

## Love Does Not Seek Its Own Benefit

Let us take turns reading 1 Corinthians 13 verse by verse with our small group members.

### 「 Introduction 」

The phrase “Love does not seek its own benefit” can be translated more literally from the original language as, “Love does not seek its own things.” While the Korean Bible renders it as “its own benefit,” it may also be understood as “its own way” or “what belongs to itself.” The ESV translates this verse as, “It does not insist on its own way,” while the NLT renders it, “It does not demand its own way.” Taken together, this means that love is a heart attitude that does not pursue itself first in every relationship.

### 「 Excessive Self-Love (Narcissism) 」

John Stott pointed out in *The Radical Disciple* that one of the cultural trends Christ’s disciples must resist is narcissism—“excessive self-love.”

In Greek mythology, Narcissus was a handsome young man. One day, he fell in love with his own reflection in a pond, leaned toward the water, and eventually drowned. From this story, “narcissism” came to mean excessive self-love or a state of self-absorption.

We possess a self-centered sinful nature. It constantly drives us to think of ourselves first, place ourselves at the center, and pursue our own interests above all else. But the humility of Jesus was a love that “made himself nothing” and became a servant for others. Love does not seek its own first.

### 「 Paul’s Evangelistic Strategy: Love Beyond Self-Interest 」

Paul the Apostle’s evangelistic strategy was characterized by freedom and flexibility. As we saw in the previous lesson, the Corinthian church at that time was divided over issues of food governed by the law. Paul teaches a new standard established by Christ through the cross, which fulfills the law.

#### 1) The guiding principle is this: seeking not one’s own benefit, but the benefit of others.

“All things are lawful,” but not all things are beneficial. “All things are lawful,” but not all things build up. Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor (1 Corinthians 10:23–24).

#### 2) We are called not to cause fellow believers to stumble in their faith because of us.

“Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause them to fall.” (1 Corinthians 8:13).

The highest way of proclaiming the gospel is love. For Paul, love meant not insisting on one’s own way, but seeking the good of others more earnestly, and carefully ensuring that no one is caused to stumble.

God’s glory is realized when we love one another. If children are fighting over inheritance in front of their parents, what kind of honor would those parents receive? They would likely be pointed at by neighbors and bring shame upon their family. In such a moment, the parents would experience disgrace. In contrast, even if a family is not well-off, when brothers and sisters live in harmony and show mutual care, would not the parents receive praise from the community? People would say, “They may not have much, but they raised their children well.” They may even become an object of admiration and recognition in the neighborhood. In that moment, the parents experience honor. In this way, God’s glory is directly connected to a loving community formed through the unity of His children. [Song Yongwon, *The Common Good of God*]

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## Sharing

1. Have there been moments when someone cared more for your good than their own and left a beautiful memory in your heart? Take time to share those stories.
2. The greatest glory we can offer to God is the love we show to one another. Who is the person I am called to love today?
3. And let us reflect on what it means to “lay down my freedom” so that I do not cause others to stumble.

### 「 Paul’s Philosophy of Ministry: It Is More Blessed to Give Than to Receive 」

Paul the Apostle lived his entire life holding to a core philosophy of ministry—a guiding principle that shaped both his leadership and his personal conduct. He did not merely teach believers with words; he sought to become a living example of the gospel he proclaimed. The conviction that shaped his life is a saying of Jesus not recorded in the Gospels:

“In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’” (Acts 20:35).

In a world shaped by the principle of “give and take,” Jesus revealed a radically different way of life—one where blessing is found not in receiving, but in giving freely, without condition or expectation of return. While people naturally tend to prefer receiving, Jesus declared that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Paul embraced this conviction as the foundation of his life and ministry. He could therefore testify to the church that he lived without hesitation or reservation in this way of self-giving love. As we see in today’s passage, love does not seek its own advantage but seeks the good of others. This is the life that embodies the love of Christ, and the path of discipleship that follows Him.

### 「 Reflection 」

The film <Seven Pounds> features seven individuals who each receive an organ donation from one person. Among them, a particularly moving scene shows two of these recipients meeting: “Did you receive as well?” “Yes, I did.” “So you received it from him too.” Through this conversation, they share a unique bond unknown to anyone else in the world. Their common experience is that they were all saved by the same person. Though they are different individuals, they are no longer fundamentally separate, because they have each received the gift of life from one donor. In this sense, the life of the donor is shared and present within all seven recipients. This creates a kind of shared ground—a common stage—on which they stand together. On that ground, they cannot easily remain hostile toward one another, nor can they emphasize their differences in the same way as before. The overwhelming commonality reshapes their identity. Because they have all received sacrificial love that gave them life, there emerges an ethical responsibility to reflect that same love toward one another. [Song Yongwon, The Common Good of God]

he cross is not merely the death of one individual, but an event of God’s love in which life was shared with all of us who were dying. Just as the life of one donor can flow into many recipients, so the life of Jesus Christ now flows in the same way within all who believe. Therefore, the church is not simply a gathering of people who share similar interests or preferences. We are all those who have been made alive through the sacrifice of Jesus. Though we differ in age, personality, and background, the moment we confess by faith, “I, too, have received this love,” we are made one. Before this love, we cannot remain in hostility, condemnation, or endless competition. The overwhelming common ground—the shared life received through the death of One—reshapes how we see one another. Because the sacrificial love we received in Christ now lives within us, we are called to a life that reflects that same love—loving one another to the end and embodying that love in our daily lives.

### 「 Application 」

1. Above all, I hope that the love of Jesus will be practiced at home. Among the things you realized through today’s small group material and discussion, let’s share one specific commitment with our members to apply within our families.
  2. The church is a life-community that has received the body of Christ together. Let’s think about who we need to love within the church and share how we can put that love into practice.
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