

# Selfishness

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*Selfishness: From Loving Yourself to Loving Your Neighbor*

Lou Priolo, series editor

# Selfishness

*From Loving Yourself to  
Loving Your Neighbor*

LOU PRIOLO



P U B L I S H I N G

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WHEN I USED TO read these words written by the apostle Paul, I assumed that they were describing the characteristics of pagan societies:

But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be *lovers of self*, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; avoid such men as these. (2 Tim. 3:1–5)

But then I realized, as the verses surrounding this passage indicate, that Paul was warning Timothy about the characteristics of those who would be *within the church* in the last days. Think of it—these are the kinds of problem people who attend church with you on a regular basis. There is even a chance that this passage might, in one way or another, describe you. But that’s OK, because, in the pages that follow, you will learn how to deal with the one sin that spawns them all.

Notice the first description of these individuals: they are lovers of self. This phrase is the big umbrella under which all of the other characteristics of the last days dwell. It is from the *love of self* that all the other inordinate loves flow. As John Calvin said:

We shall never love our neighbors with sincerity, according to our Lord’s intention, until we have corrected the love of ourselves. The two affections are opposite and contradictory; for

the love of ourselves leads us to neglect and despise others,— produces cruelty, covetousness, violence, deceit, and all kindred vices,—drives us to impatience, and arms us with the desire of revenge.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps it has been years since you took a college entrance exam, such as the SAT. I would like to ask you to take a revised version of the SAT. This version is not the Standard Aptitude Test, but rather the Selfish Attitude Test.

### Selfish Attitude Test

RATING SCALE	POINTS
NEVER (HARDLY EVER)	5
SELDOM	4
SOMETIMES	3
FREQUENTLY	2
ALWAYS (ALMOST ALWAYS)	1

Give yourself a rating of 1 to 5 for each question:

1. When making decisions, I consider only how the decision will benefit me, rather than how the decision might benefit others and how the decision can most glorify God.
2. I believe that friendships are more trouble than they're worth.
3. I spend more time thinking about my favorite temporal delight than I do thinking about God, his Word, or delights of eternal significance.
4. I am more concerned about promoting my interests than God's interests.
5. I think about how others don't love or appreciate me.
6. When people hurt or offend me, I write them off and have little or nothing to do with them.

1. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians* (repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993), 161.