

Heart Attitude #1: "Putting the Goals and Interests of Others above My Own"

I. Hook: Let's dive in to the subject with an opening question or two.

Have you ever had a time when you and your friends could never decide on what restaurant to go to because no one wanted to make the decision because they wanted everyone else to be happy?

Or think back to when you moved in with your roommate(s)...was it awkward deciding which room or which bed you would take because you wanted a particular room/bed, but also wanted to give your roommate the opportunity to choose?

These are some evidences that you have begun to "Put the goals and interests of others above your own."

II. Book: Let's look at the Bible to see what it says on this subject.

Look at Phil. 2:1-11

Verses 1-2 put an emphasis on the unity of the body. We, as believers have an encouragement in Christ, a consolation of love, a fellowship of the Spirit, and affection and compassion. We ought to, therefore, be of the same mind, maintain the same love, be united in spirit, and intent on one purpose.

In order to keep this unity of the body for a purpose, we are commanded verses 3-5: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus."

Verses 6-11 then go on to talk of how Jesus put our interests above His own.

A good cross reference passage for this is John 13:1-5. Jesus, who knew He was about to go to the cross for the people with whom He was dining, girded His loins, knelt down, and washed His disciples feet! Verse 2 explains that Judas already knew he was going to betray Jesus. From verse 21 we know that Jesus knew Judas would betray Him as well.

How do you think Jesus was able to stoop and wash the feet of Judas who was to betray Him?

Look closely at verse 3. It says, "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God..." Verse 4-5 go on to describe Him washing His disciples feet. Verse 3 shows that Jesus knew that His position was established through what the Father had given Him. He knew that He came from God and was going back to God. Jesus was confident in what the Father had given Him. He did not need to prove Himself to anyone by "lording it over" people. Instead, He was able to perform one of the most humbling tasks of a servant.

III. Look: Let's see how this biblical concept might work its way out in our lives.

So, how can we theoretically put this "Heart Attitude" into practice?

1. We must understand as Jesus did, that our position in life is based on what God has given us. Look at Ephesians 1:3-14. In a group, list all the blessings that the Heavenly Father has given to us through Christ.

With the understanding that God has blessed us so richly, we need to trust Him to look after our needs, and in turn, put our attention to the needs of others.

2. The Bible provides a rich amount of exhortation as to how to put our attention toward the needs of others. Many know them as the "One Another" passages. Look up the following verses and complete the "One Another" phrases. (A worksheet is provided at the end of this lesson and can be taken home to do as homework if need be.)
 - a. Rom. 12:10 __ (be devoted to) __ one another and __ (give preference to) __ one another
 - b. I Cor. 12:25 ____ (care for) _____ one another
 - c. Gal. 5:13 __ (serve) _____ one another
 - d. Eph. 5:21 _____ (be subject to) _____ one another
 - e. I Thes. 5:15 __ (always seek after that which is good for) ____ one another
 - f. I Cor. 11:33 __ (wait for) _____ one another
 - g. I Pet. 4:10 _____ (employ gifts in serving) _____ one another
 - h. I Pet. 4:9 __ (be hospitable to) _____ one another
 - i. I Pet. 5:5 _____ (clothe yourself with humility toward) ____ one another
 - j. Rom. 16:16 __ (greet) _____ one another
 - k. I Thes. 5:11 __ (build up) _____ one another and ____ (encourage) _____ one another
 - l. Heb. 10:24 __ (stimulate) _____ one another to ____ (love) __ and ____ (good deeds) _____
 - m. Eph. 4:32 __ (be kind to) _____ one another
 - n. I Thes. 4:18 __ (comfort) _____ one another

3. Are there Biblical limits?

- a. In our time and energy: Take another look at Phil. 2:4. It says, "Each of you should look not *only* to your own interests, but *also* to the interests of others." (Italics are added for emphasis.) The Bible is not saying that we completely neglect our own needs and interests. Read Matthew 14:13-14. Verse 13 happens right after Jesus heard of the death of His cousin, John the Baptist. He *withdrew* to a lonely place *by Himself*. The crowds, of course, followed Him, and He healed them and fed them. However, look now at verses 22-23. Verse 22 says He "immediately" (after feeding them) sent the disciples away. Then verse 23 says He sent the multitudes away and He went up a mountain by Himself to pray.

Jesus sets the example here of knowing that “alone time” is okay. He just heard the news about His cousin’s death, and although he ministered to the needs of the people, He also sent them away so that He could be alone to pray.

A pastor once told me that the way he learned this limit was by getting sick. He kept giving of his time and energy to so many people, putting their interests above his own. When he got sick, he realized that taking care of himself was also putting others’ interests above his own, because he was useless to all if he were too sick to do anything.

- b. In our resources: II Thes. 3:10-12 speaks to irresponsibility. Verse 10 says “If anyone will not work, let him not eat.” We should not encourage irresponsibility by serving people. If we find that our serving another is actually hindering him or her from a responsible and godly life, we need to stop.

IV. Took: Let’s practice “Putting the Goals and Interests of Others above our Own”

In the second week of meeting together to study this heart attitude, plan an activity that puts some of the “one anothers” in to practice.

Ideas:

1. Play the Spotlight game. In this game, the members of your group all put their attention on one member of the group. The each say specific words of encouragement about that person while the person being encouraged is only allowed to say “Thank you.” Go around the group spotlighting each person until the entire group is encouraged.

While debriefing this activity, ask how difficult it is to encourage each other. Ask about how each person felt when they were spotlighted. Some may feel awkward while it is happening, but they will likely remember everything that every person had to say about them. I once heard someone say, “I can last three months on one good compliment.” It’s funny that we are so often focused on ourselves so much that we forget to compliment and encourage those who are around us. We need to put the goals and interests of others above ourselves and learn to encourage one another more!

2. Prior to the meeting, call a staff member to find out when a good time would be for your group to come and clean their house. For staff members who have LT or staff meetings in their homes, they would love for you to clean either before or after they have people over. This gives the group an opportunity to not only encourage the staff, but also helps them to learn how to contribute to the needs of the ministry (HA # 5).

Debrief the activity. You can talk about how humbling it is to clean someone else’s toilet and how we need to remember at these times, that our blessings come from God...so we are able to do lowly tasks, as Jesus did. Ask questions like, “What was the hardest part about doing this activity?” or “What did you have to give up to do this activity?”

3. Send your group out in pairs to find ways to serve the other students on their floors or in their classes. Maybe some of them would clean their friends' bathroom or take out their trash. Maybe they would find their friends studying for a big test or writing a paper and they can bring them dinner or a snack bag. Maybe they can do a friends laundry or vacuum their room.

Debrief: Come back together after the hour of activity and discuss what everyone found to do. Talk about how their friends responded to the help. Ask about what was difficult and what was fun about the activity. Ask about what they had to give up in order to serve their friends.

4. Get your MT involved in putting the needs of International Students above their own. Invite some Int'l students to a house to make dinner with them (a staff member would likely let you use their house if you need one). You can teach the internationals how to make an American dish or let them teach you how to make one of their native dishes. Spend the evening practicing hospitality with these international students. Ask questions about their country and tell them stories about America.

After the International students are gone, debrief with your MT about how it went. What was fun about this? What was difficult? What did you have to give up this evening to put the goals and interests of the International students above your own.

5. Before the MT meets to do the practical application of Heart Attitude #1, investigate at your church or another local church to find out what some of the needs are at that church. Do they need help with a project they are doing? Do some of the family need babysitters? Do they need help in their outreach ministry? Etc. Plan on serving in one of these capacities to help your local church ministry.

Debrief: What does it take to help a church thrive in a community? What are the purposes and ministries of this church? How did our contribution to their efforts put the goals and interests of others above our own? What was difficult about this task? What was fun about this task?

6. Do the same activity in #4 but instead of with a church, ask a office on campus, a public school in Norman, or a Norman business how you might be able to help in their efforts. Use the same debriefing questions as in the above activity.

The "One Anothers"

- a. Rom. 12:10 _____ one another and _____ one another
- b. I Cor. 12:25 _____ one another
- c. Gal. 5:13 _____ one another
- d. Eph. 5:21 _____ one another
- e. I Thes. 5:15 _____ one another
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- g. I Pet. 4:10 _____ one another
- h. I Pet. 4:9 _____ one another
- i. I Pet. 5:5 _____ one another
- j. Rom. 16:16 _____ one another
- k. I Thes. 5:11 _____ one another and _____ one another
- l. Heb. 10:24 _____ one another to _____ and _____
- m. Eph. 4:32 _____ one another
- n. I Thes. 4:18 _____ one another