

~Other Speakers S-Z: K.P. Yohannan:

Normal Christian life in the New Testament was always other-centered. Even when Paul was sitting in prison, he hardly talked about his own agony and suffering, but in all his letters he expressed much more concern for the churches, coworkers and believers across Asia. The letter he wrote to Philemon is a wonderful example of this Christlike attitude. He poured out his heart on behalf of Onesimus, a runaway slave whom he had led to Christ. For Paul, prison seemed to be only incidental, not worthy to lament about or devote more than half a sentence to in his letter. He was serving His Lord and others, no matter where he was and regardless of his circumstances.

William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, lived by the same principle. When he was old and too sick to travel to a convention where 5,000 of his leaders and followers had gathered, he sent a telegram with his message to be read to the whole assembly. Everybody expected a special sermon because he was supposed to be their main speaker. However, when they opened the telegram, there was only one word on the page: "Others!"

It's so easy to fall into the trap of thinking that just because we live in an affluent nation and our children don't have to beg for food on the streets of Bombay, God must especially favor us. We must be so careful to avoid becoming self-centered; because if we live for ourselves, God will find no time or space in our lives in which we could think about the lost world and invest our lives for the salvation of others.

I am constantly shocked when I travel to Western churches and discover how little people know about the most basic call of Christ: to lay down our own desires, pick up our cross and follow Him. In the average church and through most Christian media, we are brainwashed with a selfish gospel. We are exhorted to first watch out for ourselves, our families, homes, health, security and rights. Then, when all these things are well taken care of, perhaps we can consider others.

I strongly believe that the number one enemy that keeps us from reaching the lost world is not the devil, but our self-centeredness.

I have been walking with God and serving Him for more than 30 years, and still my greatest struggle is my selfishness. I do not want to pay the price often. You will have the same battle in your own set of circumstances. The grain of wheat just doesn't like to die! But I have found that following Christ is not a matter of whether we enjoy doing something, but rather a deliberate decision of consistent, constant obedience. That's where the victory is won and where the fruit will follow.

"Oh to be saved from myself, dear Lord, oh to be lost in Thee. It is no more I but Christ that lives in me." How easy it is for us to sing these words but so hard to live it. Are you choosing the way of the cross today? What about giving up some meals to fast and pray for the lost people groups in our generation? How about burning the wish list and the stuff you plan to buy and spending that money for the preaching of the Gospel? What about giving your vacation time to go to the slums of Mexico City and minister for Jesus?

It is time for us to die—but you must choose it.