

Living Beyond Ourselves

Why are so many people depressed today? Why are so many unhappy in their marriages? Why so much divorce? Why so many angry and rebellious children? Why so much crime and mass shootings?

These are big questions. They've been discussed on talk shows, seminars, among scholars and experts with many causes presented, but no changes.

There is a common reason, a single answer that addresses each of these questions as well as other similar questions. Though change may not come easily, it can begin one person and one family at a time when we start with the answer and apply the answer to the needs.

The answer is in living beyond ourselves. More specifically, it is in living to serve others first. This is the common denominator for each of the dysfunctional life situations we face. However, this is difficult to do when we have a natural bent away from God and towards ourselves.

When a society lives beyond itself, it tends to flourish socially. But it takes a spiritual priority to flourish spiritually. This spiritual priority can only come with repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ. Then, with this spiritual center, it requires obedience to the Great Commandment. This is found in Matt. 22:35-40.

Matt.22: 35-40

The First and Great Commandment is to love the Lord with all of our hearts, souls, minds, and strength. When this is the priority, we put Him first in our passions, thoughts, decisions, and actions. He is given the right to govern our lives.

He is the only one capable of meeting our deepest needs, including loneliness, depression, low self-esteem, inferiority and rejection. These things are very prevalent in this generation.

Luke 12:15-21 The parable of the Rich Fool

Greed is idolatry (Col. 3:5). It is a violation of God's law and only results in separation from God. We gain the whole world and lose our souls.

So how do we practice living beyond ourselves?

By loving our neighbor as ourselves (Matt. 22:39)

This means meeting the need of those God places in our paths when we have the ability to do so.

Prov. 3:27 Withhold not good to those to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do so.

This goes back to Jesus telling us the parable of the good Samaritan when he was asked "who is my neighbor?"

Lk. 10:25-37

Rom. 14: 7 For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself.

I John 3:17-18 But whoever has this world's goods, and seeks his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

The parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us how to live beyond ourselves. Here's what we find in the story.

1. Seeing a need and getting involved.

The priest and the Levite looked at the need but did not "see" it and passed on the other side. They did not love their neighbor according to God's standard. If we have the tongues of men and angels and have not love, it profits us nothing (I Cor. 13:1).

2. Having Compassion for the needs of others (v.33)

We won't help without compassion. We have to be honest with ourselves and with God if we don't have it. We can have it if we ask God to give us his heart towards those in need.

3. Using what he had to make a difference (v. 34)

It doesn't take a lot to help someone in need. It starts with using what we have.

4. Referring them to someone that can help further. (v. 35)

We may not be able to provide the more long term solutions, but we can always be willing to direct someone to where they can get further help. If you don't know where to refer them, take the time to find out. That's being a neighbor.

