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Talk About Selfish!

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Marriage not only brought me face to face with the girl of my dreams, it brought me face to face with my own selfishness. Sure, I knew I was self-centered. But prior to marriage I found ways to minimize the seriousness of my problem. I could blame someone else for making me mad or getting in my way. I could avoid people who surfaced my selfishness. Or, they could avoid me.

Locked In

Marriage placed me in an apartment with someone who consistently wanted things done her way. It locked me in a relationship from which I couldn't escape. And it surfaced my selfishness in some nasty ways. Of course, it also revealed the self-centeredness of my charming and beautiful bride.

If you're single . . . you can look forward to this. If you're married, you know what I mean. Couples who fail to bridle their selfishness will live in marital misery. Over the years I've talked with countless couples who have destroyed their marriage because they refuse to put the other person's needs before their own. The good news is there's hope.

What We Can't Do for Ourselves

Jesus performed amazing miracles. He opened the eyes of the blind, healed lepers, cast out evil spirits, and raised the dead. In each of these instances, Jesus did for others what they couldn't do for themselves. At its core, that's what Christianity is about. It's about God doing for us what we can't do for ourselves. Just as we can't earn forgiveness and eternal life, so we can't overpower sin and selfishness. We must rely on Christ to accomplish that work in our lives.

When we marry, we enter into a relationship that Christ wants to empower. Apart from him we're a sailboat without wind, a plane without a prop and a car without an engine. He alone possesses the strength to break the chords of selfishness so we can love one another. Yet, we must ask for his grace during our time of need. We must ask him to enable us to act selflessly . . . to serve when we want service . . . to give when we want to take.

Turkey Vultures

Such prayer activates our faith and unleashes the power of God's grace in our lives. Just off the deck of our home stands a massive old growth fir tree. Years ago half of it broke off leaving a jagged tooth-edged top. During the early morning hours of summer turkey vultures use the top of the tree to sun themselves. They look like statues as they spread their massive black wings-six-feet across-lift their featherless pink heads, and absorb the warmth of the sun.

Once rested, they leap from the tree and soar into the sky. If the wind currents are right, they'll glide higher and higher covering miles of space without flapping their wings. Even ugly turkey vultures look graceful when they fly. Of course, those giant birds don't create the air that lifts them heavenward. Before they jump, unseen air moves around, over and under them. But the ever present air has no lifting power until they jump. Only then will the birds soar above the pull of the earth.

Leap Into Grace

Similarly, our faith in God enables his invisible grace to lift us above the gravitational pull of selfishness. We must spread our wings and leap into his ever present and invisible grace--trusting him to do for us what we can't do for ourselves.

The next time your selfishness is driving you to put yourself before your spouse, or girlfriend if you're single, leap into the grace of God. Ask Christ to live his life through you. Ask him to enable you to love as you've been loved by him.