

Selfishness  
UUF

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We should have another holiday. A new holiday should be added to the calendar. And it should allow us a day off from work, and all other responsibilities too. This holiday would not be intended to honor the soldiers, or a day where we're supposed to give presents to other people.

This holiday should be a selfie---selfies have become popular now that we have cameras in our cell phones. Now I know some people have gotten themselves into trouble with selfies, but I'm not talking about a selfie as a photograph. I'm talking about a selfie holiday. A day in which we get to do and be whatever we want.

Maybe we should have them more often than just once per year. Maybe we should have them, say, once a quarter or even once a month. I understand we probably wouldn't be able to take a day off every quarter or once a month, but we should have a number of Selfie holidays each year.

I'm thinking we should learn how to be more selfish, and maybe the government, our employers and society at large should help us in this regard. While it may sound crazy at first glance, I think it would ultimately be a benefit to all of society. Maybe not right away but certainly over time it should turn out to be a net positive for all.

Like anything else, I think it would take some time to get really good at doing Selfie holidays. We'd need time to practice, like we do when we learn a new language or learn to fly-fish or ski. One Selfie Holiday a year just wouldn't move us along the learning curve very fast.

After all, if you are going to have a Selfie Holiday, you probably should do it well, or why bother? It may strike some of you as odd that one would have to work at doing a Selfie well. I can tell you from experience it ain't easy. I've tried.

As a minister, you have all sorts of spare time, extra time when you have no other responsibilities. Your employment contract may say you work six days a week, but if you don't live in the parsonage, where people can see your every move, nobody knows when you're just sloughing off.

(I hope you understand this is all just a theoretical proposition.)

What would you do with a whole day that is intended to be just for you? I might go for a walk in the woods, or have an ice cream cone. And I'd still have 22 hrs left. While in the woods, I might find a pond or stream to fish in... 20 hours remain, maybe only 18 if the fish were biting.

I'd have to eat and sleep so I'd use maybe 10 more hours. I'd still have 8-10 hours to do whatever I wanted to do, and not have to feel guilty about it. I'd probably then have to decide if I wanted to work on a project around the house, read or visit with friends. And if I did all three, I'd probably still have time left in my selfie day. See what I mean? It might take practice to do a Selfie Holiday well.

What would you do with a Selfie holiday?

Now some of you...I won't try to categorize you...would jump at the chance to have a Selfie Holiday. You'd probably know just what you'd do or would think it doesn't matter. Time to do whatever you wanted would be fine with you. It would sound like a grand idea.

Others of you might feel squeamish about the idea. I won't try to categorize you either, but you also probably have easy access to feelings of guilt. You might well be uncomfortable with the idea of having a full day to do whatever you wanted. You might think that the whole idea of a Selfie Holiday is more than a bit bazaar. It would encourage being selfish after all, and by definition, that's not a value you'd likely support.

While this isn't a test and there's no right answer, I do want to suggest that selfishness has gotten a bad rap. We tend to use the word selfish when we think about someone who's only interested in self-aggrandizement, self-satisfaction; someone who is wholly and only self-occupied.

When we use the word, I believe, we tend to use it as a mantle that we place on someone; we use it as a definition of who that someone is. Our tendency is to see selfishness as the essence of who they are...always and only. We think of selfish as being a negative trait or value.

My rub is with the notion of always and only. I'd certainly agree, someone who is always and only interested in "self" would not make a good friend, partner, parent, neighbor or employee. But the truth is, there just aren't that many people like that out there who always and only focus on themselves.

My concern is we've ruined a word that otherwise could have real value in our lives. And all because of a few people and Puritanism.

Like in the story of the thirsty man, sometimes being wholly self-occupied, doing something solely for one's own benefit is a useful practice or skill to have. That fellow was wholly interested in obtaining water. He wasn't concerned with destroying a well built wall. He wasn't concerned with whether or not the water wished to have his company...or be consumed.

What does the airplane steward tell you before take-off. When the airbag descends, place YOUR mask on first. We're not told to check to see if everyone around us has an air-mask. We're not told to first focus on our elderly mother, or child who is travelling with us. There's no expectation that we will share our mask with anyone else.

We are explicitly told to take care of yourself first. And for good reason. If you are not conscious you won't be of any value to anyone else and you'd probably be in other people's way! There are times, when we need to understand the importance of taking care of ourselves first and foremost.

If one is in an abusive relationship, one should focus on self-care first and foremost.

So much of what we are taught by polite society is that we should always take other peoples' concerns into account. And the implication is that we should place other peoples' needs and wants before our own.

And yes we should, but only sometimes, not always.

When someone loves someone, they don't love the other for the benefit of the other person. We love someone else because of how it makes us feel, because we feel better when we are with them. Or because we feel fed by the relationship.

What someone else may gain from our love is wholly secondary to the fact of our love. So in a sense, loving someone is, in its self, a selfish act.

There are times in our lives when we should be selfish. Selfie Holidays should be designed to allow us to learn when and where we should be selfish. It's through trial and error that we learn. It's through exploration and experience that we discover what is sacred in our lives and as such, deserves selfish consideration.

Is it selfish, in the negative sense of the word, to follow a star that calls to us? Is it selfish to reach for a hope or a dream that we sense would satisfy a deep yearning?

When we care for the environment, it satisfies a need we have to do good, to be of assistance, to do our part in saving the world as we know it or would like it to be. Whether or not our efforts truly make any real difference is secondary to our need to act. Working on behalf of the environment, at its core, is a selfish act. One that should be encouraged.

I have not forgotten that today, we kick off our pledge campaign, and we ask that you be active stewards of this community of faith. (Can you tell where I'm going with this?) I ask that when you consider how much to pledge this year, I ask that you take it as an opportunity to be selfish.

Consider what you gain from your involvement with this Fellowship. Consider the degree to which it feeds your yearnings.

I want you to be selfish in seeking to fulfill your hopes and dreams for this community, not just for the benefit of the community, but consider how you as an individual will be benefited by your own hopes and dreams coming to fruition.

And like Selfie Holidays, that should come often during the year, so that we have multiple opportunities to discover and practice what feeds us, understand that this pledge campaign is just one opportunity to be selfish. During the year, after the pledge campaign has ended in a few weeks, I hope that you will find many opportunities to actively work to satisfy your selfish needs of this community.

Join a group that will expand your horizons. Get involved with an activity that allows you to use your skills and interests to advantage. Or offer to start an activity or project that feeds you. Help guide the creation of a Fellowship mission that serves you.

But as we go through the rest of the year, please remember—you only get so many Selfie Holidays during the year. All the other days, we need you to be mindful of the other guy's wants and needs and ensure there is room for their hopes and dreams as well.

May all our hopes and dreams come true.

Amen