

Pathwork on
Maturing Into Profound Happiness

This quote from Pathwork Lecture 76 *Questions and Answers*, begins on the topic of selfishness and prayer. Is prayer for our own happiness selfish? The lecture then beautifully elaborates on God's desire that we be happy. We, on our part, do not pursue happiness as a goal, however. Rather, happiness comes only as a byproduct of our doing the hard work of self-facing and purification – of removing our blocks to happiness. Unlike “cheap” happiness (which is circumstantially based and short-lived), **True Happiness** is more of a **profound positive attitude toward all of life**, independent of circumstances. The lecture points out that **only those who are happy can give happiness to others**. So for these reasons the lecture invites us to pray with these points in mind.

11	<p>QUESTION: I would like to hear about the matter of selfishness in prayer.</p> <p>ANSWER: I have discussed this on various occasions, but I shall do so again, perhaps with a different slant. I know that many people are afraid that they pray out of mere selfishness. Here I can only say, my friends, that it depends very much on how you pray and what your motive is. You cannot say about anything that it is selfish or that it is not, except for crass acts. In all your desires and attitudes it is the motive that counts. It always depends on the how.</p>
12	<p>The answer to this is really very simple. If you pray for things because you want them merely because they are pleasant and that is all there is to it, then of course this is a selfish prayer, and it will do no good at all. For only a spiritual force coming out of your soul will have any effect. Selfish prayer indicates a misunderstanding of life and is therefore an untruth, even though you do not commit a deliberate lie. Nevertheless, an untrue thought, as 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. One of the first things you learn on this path is to ask yourself about your own motives, why you desire a certain thing. You learn to ask yourself the "why" of certain of your emotional reactions and if you cannot give yourself the answer, a good beginning would be to pray for the will to recognize yourself fearlessly and in truth. This cannot be construed as selfishness. Thus you will pray that your motives become purified.</p>
13	<p>Furthermore, there certainly is nothing selfish in it if you wish other creatures well and if you can bring yourself to pray for those who have harmed you -- and mean it. That in itself is purification. And if you pray for strength and understanding to be able to overcome your cowardice to face yourself, to overcome your resistance to developing yourself, there is nothing selfish in that, though you might believe that the unavoidable happiness that results from purification -- after a certain point is reached -- is in itself a selfish act. If you believe that, then it would seem a higher aim to remain unpurified so as to be unhappy because this would mean selflessness. In this connection you must</p>

	<p>understand that God's laws work in this way: Only one who is happy can give happiness to others. I do not mean a cheap and easily obtainable happiness, but the real thing that comes only through hard labor and that no one can take away from you. You will never see an unhappy person who can truly give happiness to others. That is impossible. One may do a certain good deed, a single unselfish act, but cannot make another person happy. So if you are afraid of selfishness because your purification and development would make you happy -- and this should be your main prayer as distinct from prayer for others -- consider this happiness as a byproduct, as a means to an end, and not as the end itself. Even if selfishness, namely the desire to become happy, enters a little at the beginning in your striving upward, recognize this, but do not mind it too much. Accept yourself as you are -- and you are still imperfect. This selfish motive is not as pure as the one stated here, namely that happiness should be only a byproduct, a means to an end, but it is certainly a step forward on the path of truth.</p>
14	<p>Only by purifying yourself can you become happy, while the person who has a lower degree of consciousness believes that happiness results from giving in to all the desires coming out of the lower nature. If you are not free from selfishness -- and a human being rarely is -- it is certainly healthier to see this clearly instead of pushing and 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, but know that you are emotionally not yet there. Also realize that secluded happiness is impossible. The separating wall must fall, and that is what all of you are afraid of. You feel endangered without it. You do not realize that in desiring to keep your separating wall, you defeat your own purpose, and you illogically contradict your desire to develop that persists just as strongly, in spite of your fear of it. You all desire happiness and you all desire to make others happy. Yet, you cannot achieve either one without losing your separateness. And how do you lose your separateness? By doing the very thing that seems hardest for you -- perhaps by giving up your pride, by going through your apparent shame. When you approach the problem in this way, you will realize that in a prayer of this kind there is certainly nothing selfish. For God wants you happy. It is a long tradition of misunderstanding, an often unpronounced conception that to be godly means to be unhappy and severe. This image is engraved in humankind. This is supposed to be martyrdom. No, my friends, it is not so. Do not feel guilty if you also become happy. That certainly does not mean that you should pray directly for happiness. What you should pray for is the strength and the ability to overcome and remove the obstacles you have placed between yourself and happiness. This removal must mean to go through the self-inflicted unhappiness out of error and ignorance, not to shirk it. At the end of the tunnel you will find the clear light of peace, harmony, beauty and joy that must be yours regardless of others' actions. That is the spirit you should have when you pray.</p>