

# Selflessness and Bible Psychology

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | October 16, 2009



*Regarding your belief that God is love and love is selfless and that the core of Christianity is that human hearts are selfish instead of selfless and other-centred how do you reconcile that with the belief that some women/mothers are selfless and self-sacrificing?*

*What would your opinion be of this quote by Luciano L'Abate, Charles H. Bryson*

*"Selfless mothers produce selfish men (sons) who will grow up to be to opposite of them and like their fathers, and selfless women(daughters) who learn to be very much like their mothers."*

*Personally i think the above quote is just an unproven theory & generalisation but isn't it true that selflessness can sometimes be detrimental? For example, the picture of the selfless, rundown mother who always gives to her children & husband but never for herself. Couldn't a selfless and other centred heart sometimes be detrimental to a person?*

*Also how do you reconcile your psychiatric beliefs with the beliefs of Martin & Deidre Bobgan that all psychiatry and psychology is heretical and not biblical, that Christ's death was sufficient and that psychology prevents sanctification and is man made wisdom and not Godly?*

*Can you please talk about the principle of turning the other cheek as found in Luke 6:29:*

*If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic.*

*Twice, people have used that principle to say Christians shouldn't defend themselves when verbally or otherwise attacked.*

Thanks for great questions.

The key to understanding this issue is a proper definition of love and selflessness. Love, is other-centered regard, being more concerned for the good, health, welfare of the other party than for oneself. Notice, love is concerned for the good, health, welfare of the other party – not what the other party believes is good for them, but what actually is good for them.

I was in the mall one day just watching the people. As I looked out from the second floor balcony I watched as a mother and her young son (approximately 5 years old) came to a fork in the walkway. The mother wanted to go to the right, but the son wanted to go straight. The son let go his mother's hand and went forward about six paces. The mother stood there indicating they needed to go to the right. The son looked back at his mother and pointed at her demanding she come his way. He did this twice and the mother just stood there. Finally, the child angrily ran back to his mother punched her in the belly, kicked her in the shin and pointed to the ground for her to follow him – and she did.

Was this mother “loving” her child? Was she acting in “other-centered” regard? Was she doing what was in the best interest of her child? Of course not. This type of behavior is not love, it is not selflessness, it is not other-centered regard or compassion. It is selfishness arising from severe fear and insecurity, a dependent need on the part of the mother to do whatever it takes to keep the child happy with her. Such behaviors are gross counterfeits to genuine love, which does what is right, reasonable and healthy because it is right reasonable and healthy, not because others, even our children, agree.

Luke 6:29 is not a rule which is to be applied to all circumstances for Christ did not mean that parents should fail to discipline and instead allow their children to hit and abuse the them. Such distortion of Christ's instructions occurs when we fail to understand what genuine love actually is. When we understand love promotes the long term health, wellness and eternal salvation of the other party then we are able to understand how to apply Christ's instruction to turn the other cheek.

The idea that all psychiatry and psychology is opposed to God and God's principles for healing come from failure to understand God's creation, the problem sin caused and God's solution for it. It is true that there are humanistic psychological models out there that oppose Godly principles, just as there are humanistic religions that oppose Godly principles. But, just because some religions oppose Godly principles doesn't mean there isn't a true religion centered in God's character of love. Likewise, just

because there are many godless philosophies within psychiatry and psychology, doesn't mean there isn't a healthy model of psychology which is built on God's original design protocols.

In fact, the Bible says:

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. 2Cor 10:3-5

When we fight a war over arguments, knowledge, pretensions and thoughts where is the battle ground? Where is such a war fought? In the mind! Genuine spiritual warfare is a battle for the minds of God's children. As Christians we are to be renewed in our minds, have the mind of Christ, have the law of God written on the heart and mind. Therefore, as a psychiatrist who understands God's creation, the laws upon which He designed the universe to run, and His methods for reversing sin's damaging effect upon mankind, I find myself on the frontline in the war between Christ and Satan. Therefore, I daily seek God's wisdom to accurately diagnose and bring to bear interventions that will reverse the damage caused by violations of God's methods, principles and design template for life and help restore my patient's back to God's original design.

In my book ***Could It Be This Simple? A Biblical Model for Healing the Mind***, I document a psychology that is wholly built on Godly principles and leads to genuine healing of mind. If you haven't read it consider checking it out and decide if this model is a psychology that is in harmony with God's word.