

Pathwork on  
**Happiness, Selfishness, and Prayer**

This beautiful quote distinguishes happiness from selfishness and suggests the way to healthy unselfish prayer that inevitably leads to happiness, but happiness as a byproduct rather than as a direct answer to a prayer for happiness. It is from Pathwork Lecture #39 *Image-Finding*.

39	QUESTION: What about the problem of selfishness in prayer?
40	ANSWER: I have discussed that on various occasions, but I will do so again, perhaps with a slightly different slant, my friends. I know that many people are afraid that their prayers are selfish. But that depends very much on how you pray. You cannot say of any act that it is selfish or not without examining it. Aside from crass instances, it is your motive that counts in all desires and attitudes. Selfishness always depends on the how. To determine this is really very simple. If you pray for things solely because you want them and because it would be pleasant to have them and for no other reason, then, of course, it is a selfish prayer and it will do no good at all. For only a pure spiritual force coming out of your soul will have an effect. A selfish prayer indicates a misunderstanding of life and is therefore made in untruth, even though you are not deliberately dishonest. Nevertheless, an untrue thought, innocent and in good faith as it may be, cannot meet with the true forces of the cosmos. Like attracts like, and this law cannot be changed.
41	One of the first things you learn on this path is to ask yourself about your motives for desiring a certain thing; to ask yourself about the why of some of your emotional reactions. If you do not find the answer, it is a good beginning to pray for the will to recognize yourself fearlessly and truthfully. Thus, in such an instance, you would pray that your motives should become purified. This cannot be construed as selfishness. Furthermore, it is certainly not selfish to pray for the good of other creatures. If you can bring yourself to pray for those who have harmed you -- and mean it -- that in itself is an act of purification. And if you pray for strength and understanding to overcome your cowardice to face yourself and to overcome your resistance to developing yourself, there is nothing selfish in that. If you believe that wanting the happiness that inevitably results from purification, after a certain point is reached, is self-serving, then remaining unpurified and unhappy would seem to be a higher aim because it would seem selfless!
42	In this connection you must understand how God's laws work: Only those who are happy can bring happiness to others. I do not mean cheap and easily obtainable happiness, but the real thing that comes only by hard labor and that no one can take away from you. You will never see an unhappy person who can truly bring happiness to others. That is impossible. An unhappy person may do a good deed, a single unselfish act, but cannot possibly make another person

	<p>happy. Therefore, your purification and development should be the main intent of your prayer, apart from praying for others, and consider the resulting happiness a byproduct, a means to an end, rather than the end itself.</p>
43	<p>If selfishness, namely the desire to become happy, enters your motivation a little bit at the beginning of your upward climb, recognize this, but do not mind it too much. Accept yourself as you are, as still imperfect. Even if the selfish motive is not as pure as expecting happiness only as a byproduct, it is still a step forward in the realization of truth. Only by purifying yourself can you become happy. The person who has a lower degree of consciousness, however, believes that happiness results from giving in to all the desires coming from the lower nature.</p>
44	<p>If you are not free from selfishness -- and scarcely a human being is -- it is certainly healthier to see this clearly instead of forcing it away; in that way it will only hide in your soul and cause you more harm than the clear and courageous recognition of its existence. Know that the aim is a higher one, and know that you are emotionally not there yet.</p>
45	<p>Also realize that secluded happiness is impossible. The separating wall must crumble, and that is what all of you are afraid of; it threatens you. You do not realize that by keeping your separating wall you defeat your own purpose and you contradict your desire to develop, which exists just as strongly as your fear of it. You all desire happiness and you all desire to give happiness, yet you cannot achieve either one without losing your separateness.</p>
46	<p>And how do you lose your separateness? By doing the very thing that seems hardest to you. Perhaps it is giving up your pride, going through your apparent shame. When you approach the problem this way, you will realize that in this kind of prayer there is certainly nothing selfish. For God wants you to be happy. It is a long tradition of misunderstanding, often unpronounced, that to be godly means to be unhappy and severe. To be godly is supposed to be martyrdom. This image is engraved in humanity as a whole. No, my friends, it is not so. So do not feel guilty if you also become happy. But do not pray directly for happiness. Pray for the strength and ability to remove the obstacles you have placed between yourself and happiness. This means going through the unhappiness, self-inflicted by error and ignorance. The outcome will be the clear light of peace, harmony, beauty, and joy that will be yours regardless of other people's actions. That is the spirit you should have when you pray.</p>