyers today. Lawyers in ancient Israel were responsible for studying God's law and interpreting it for God's people. So think more like a scholar or theologian.

And he gets up and he wants to test Jesus - and so he asks him this question → What shall I do to inherit eternal life?

**26 He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?"**

Pretty typical Jesus - answering a question with a question. He's like - what do you think? You're the lawyer here. You're the scholar. You tell me.

**27 And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself."**

The man quotes directly from the Old Testament law - Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18. These two big commands of God. Jesus Himself in a similar interaction in Matthew says that all of God's laws can be summed up in these two greatest commandments → **Love God. Love others.**

We said this at the beginning - we were created by God to turn upward towards Him and outward towards others. That's the clearest summation of what it means to follow God's design → Lay down your life in love for Him, lay down your life in love for others.

**28 And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."**

Now, is Jesus lying here? Is he teaching a works-based gospel? I thought we were saved by grace?

What Jesus is saying here is congruent with the rest of the Scriptures → Obey God's law perfectly and you will live forever with God. Perfect obedience to God's command to love him and love our neighbors is one way to gain eternal life.

**Here's the problem → None of us can do that.** None of us love God perfectly. None of us love those around us perfectly. Just not going to happen.

If perfect obedience to the law is one way to live forever, then all of us are going to die guilty. That's the hook. That's the twist. If we have to do something, then we're doomed to hell. We need a Savior.

The lawyer knows this. He knows his inability to follow through on these commands - so he thinks the answer is to lower the bar. Look at what he says:

**29 But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"**

He's hoping Jesus will lower the bar. Give him an out. Shrink down the requirements of who his neighbors are - "Oh I don't have to love *those* people? Got it. Then I'm good."

But that's not Jesus' answer. Instead he tells the crowd a story to show how neighbor love in God's Kingdom is supposed to look. It's a beautiful story and **is going to give us a picture of what true love as a fruit of the Spirit looks like.**

### Four Markers of Love

Let's read the whole thing together again:

#### Luke 10:30-35

**30 Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. 32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. 34 He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.'**

There's **four distinct markers** of love I want us to see in this story that give us a picture of the love we are called to:

#### **1) Love necessitates action**

The first two men to pass by were a Priest and a Levite. Priests and Levites were supposed to be the most religious of people in this whole society - those who followed God the most. They would have had the most well-formed theologies of love. They would have been able to interpret the Scriptures and teach on love until they were blue in the face. They could have argued the ins and outs of the Hebrew word "Ahav" and how to interpret Godly love vs. worldly love.

But when a tangible need was placed in front of them, they crossed on the other side. I think there's a solemn warning for those of us who think we are mature in Christ because we know a lot of theology but that knowledge of God never makes its way out into the practice of love for others.

That is deeply convicting for me even this week, as I'm getting ready to preach a sermon on love, and yet I find myself with bitterness or resentment and withheld forgiveness in my heart for people I know I need to address. I know there are tangible opportunities to love people right in front of me - in my neighborhood and in our church - I just don't want to step into it because of laziness and selfishness and apathy.

It's my own selfishness that makes me sit in Community Group and after someone shares to go - "I'm here and praying for you" and then not actually do any praying or anything else about it afterwards. That's my selfishness. That's my flesh.

In some respects this story is a warning to those of us who love the “deeper” things of God to be warned that our heads don’t outgrow our hearts and love for others.

**1 John 3:18** tells us - **Let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.**

**Does your theology of love lead to the action of love?**

\*Hard to preach on love...

## **2) Love crosses to the other**

This is a shocking story on many levels, but one of the most shocking parts is that this is a Samaritan who stopped to help. **Jews and Samaritans hated each other.** And this was not like disagreeing about a petty argument type of squabble.

This was a deep rooted hatred that went back almost 750 years prior when the Israelites were two separate kingdoms - the southern kingdom of Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel. The capital of the northern kingdom was the city of Samaria. It was conquered in 722 BC by the Assyrians, and after that the people of Samaria started intermarrying with non-Jewish people, they started worshipping pagan idols. To put it bluntly, in the mind of the Jewish people - Samaritans were impure sellouts.

And over time this distaste for each other grew aggressive:

- Both Jewish and Samaritan priests would teach their people that the other side was “unclean” which means they shouldn’t interact with them in any way, shape or form.
- The worst insult that a Jew could use was to call someone a Samaritan. In fact in John 8 when they Pharisees got really angry at Jesus they basically were like “well, you’re a Samaritan...”

They were enemies through and through. But Jesus here, in a story to Jewish religious leaders, makes the Samaritan the hero of the story. It’s the Samaritan, not the priest or Levite who stops to help.

And this says something to the sacrificial nature of the love we are called to as followers of Jesus.

**It is easy to love:**

- People you like.
- People who are like you.
- People you get along with, who think like you, help you in life, build you up, do good things for you in return.
- People who are convenient, and not too rough around the edges, and manageable.

**It’s a whole different kind of sacrifice to love “the other”.** The flesh doesn’t love “the other”. The flesh doesn’t love the difficult person. The flesh doesn’t love the person who yelled at you, mistreated you, lied to you. The flesh doesn’t love the person who disagrees with you.

Let me just ask you a question → Do all of your friends look like you, talk like you, like what you like, and agree with all of your viewpoints? \*\*You may not be doing a lot of crossing to the other.

Jesus himself says it just a few chapters earlier - Luke 6. He says even non-Christians love those who love them, even non-believers do good to those who do good to them. But you, Christian (vs 35) - **35 But love your enemies, and do good.**

That’s the fruit of the Spirit kind of love. Love that moves towards the other. Love moves towards those who wrong you, hurt you, belittle you, lie to you, interrupt you, mess with you, inconvenience you.

## **3) Love is willing to be interrupted with compassion**

**33 But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion.**

He has compassion. He's moved internally with love to help the man. Selfishness doesn't gel with compassion.

**Compassion means we're moved and motivated by the needs of others. Selfishness only moves us for what we need or what we want.**

Selfishness only has compassion for ourselves and our needs. Selfishness and self-interest have a thousand valid excuses for our problems and pain and mess ups, and zero tolerance for those of others.

But this man is willing to be interrupted. He sees him. He sees him. And he has compassion and he stops.

When's the last time love caused you to shift your plans?

When's the last time you were willing to rearrange your schedule and shift things for the blessing of someone else?

Do you want to know a good test for the fruit of love in your life → **How often are you willing to be inconvenienced for the good of someone else?**

\*As someone who lives and dies by a schedule, this is a big gut check for me. Something the Lord is constantly working on me about.

I think this is one of the hidden blessings of Community Groups → **forced inconvenience that helps cultivate love.**

- This hangout my group wants to do doesn't fit with my schedule or my kid's schedule - great. Could be a good chance for you to push against the selfishness of the flesh.
- I didn't get enough time in 'Engage the Heart' to share what was going on in my week - that's ok. Was there someone who needed more of it this time than you? Was someone walking through some stuff and the Spirit wanted to use that in your life to grow your love for them?
- The time of my group doesn't work. The location isn't perfect. The people are annoying and we don't gel.

That's great. It's a chance to kill your flesh, put to death your selfishness and allow the Spirit to cultivate love that is willing to be inconvenienced in compassion for the blessing of others.

#### **4) Love sacrifices at great cost to itself**

**34 He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.'**

Christian love is self-sacrificing. This Samaritan doesn't gain anything by taking care of the man. He puts himself at risk. This road from Jerusalem to Jericho is dangerous. What if the same robbers that beat up this guy are waiting for someone to stop. What if this is a trick? He's willing to put himself at risk.

He pays a great cost - the text says it's going to cost multiple days worth of income to care for this man. He stops his own journey, he goes out of his way to get to an inn to get this man the help he needs, goes back the next day to pay and check on him, and then says he's going to come back again and finish paying whatever more is necessary.

Sacrifice after sacrifice after sacrifice. **Christian love is sacrificial.**

Christian love doesn't bail when it starts to hurt. Christ-like love doesn't bounce when it starts to cost something.

**Relationships.** And you could take this idea and apply it a number of different ways but one of the main ways I see the most - both in my life and around me - is the way we are unwilling to sacrificially love when our relationships start to hurt.

Now don't mishear me - I'm not talking about legitimate cases of abuse if that's your situation you come talk to me.

I'm talking about the way we bail on someone because they said something that hurt our feelings, or we withhold forgiveness and cut off the friendship when someone does something we don't like or isn't there for us like we wanted them to be. **We just give up on each other when the relationship starts being difficult or they rub us the wrong way or they're tough to love.**

**And we baptize our relational selfishness in the language of boundaries and protecting our mental health.**

I can't love them anymore - I need to say "no" to them and start saying "yes" to me. WHATEVER THAT MEANS. And it's off. It's not of the Spirit. It's not the LOVE we are called to. It's selfishness, it's the flesh.

Love sacrifices. Love is willing to be hurt.

### Christ-like Love

**Galatians 5:22 - The fruit of the Spirit is love....Active, compassionate, crossing to the other, willing to be interrupted, at great cost to ourselves, love.**

That's how Paul begins the list. In fact, many scholars argue that Paul puts love first because it is the basis for all of the other parts of the fruit. The other 8 amplify and outwork love: Love looks like kindness, love looks like goodness, love looks like peace, love looks like patience.

And this is our call as followers of Jesus. To become like Jesus we must learn this deep, sacrificial love.

That's how this part of Luke 10 ends:

**36 Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" 37 He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."**

Jesus turns the original question from "who is my neighbor" to "what kind of neighbor are you?".

Go and do likewise. Church - the call is for you to go and love.

**The first and most primary outworking of us becoming like Jesus is love for others.**

**Self-giving love** - what do you need from what I have? How can I love you through giving of myself. My first priority in life is not my interests or wants or needs - it's the good and blessing and care of others. What I have is yours. What do you need from me? I'm resisting the incurvatus, the pull to turn inward and I'm turning outward. The flesh takes and takes and takes, love gives. What can I give?

**Self-sacrificing love** - your good over my protection. Your interests above my own. Your needs above my own. Love that looks crazy to the outside world because it's daring and costly. Because it actually requires something of us. Sometimes love means we do it, even when we don't want to.

**Self-emptying love** - I'm willing to be hurt for this. I'm willing to make my life tougher to love you. I'm willing to pour myself out for your good.

This is the love we're called to as believers. This is the nitty gritty stuff of love. I'm not talking about sentimental feelings or good vibes towards others. That's not what Paul has in mind. That's not what Jesus is saying in the Good Samaritan. Love is not simply sentimental feelings of being nice. Love is real practical down-to-earth caring, providing, helping, encouraging, sacrificing for, and supporting one another - even when it costs a little or hurts a lot to do so.

### The love of Christ

**After all, wasn't this Christ's love for you?**

As beautiful as the story of the Good Samaritan is, there's an even better and more sacrificial love it points to. Because in the story Jesus tells, we get glimpses of the story Jesus lives.

He is the true and better Good Samaritan. Do you see that?

- **Jesus, who loved in action.** Took on flesh. Came to earth. Who left the right hand of the Father to be present with humanity.
- **Jesus who crosses to the other.** We were the other. We were His enemies. We were rebellious against God. We didn't want God. We didn't want Christ. Jesus came to us.
- **Jesus who had compassion on us.** For God so *loved* the world. Jesus' life and death were incredible acts of compassion and love.
- **Jesus sacrificed at great cost to Himself.** He died the death we and our sins deserved. He took the wrath of God that should have been fittingly poured out on us upon Himself instead. He, though perfect, became sin for us. He gave up His life.

And He rose from the grave victorious. It is this Jesus who first loved us, who saves us and who changes our hearts to then love others out of the overflow of His love for us.

**You are not the good samaritan in the story, you are the beat up man**... and because of the love you have now experienced from Jesus (the good samaritan), you are moved and compelled to love others out of the overflow of Christ's love for you!

### Cultivating Love

#### **So how do we become like Jesus - with love in a time of selfishness?**

You've got this handout in your bulletin. Each week you'll have a handout like this with a couple of practices to help you keep in step with the Spirit and cultivate this fruit of the Spirit in your life. (**GRACE + GRIT**)

1. **Abide.** → Bring back up my first thought in the morning.
2. **Sacrificial acts of love.** → Love in action.

**PRAY. Communion.**