

Decrease Self, Increase Christ



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Paul instructed Christians to “put off your old self... and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self,” Ephesians 4.22-23. How can we become more successful in conquering the flesh and our selfish wants and desires?

We must cease to make excuses. The moment that some defense mechanism comes into play, recognize

it, and ask yourself: Why am I letting this upset me?

We must engage in self-examination. Reflect a moment on how self enters into everything you do. It concerns and controls our actions, work, conduct, dress, appearance... everything! We often need to increase our personal discipline and moments of self-examination. In writing about himself, Paul said, “I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified,” 1 Corinthians 9.27.

We must realize how much misery is traced back to love of self. Recall your moments of unhappiness and irritability. Self is the main cause of unhappiness in this life!

Measure yourself against Christ’s standard. Philippians 2.5-7 teaches that Jesus “emptied” Himself. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.” How did Jesus “make himself nothing?” During his life on earth John’s gospel tells us that Jesus’ words were not His, 12.49, and that Jesus’ works were not His, 14:10. During His ministry, Jesus told those who follow Him, “I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me”, John 5.30. He was totally concerned with serving His Father! He is the perfect example to follow in subjecting our own interests to that of the will of the Father!

Perhaps no greater example of Jesus’ commitment to the interests of others over that of himself is seen while He was on the cross. While suspended in air—spikes driven through His hands and feet—he prayed “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do” (Luke 23.34). We must follow Peter’s admonition. “For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness,” 1 Peter 2.21-24.

Jesus set the standard that we are to follow. How are you doing? Make the commitment to decrease self and increase Christ. Have you put the wishes of the Savior above your own?

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