



AN **EKERK** TREND REPORT

SELFIE

INTRO

If we heard this word ten years ago, we would have had to guess what it means. However, if you read this ekerk trend report today, then chances are that you know what that means: a type of self-portrait, normally taken with a camera phone.

The word selfie was first used on September 13 2002, in Australia's ABC Online forum. The hashtag #selfie that became popular through social media was first used in 2004 in the online photo management and sharing application Flickr [<http://www.searchenginejournal.com/13-things-know-word-year-selfie/78339/>].

Since then selfies took over the internet to such an extent that 2013 was dubbed the year of selfie.

This ekerk trend report will look at the international and local trends concerning selfies. We invite you to join in and to think about the possible implications and consequences for our society. Do these trends affect the society in which we live? If so, how? Are people becoming more and more self-centered? Is it saying something about the impending disappearance of privacy boundaries? Then, in conclusion, this report will also consider what this trend of the 'self(ish)ie' has in store for the local congregation. How does it affect our lives as Christians today?

THE ARCHIVE OF #SELFIE

The hashtag #selfie surely turned the spotlight onto the term and concept of “a selfie”. The hashtag is used more than 57 million times on Instagram (online photo taking and sharing platform). According to Instagram, the first photo marked #selfie in the photo sharing network’s short but illustrious history, was posted on 16 January 2011 by a user called Jennifer Lee. On 27 January 2011, the day the network introduced hashtags for the first time, she added the fateful tag #selfie [<http://mashable.com/2013/11/19/first-selfie-hashtag-instagram/>]. It was only just the beginning of the flood. Since this first #selfie, the tag was used on 70,280,227 photos (of the 150 million users) as at 16 January 2014. In this archive of the #selfie tag, you will also see the most popular and active #selfie users on Instagram (from October 2013): Kylie Jenner, one of the young Kardashians, posted 451 selfies on Instagram. Snoop Dogg is in second place with 271. On the famous social media platform Twitter, Miley Cyrus has the most #selfie pictures at 121. Tyra Banks is second with 62.

The selfie is so popular that it has turned into an online game called The Selfie Olympics on Twitter. The aim of the game is pretty simple: take the most extreme selfie you can, and share it online [[http://mashable.com/2014/01/03/15-selfieolympics-](http://mashable.com/2014/01/03/15-selfieolympics-shots-worthy-of-a-gold-medal/?utm_cid=mash-com-fb-main-link)

[shots-worthy-of-a-gold-medal/?utm_cid=mash-com-fb-main-link](http://mashable.com/2014/01/03/15-selfieolympics-shots-worthy-of-a-gold-medal/?utm_cid=mash-com-fb-main-link)] & [<http://fstoppers.com/selfie-olympics-let-the-games-begin>].

The wonderful thing about social media is that between all the #selfies of these famous popstars, there can also be one of me or you. This courtesy of all the advice and guidelines that one can find today for taking a better selfie [<http://www.picturecorrect.com/tips/selfie-photo-tips-techniques/>] & [<http://www.gizmodo.com.au/2013/11/how-squinching-will-make-you-look-good-in-photos/>] & [<http://news.instyle.com/2013/12/27/how-to-take-selfies-tips/>].

#SELFIE FROM MARS TO THE VATICAN

The #selfie is so popular that even the Mars Rover, Curiosity, and Chris Cassidy, a NASA astronaut, took a selfie in outer space [<http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2012/09/mars-curiosity-rover-takes-a-selfie/262181/>] & [http://mashable.com/2013/12/11/2013-the-year-of-the-selfie/?utm_cid=mash-com-fb-main-link].

Even Pope Francis has appeared in a selfie taken by young people [<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/the-pope/10277934/Pope-Francis-and-the-first-Papal-selfie.html>].

The online newspaper BuzzFeed published “The 23 Most Important Selfies Of 2013” [<http://www.buzzfeed.com/jessicamisener/the-most-important-selfies-of-2013>]. Among these ‘selfies’ you will find: a selfie of Malia and Sasha Obama at their father, President Barack Obama’s inauguration as U.S. President. President Barack Obama himself was in the spotlight when he, British Prime Minister David Cameron and Denmark’s Prime Minister Helle Ning Schmidt took a

selfie at the former South African President, Nelson Mandela’s memorial service at the FNB Stadium [http://mashable.com/2013/12/10/obama-nelson-mandela-funeral-selfie/?utm_cid=mash-com-fb-main-link]. There are many other celebrities that also pose in selfies on social media.

This trend of selfies is not only prevalent on international soil. The Afrikaans newspaper, Beeld, asked a few South African stars what their opinions are about selfies and they indicated that selfiemanía is also king of the hill locally [<http://www.beeld.com/bylae/2013-12-16-moderne-selfportret>].



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FROM CHOLESTEROL TESTING TO TRYING ON CLOTHES

The selfie is not just for social media use. There are a variety of apps that attempt to use selfies to make your everyday life easier and healthier. One of the latest technological apps helps you with a small remote control to take better selfies. Snapx Wireless Remote Shutter Controller is a Bluetooth device — just a simple little button (with the free application on the phone) that you use to take photos on your iPhone [<http://craziestgadgets.com/2013/11/27/take-better-iphone-selfies-with-isnapx-remote-shutter-controller/>]. Canon, the camera manufacturers also spotted the trend of the selfie. Their answer is the N100 PowerShot camera. This new camera's star feature is a "rear-facing camera that can take a picture of the photographer at the moment they capture their image with the primary lens; the selfie is then overlaid on the main photo" [<http://www.theverge.com/2014/1/6/5278900/canon-n100-announcement>].

Yet another application is the iOS app ThirdLove, an online underwear retailer. This application makes use of quick selfies to get the perfect fit for your underwear [<http://readwrite.com/2013/11/22/how-selfies-and-image-sensing-technology-could-get-you-a-better-fitting-bra>].

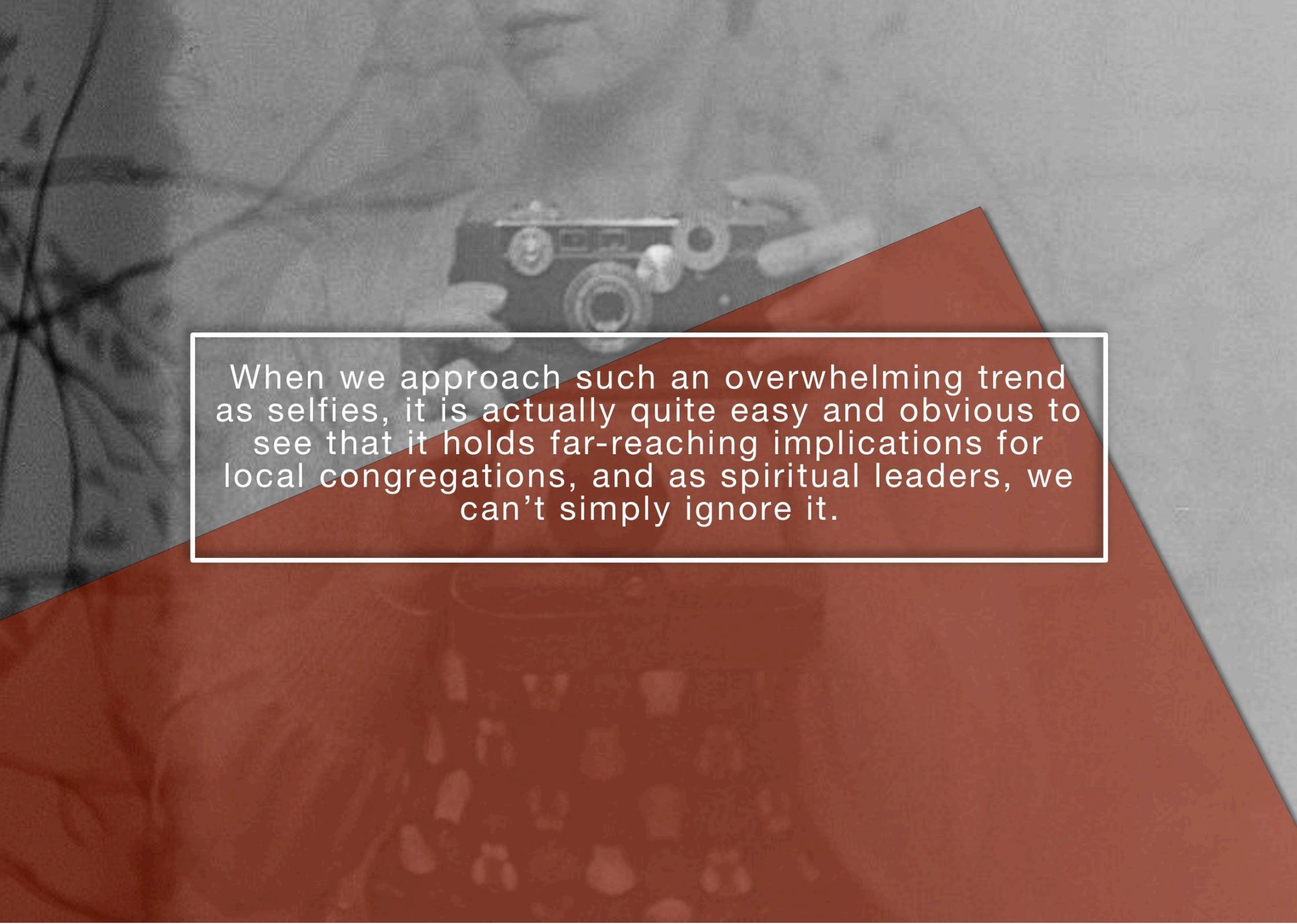
Researchers from Cornell University explain in an article that appeared in the journal *Lab on a Chip*, they have developed a smart phone application that uses a selfie to test your cholesterol level. All you need — apart from the app that they developed and a smart phone — is a reagent test strip and the willingness to draw your own blood. Cholesterol tests tend to rely on reagent test strip that turns different colors depending on the actual cholesterol levels of the blood placed on the test strip. The researchers' achievement was to place an attachment over the smartphone's camera flash that can illuminate and catch the color of the strip [http://mashable.com/2013/12/18/cholesterol-app/?utm_cid=mash-com-fb-main-link].

The clothing retailer Urban ran a campaign encouraging people to pay for their clothes with a selfie. The question behind the social media campaign was simple: how much do you think your selfie is worth? This shows evidence of a society where fashion is more about what your friends think (how would you know what looks good if your friends don't tell you?), and what those on social media think. They launched the social media campaign with the following rules: (1) Follow @UrbanSelfie on Twitter and "Urban Degree" on Facebook; (2) Visit any Urban store on the particular day that they specify; (3) Take a selfie of you wearing the item you want; (4) Tweet your photos to @urbanselfie and use the #urbanselfie tag. In this way you could get \$10 off on your purchase of the item. If you were lucky, and the Urban staff decided your selfie had the iconic Urban style, you could even get \$20 towards your purchase. According to the retailer the selfie that got the most retweets won an Urban wardrobe worth \$1,000 [<http://memeburn.com/2013/11/pay-with-a-selfie-the-best-social-campaign-by-a-fashion-retailer/>].

Locally, the fast-food chain, Burger King, launched a similar social media campaign when they recently opened a new store in Johannesburg. They said "Jozi, the WHOPPER® is coming soon. Want in on the action? Make sure you're the first to get a selfie with a uniquely numbered WHOPPER®." They placed a number of uniquely numbered WHOPPER® (their iconic burger) codes around Johannesburg. You needed to take a selfie showing the code and then use the hashtag #whopperyourselfie with the unique code to get a free WHOPPER®.

SELFIES IN THE ARTS

Selfies are also used in the arts. In the photo series “Imagine Finding Me” by photographer Chino Otsuka, she relives her childhood by digitally bringing herself into old photos of her as a child. Otsuka compares her double self-portraits with a trip back in time [[http://
laughingsquid.com/photographer-digitally-adds-herself-to-
childhood-photos-of-her-in-double-self-portrait-series/](http://laughingsquid.com/photographer-digitally-adds-herself-to-childhood-photos-of-her-in-double-self-portrait-series/)]. Even the South African company, Lowe, has launched a campaign for the Cape Times last year where they had famous photographs — the wartime kiss, Beyers Naude and Desmond Tutu, Winston Churchill smoking, etc. — relived and developed as selfies [[http://www.adweek.com/
adfreak/famous-photos-reimagined-selfies-newspapers-
wonderful-print-ads-153815](http://www.adweek.com/adfreak/famous-photos-reimagined-selfies-newspapers-wonderful-print-ads-153815)].

A vintage camera is positioned in the upper center of the frame, resting on a grey, textured surface. A large, dark red, semi-transparent geometric shape, resembling a triangle or a large arrow pointing right, is overlaid on the right side of the image. The camera is a classic rangefinder style with a prominent lens and various dials. The overall aesthetic is modern and artistic, with a focus on texture and color contrast.

When we approach such an overwhelming trend as selfies, it is actually quite easy and obvious to see that it holds far-reaching implications for local congregations, and as spiritual leaders, we can't simply ignore it.

THE IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS OF THE SELFIE

Each trend handled by the ekerk research team finds expression in specific applications and implications for local congregations. We ask ourselves the questions: how does this affect our own faith communities, and what is useful tips and practices that can flow from it?

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Here follow a few of the consequences of the selfie trend, as well as potential practical applications for ministries.

CONSUMER TECHNOLOGY GROWTH CONTINUES

We're still facing an explosion of consumer technology. From smartphones, social media, personal websites and increasingly affordable software, technology is busy taking over the world on large scale.

Technological communication is no longer the exclusive playground of large corporate entities. Ordinary users can communicate with the masses via their smartphones and computers. Anyone with an internet connection is only a few links away from a global audience curious about his/her field of interest.

This accessibility of mass communication and information has a major impact on how we think about wisdom, knowledge and data, and also the inter-connections between the three.

Possible applications:

- Create two-way digital communication channels between the church and the leaders, as well as between congregation members.
- Make sure the people in charge of congregational communication is well-versed and comfortable with digital communication.
- Join and participate in the online communication platforms where the congregation and community have conversations daily.

PEOPLE ARE INCREASINGLY COMFORTABLE WITH THEIR DIGITAL PERSONAS

Where we hesitated to publish any personal information online as recently as five years ago, it is now the norm for certain technology users. People see their digital profiles on social media and other venues as a mere extension of their own existence, and don't hesitate to engage with the online world with the same confidence as they engage with the offline world. Thus, the boundaries between online and offline personas and interactions are disappearing.

Possible applications:

- An organization or congregation has a distinct digital presence, just like a person. Communicate accordingly.
- Know that users create an emotional connection with the organization's digital persona — be careful not to disappoint the relationship-expectation that goes with this connection.
- Encourage leaders to sharpen their own personal communication on digital platforms. Allow people to connect with leaders on a personal level.

THE NEED TO SHARE IS KING

One of the most interesting developments in the selfie trend, is recognition that the need to share a specific experience with others outweighs the need for the experience itself!

This means that even while people are in a conversation, experience or opportunity they will at the same time be sharing this with their online community. The need to share any event lends credibility to the event.

It is as if without the 'shared nature' of the experience, the experience becomes less real. People use selfies in this way to show others what they are passionate about, what they are busy with and what they are experiencing [<http://www.inc.com/jeff-haden/before-you-take-another-selfie-in-the-name-of-personal-branding-read-this.html>].

Possible applications:

- Know that every meaningful spiritual experience by believers wants to be shared — create both the opportunities and channels for this.
- Cultivate an atmosphere where people will have the confidence and take the liberty to share personal and spiritual experiences with one another, both online and off.
- Recognize that when people put in effort to share an experience or opportunity with others online, this does not undermine the experience or make it cheap in any way — the opposite is true.

A FOCUS ON THE 'SELF' IS CENTRAL

We can't deny that this trend also shows up a potentially dangerous component of human nature. The preoccupation with the 'self' is at an all-time high. Never before were people so focused on their own comfort, image, impact and importance.

This aspect can also be interpreted in one of two ways. (1) Through a humanistic worldview, we can assume that people see themselves as the center of the universe, and that pride and self-glorification are projected. So it is seen as selfishness [<http://www.inc.com/jeff-haden/before-you-take-another-selfie-in-the-name-of-personal-branding-read-this.html>] & [<http://www.thegremlin.co.za/2013/12/24/10-trends-for-2014-from-flux-trends/>] (2) We can also

assume that deeper caring and love for others are emerging, and that the signs thereof are becoming visible in our online culture.

Of course we want to plead for the latter, and we believe that there is an increasing awareness growth for others' pain, worries, dreams and ideals.

Possible applications:

- Make sure to touch both perspectives in congregational conversations — be wary of one-sided opinions.
- Build an understanding of true love and caring for others in the spiritual culture of the congregation. Encourage a 'focus on the other despite yourself' approach.
- Focus on courses and aids that can grow self-awareness and self-knowledge. Personality assessments and relationship management are two main areas that can contribute here.

Below Stephan helps us by pointing out possible indicators that enable us to live a new story with Jesus in this 'self(ish)ie' culture.

A group of people, including a woman on the left, a woman in the center, and a man on the right, are shown in profile, looking towards the right. They appear to be in a dark setting, possibly a theater or lecture hall. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter. A white text box is centered over the image, containing the following text:

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FROM “SELFIE-ISHNESS” TO A NEW STORY WITH JESUS

(This article was published on ekerk.org on 13 January 2014 [<http://www.ekerk.org/#!Vanaf-selfie-sugtigheid-tot-n-nuwe-storie-saam-met-Jesus/ckfj/CF8C134D-E410-4038-B5D2-1EF1F0D75F68>])

They say 2013 was the year of selfie, i.e. photos that people take of themselves with mobile phones. This term became so popular that it was appointed as the term of the year by the Oxford Online Dictionary in November 2013. At the end of 2012, Time Magazine highlighted it as one of the ten “buzz words” of the year, while the word ‘selfie’ was declared as a new English term by the self-same Oxford dictionary in 2013. If you consider that a recent study shows that about 30% of all 18-24 year-olds take selfies, then this is a trend that we should take notice of.

Whether we take selfies with our phones, or not — we are all writers and actors in the story of our own lives. We are lifelong storytellers. We learned this from God. He couldn’t help but share his rescue-acts in story form with us. The Bible is God’s official Story. It is his official Autobiography. The Bible is his Self-introduction that largely happens in narrative form. He likes to use stories to reveal Himself to us to, and the one that shows most beautifully how his heart unfolds is that of the cross

and resurrection of Jesus. There we see His love in full-color action. There we see the best and clearest pictures of God! We need to learn from Him how to live better stories. To help us with this, Christ invites us to model our lives on his.

Our selfies need to portray the chronicle or travel-story of our life with Christ. The decision to follow Him rapidly displaces us from the lead role of our lives. He applies “self(ie) control” to us. Never does the Lord allow us to dominate the scene of our lives selfishly. We appear with him there on all our life photos. He tells the real story of our lives. We appear with him on the victory podium, but the glory and the victory remain his.

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For more information about ekerk research, please go to www.ekerk.org. To book one of the ekerk trend speakers to present this trend in seminar format, please contact pierre@ekerk.org

Thanks for reading!

