



In 2004, Scott Harrison left the streets of New York City for the shores of West Africa. He'd made his living for years in the Big Apple promoting top nightclubs and fashion events. He was paid to wear certain clothes, drink certain drinks; he was paid to promote. His life was completely consumed with his own self and for the most part he was living selfishly and arrogantly. After many years of doing this he was unhappy and needed to change. Faced with spiritual bankruptcy, he wanted desperately to revive a lost Christian faith with action and asked the question: What would the opposite of my life look like?

Scott signed up for volunteer service aboard a floating hospital with a group called Mercy Ships, a humanitarian organization which offered free medical care to the world's poorest nations. He took the position of ship photojournalist and immediately traveled to Africa. He traded a spacious midtown loft for a 150-square-foot cabin with bunk beds, roommates and cockroaches. Fancy restaurants were replaced by a mess hall feeding 400+ Army-style. A prince from New York was now living like a pauper.

He said: "But once off the ship, I realized how good I really had it. In new surroundings, I was utterly astonished at the poverty that came into focus through my camera lens. Often through tears, I documented life and human suffering I'd thought unimaginable. In West Africa, I was a prince again. A king, in fact. A man with a bed and clean running water and food in my stomach."

As he traveled through Liberia—a country with no public electricity, running water or sewage—spending time in a leper colony and many remote villages, he put a face to the world's 1.2 billion people living in poverty, those living on less than \$365 a year. He saw thousands of patients waiting in line to see the doctors—patients afflicted with enormous tumors, cleft lips, faces eaten by bacteria from water-borne diseases, blind people without access to a 20-minute cataract surgery that could restore their sight. "Over the next eight months, I met patients who taught me the meaning of courage. Many of them had been slowly suffocating to death for years and yet pressing on. Praying, hoping, surviving. It was an honor to photograph them. It was an honor to know them."

He came back to the United States and started an agency called Charity Water. Six years after the start of Charity Water, 3,200,000 people have been given clean drinking water.

Scott's story demonstrates the entire message of my sermon today: "If any ... then love" Understanding this will transform your motivation to serve others. Understanding this will give you new inspiration to serve others. I am so excited to be preaching this third week in the Follow Jesus sermon series.

This is preparing our hearts for LoveWorks. I hope you are praying about leading a project. I hope you are praying as you drive around town, asking God, "How could my church show the love of Jesus through acts of service and compassion?"

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,... (Philippians 2:1).

If Any...

Verse 1 starts us on this pattern of thought by making it clear that the source of our love for others is Jesus. It's presented to us in the form of four "if" statements.

If any encouragement from being united with Christ

» Doubting yourself? The Spirit comes along and we regain a sense of security.

» Discouraged and perplexed? God gives us an answer.

» Looking ahead at life and a bit bewildered and lost? God shows the way.

If any comfort from His love

How many times has the love of God comforted us? I think of the mom who's devastated because her son is being bullied. The family facing financial crises and the Lord provides. A medical crises arises and the Lord meets you in the midst of it. There's a relational crises and God brings reconciliation.

If any fellowship with the Spirit

Conversion, word, prayer, worship.

If any tenderness and compassion

God does not destroy me because of my sin and selfishness but is instead tender and compassionate and forgiving.

The point is labored and emphasized because God wants each of his children to recognize how good he has been to us; how generous he is to us. He's lavished us with goodness to see without a doubt that Jesus is our Source.

Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind (v. 2).

This verse contains the “then” portion of the “if–then” equation. **If** you have any, **then** be like-minded, have the same love, be one in spirit, have one mind.

What’s the idea here? It’s the idea of oneness. Everyone is thinking collectively. Everyone is looking out for everyone else. So much so that you could describe them as having one spirit and one mind. The true obstacle to oneness is not legitimate differences but self-centeredness.

This concept runs contrary to our individualistic mindset. So Paul goes on in verses 3–4 to describe how a person would move toward this oneness.

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above (more important) yourselves, not looking (merely) to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others (verses 3–4).

Lots of people have memorized these two verses and been inspired by the idea to serve others. I know I have. I memorized these two verses as a college Junior and my guys’ Bible study tried earnestly to serve others in our Campus Crusade group. But it wasn’t until Cassie and I had children that I got a whole new lesson on serving others. You know what I mean? When God uses life circumstances to teach you new lessons? As a new dad I can remember coming home from work, looking forward to some down time, some relaxation, and being handed a child so Cassie could get some down time.

These verses boldly confront our selfishness, our self-centered way of thinking and tell us that I should be just as concerned and consumed with your needs as I am for my own.

But when I’m really honest with myself, I wonder, what holds me back from being more selfless? The verse says “do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.” “Nothing” is an extreme word. “Others” is used here. That includes everyone, not just the people it’s easy for us to get along with. Or the people we deem worthy of assistance. Just because someone makes a dumb decision does not eliminate them from being on the receiving end of our loving thoughtfulness.

I was thinking of all the different expressions selfishness can take in my life:

“Give me that” selfishness. This is often seen in children, who have no filter! They see something you have and they say, “give me that.”

“Justified” selfishness represents freezing my water on a Mexico mission trip when it was really hot. Students drank warm water! I reasoned that I could do this because I am a veteran of trips like this. They are rookies. They should suffer some.

“Bargaining” selfishness. I do the dishes, without being asked, because I want to watch TV later without being hassled.

“Prideful” selfishness. My decisions are the best. Like when I’m watching our son and Cassie leaves to go to the pharmacist. She’s gone for a long time and Aidan starts to cry. I’m frustrated. It’s based in pride because I could make a better decision if I was in her position.

“Protect what I’ve got” selfishness.

That’s a lot of forms of selfishness, isn’t it! One of the things that holds us back from being more selfless with each other is a Scarcity Mindset. A scarcity mindset says I’ve got to protect what I’ve got because it’s mine.

God knows our old nature, our sinful patterns that make us self-centered. He knows that we will resist the idea of serving others and considering others as more important than ourselves and to think of them as much as we think of ourselves. We could easily say something like, “Well, sure I’ve got some but not enough to share.”

This is why he says, “if any” back in verse 1. He belabored the point by repeating this four times. Do you have **any**? If so, you have enough to give away.

Jesus is our source of eternal supply because when we give away, he’s the source that refills us. But I have good news for you. Regardless of our degree of self-centeredness, we can be more like Jesus than we are right now.

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus (v. 5).

Our mindset should have a mental perspective as Jesus; thought patterns as Jesus; actions as Jesus. In short, follow the way of Jesus. And with him filling us up, since he’s our eternal Source, we know we can do it!

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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