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## **We Need A Shot of Love**

The 2019 movie *The Last Full Measure* recaps the heroism of William Pitsenbarger, a United States Air Force Pararescueman who flew in helicopter rescue missions during the Vietnam War. He is credited to have personally saved over 60 men during the war before losing his own life in 1966 while aiding and defending others. He was posthumously awarded the Air Force Cross, which was later upgraded to the Medal of Honor. What was it that provided Pitsenbarger the courage and devotion to sacrificially serve others to the point of death?

In a world teeming with various interpretations and manifestations of love, a contrast emerges between the selfless, sacrificial love encouraged by scripture and the often-selfish love championed by worldly standards. In a world that is infected with hate, it becomes imperative to compare the false love often exhibited by humanity with the pure, sacrificial love embodied by God.

At the heart of sacrificial love is the willingness to put the needs and well-being of others before our own desires. John 15:13 (NIV) lays the foundation of this understanding, "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." This verse encapsulates the essence of living a life marked by daily acts of selflessness and consideration for others. It contrasts sharply with a world that often promotes the "me-first" attitude, where actions are driven by what one can gain.

Sacrificial love is not an abstract concept taught by Jesus but was made manifest through his life and death. Philippians 2:5-8 (NIV) presents sacrificial love as the antithesis of selfish ambition and vain conceit. The early church set a profound example of sacrificial love. Tertullian (160AD-240AD) wrote this about Christians during his lifetime: "It is mainly the deeds of a love so noble that lead many to put a brand upon us. See how they love one another, they say, for they themselves are animated by mutual hatred; how they are ready even to die for one another, they say, for they themselves will sooner put to death (The Apology, ch. 39)." Their commitment to the welfare of others, including their enemies, spoke volumes by embodying Christ's commandment to love one another. This selfless love not only bolstered the early church's growth, but it was also out of this same sacrificial love originating from God that spawned great humanitarian movements throughout its history.

Conversely, the worldly perspective on love often equates it with emotional gratification and personal fulfillment, sidelining the needs and well-being of others when they conflict with personal desires. This selfish love is summarized best where relationships are treated as commodities, to be pursued or discarded based on their perceived utility or satisfaction. Such a narcissistic view not only depreciates the inherent value of individuals

but also sows seeds of relational mistrust. Trust is the fuel of healthy relationships and self-centered love not only harms trust, but it also consumes it leaving deep wounds that might never heal.

The contrast between sacrificial and selfish love becomes obvious when examined through the lens of 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NIV), which defines love as patient, kind, not envying, not boasting, not proud, not dishonoring others, not self-seeking, not easily angered, and keeping no record of wrongs. In contrast, self-centered love exhibits its own set of traits including impatience, unkindness, envy, pride, and egotism. By embracing this scriptural blueprint for love, believers are called to cultivate relationships that reflect God's love, marked by a steadfast commitment to being other centered.

By being practitioners of sacrificial love individuals, communities and societies at large are healed from the ravages of hate. When individuals prioritize the genuine well-being of others, they create ripple effects of kindness, generosity, and compassion that can heal divisions and foster a genuine sense of belonging and community. This stands in stark contrast to the fragmentation and alienation engendered by a culture of selfish love.

A reorientation embracing sacrificial love not only enriches our lives but also serves as a beacon of hope and healing in a world is desperate for sacrificial, selfless love. This love fueled William Pitsenbarger and is the shot of love the world needs today.