

Let's dive into a principle from the Bible that's very core to great success in our lives—at least when it's applied intentionally and consistently every day. To apply that principle is a privilege and affords truly meaningful power and impact!

So, needless to say, this is a principle that's at the heart of the New Covenant—yet relatively few Christians seem to consistently exemplify a full and healthy version of it. So...just what *is* this amazing principle?

Well, that principle is to be *fruitfully centered on others*...every day...in every way...large and small! And the secret to the successful application of being fruitfully centered on others is to *relentlessly avoid lapsing into being self-centered*...that's right, back to the point: focusing instead on being centered on others!

But wait just a minute, isn't that naïve? *Well, if so, then Jesus was naïve!* Here's a Bible story we've all heard...it's found in Matthew 22:34-39 (ESV).

“But when the Pharisees heard that [Jesus] had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?’ And he said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

This is one of the greatest “two-fer” wins ever—yeah, a *two-fer* results in two wins from one action, right? Here in this response by Jesus to the lawyer's question is a two-fer in the sense of interweaving both *spiritual focus* and *proper spiritual intent*. You see, the truth is, a person can have an apparent spiritual focus *without the proper spiritual intent!* Think of those legalistic Pharisees recorded in the Bible who were indeed already often focused on others—but *that focus was with condemnation, not love!*

That's because the condemnation of others is actually centered smack-dab on a very high opinion of supposed self-accomplishment—yeah...wrongly thinking of yourself as being better than others! Right to that very point, do you remember the classic story of the Pharisee told by Jesus in Luke 18:11? Here it is.

“The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.’” Remember, Jesus is *not* telling this story approvingly—yes, the Pharisee has a direct prayer-focus on God...but only about others' faults!

But the clear reality—then and now—is that this Pharisee's weak spiritual condition of high self-regard *at the expense of others* is certainly not monopolized by him...sadly, this virus of comparing self favorably to others has been passed around among a great many Christians since the Cross!

Paul had an answer for adjusting us all back to truth...writing it elegantly in eleven words to the Romans: “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” (3:23) And Jesus Himself paved the way with His enduring, eternal, loving response to fallen humanity: yes...dying to self, laying down His life for others.

Indeed, Christ Himself bore the sins of every person in the world on the Cross, thus manifesting a sacrificial, redeeming love for all, and in so doing also loving His Father in heaven, too—yes, doing that by reconciling all who would say “yes” to the Father!

And so the pressure's off for the believer! We don't have to condemn people on God's behalf by comparison to ourselves...in fact, we should lose that desire! Instead, we get to love and serve them on God's behalf! Hey, we now have the big picture in the New Covenant: Jesus fulfilled the Law on humanity's behalf by going to the Cross. Yes, Jesus was selflessly centered on others—His Father and all humanity.

And just look at the amazing and enduring results—the magnificent story of His Kingdom being increasingly, freshly populated every day by new believers responding to Jesus's love for both His Father and for us that He manifested on the Cross.

Then, for us as Jesus-followers, there's this instruction: what Paul wrote to the Philippians (2:1-5).

“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus...”

That’s right. “Being of the same mind, having the same love.” “Count[ing] others more significant than yourselves.” “Look[ing]...to the interests of others.” Yeah, all of that is about *loving others!*

Yes, as new creatures in Christ, we have the privilege and the power of stewarding all of *our* relationships with God’s love—our vertical relationship with God and our horizontal relationship with everyone else, from family to enemies! Hopefully those two categories of *family* and *enemies* are different!

The totality of all this brings us to our appointed, target-rich roles to actively love in the workplace. Now, we all know that the practice of doing business every day is sometimes considered *inherently* selfish and greedy and thoughtless and self-centered—those words often voiced by ignorant, politicized ideologues. *But—for many—nothing could be further from the truth and the reality of everyday service!*

You see, when people participate in free markets, they’ll only sustain true success when they consistently serve well—that means actively loving people by providing great value in the service or product being offered.

Still, it’s shocking to many socialists who’ve never sacrificed and served others by starting and sustaining a business that one of the great lovers of the poor in America the last half of the twentieth century was Sam Walton. So, while pricey restaurants hosted many a rich elitist who condemned Walmart and Walton, he was simply ignoring them and making hundreds of millions of his neighbors grateful. And how did Walton do that? By working on his neighbors’ behalf to make life’s necessities much more affordable!

And Walton served his investors in Walmart very well, too, not only giving them great returns on their investment...but by the investors’ capital investment, they shared in Walton’s loving service to customers.

And, in the end, yes, as a fabulous steward of others, Sam Walton made a whole lot of money. *And, as we can see, that’s rightly just!* But Sam’s heart remained on driving his old pickup on his farm—interspersed, of course, with his visiting countless stores throughout America...where his love was rousing returned to him by Walmart employees.

So, remember what Paul wrote to the Philippians? “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” Yes, *when we look to the interests of others*—whether coworkers or employees or owners or supply chain partners—*we are ultimately simultaneously looking to our own God-established interests of being a good steward, too!*

Being centered on others is a privilege, and when done very well, the resulting power can be used for witness...and continuing in doing even more good! Just watch folks who’ve done it well...like Walton! Power accumulated to Walton...and he used that power to serve even more...even better!

And you know what? By and large, in the final analysis, *it’s just a whole lot of fun* serving and loving others...yeah, then often enjoying reaping the gratitude of others for our love and service. You know, just like we understandably have undying gratitude to Christ for His grace, love, and service to us!

And, again, in the end, *we’ve looked out for our interests* by being a good steward as unto the Lord, too. That’s the privilege and the power of being centered on others!

Yes, that’s the Jesus approach we can all work to conform to. So, enjoy it...afresh...tomorrow...next week...next year! That’s all about being centered on others...its privilege...and its power!

## *A&A: Application & Action*

1. When looking at a company positioned like Sam Walton's Walmart, do you believe that fruitfully centering on the strong stewardship of others in free markets aligns with God's purposes well...or not? Discuss.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. In your journey, have you generally observed more Christians with a true spiritual intent of love in Christ or an active intent of condemnation of others? Discuss.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Do you truly consider it a privilege to be relentlessly centered on others? Be specific, using real-life examples.