

# MARK JENKINS MINISTRIES

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Living Beyond Yourself

Dear Friend,

What does it mean to live beyond yourself? It is a principle that is exemplified in the lives of people throughout the Bible and yet, sadly, it is a rare quality, seldom discussed and hard to find in modern day Christianity. Living beyond one's self requires a person's focus of attention to be redirected off themselves and onto others. Instead of being consumed with their own success, well-being, and place in society, their life is devoted to being a blessing to others through the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Living beyond yourself really means living beyond the dictates of this world's system. The world teaches us that our life should be all about us; self-centered. We are taught from childhood to get all you can and to "can" all you get and when you are old you can sit on your "can" and do nothing until you die. The commercials on television push us to desire the newest gadgets, lust after the biggest houses, and not to be happy until we have more than our peers. Life is portrayed as a race to accumulate the most and the best things until finally you die. This is a perfect picture of selfish vanity.

This self-centered way of thinking has become so engrained that we don't even know it is there. For example, we are taught through various media outlets to enter into a marriage covenant with an eye towards what we can get out of the marriage instead of what we are obligating ourselves to contribute to the marriage. As a result, when our expectations go unrealized all too often we pull the plug on the marriage. This mentality undermines the value we place on commitment and could even cause a person to question whether or not Jesus is truly committed to us, His bride.

When our thoughts and actions agree with the social norms, we are not **living beyond ourselves** we are **living for ourselves, just like the world.**

In the gospel of Matthew is recorded a message Jesus taught called the "Sermon on the Mount" or the "Beatitudes". What Jesus said in these verses are so

important because they tell us what our life is to be like and how it's not to be about ourselves. Jesus said the "blessed" were: the meek, the pure in heart, those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, and those who are reviled. Why? Because these people live beyond themselves with their focus of attention on others. This is the heart of God and likewise should be our attitude as well.

Conversely, society has taught us to look out for number one, because no one else is going to, which is not true. God is looking out for us. Who better than the apostle Paul to help us understand God's ever present watching over us? (Romans 8:31)

***"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"***

I believe that the first step necessary to head in the direction of living beyond the four walls of our own life is the realization that we no longer belong to ourselves. (I Corinthians 6:19-20)

***"What, know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which you have of God, and you are not your own. (20) For you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."***

The reality of the Gospel is simply this; we no longer belong to ourselves. God purchased our lives in Jesus and we now belong to Him. But, because God is love and love never forces Himself upon us, we can accept His salvation, confess His Lordship of our lives, and continue to live for ourselves the rest of our life and die and go to be with Him for eternity. Although, I wouldn't recommend it. For those opting to live the life of self, standing before Him might be a little uncomfortable. It's then that we will know what joy and fulfillment we passed up on earth because we chose to live our lives for ourselves.

God used a familiar Old Testament person to bring this way of living back to my attention, again. Unfortunately, this isn't my first time for God to have to remind me of my shortcomings in this area, and it probably won't be the last. To live this way is to go against an ocean of current heading in the opposite direction. But, as Joseph demonstrated through the events of his life, it is possible.

The account of Joseph spans from Genesis 37 to Genesis 50. I won't be able to do an exhaustive study here so I encourage you to read about his experiences on your own. Joseph went from being a 17 year old young man whose life was

by all indications fairly comfortable and favored by his Father, to being sold into slavery by his own jealous brothers. He was taken to another country in bondage where he faced an uncertain future because the dreams God had given him had further aggravated his brother's envy.

While we have the benefit of turning over a few chapters and seeing the miraculous end of how God took him from the pit and placed him on the throne, second only to Pharaoh, Joseph wasn't as fortunate. All he had was a dream in his heart, a word from God of his parents and his brothers bowing down before him. I'm sure when Joseph's brothers threw him into a pit the fulfillment of his dream seemed miles away. It's in those times that **we** determine whether or not we will ever see God's word fulfilled in our lives.

The key is in how we respond to those negative circumstances. Do we turn our attention onto ourselves and sulk because others have done us wrong? Or, do we continue to stay focused on God and live a life of service to others out of a heart of love?

Joseph's life shows us example after example of how bad things can happen. After being thrown into the pit and sold into slavery, Joseph rises to the top in Potiphar's house only to be accused of rape by Potiphar's wife and thrown into prison. For a second time Joseph is treated wrongly resulting in catastrophic changes to his life. But, once again while in prison, Joseph rises to the top and is placed in charge of the entire prison.

God's grace and favor is clearly on display, as well as, a positive attitude by Joseph. Had Joseph turned his attention on himself and how wrongly he had been treated he could have totally derailed God's plans for his life.

While in prison, Joseph interpreted dreams for Pharaoh's chief butler and baker. Pharaoh's chief butler was restored to his position with the understanding that he would remember Joseph. However, two more years passed in prison because the butler forgot Joseph, giving him another opportunity to sulk and be depressed about where he was and how everyone had done him wrong. Instead, Joseph kept his eyes on God.

In Genesis 41 we see where Pharaoh had dreamed dreams that no one could interpret. Finally, the butler remembered and Joseph is called to the throne to interpret Pharaoh's dreams. Think about all that had taken place in order for Joseph to be called to Pharaoh's throne. One negative event after another transpired in Joseph's life and still God was able to put Joseph exactly where he needed to be because he kept his heart right and remained focused on the dream God had given him.

Every downturn was an opportunity for Joseph to take his eyes off of God and focus on himself and his horrible circumstances. Think about it, even in prison Joseph is serving others and being a responsible leader. This is what God expects of us. No matter where we find ourselves in life. No matter what kind of circumstances we are faced with. If we refuse to focus on ourselves and how others have treated us and live beyond the four walls of our own life, we are keeping the door open for God to deliver us out of wherever we find ourselves.

Joseph dreamed the dreams about his family bowing down to him at age 17. Approximately 20 years later Joseph saw the fulfillment of those dreams. After seven years of abundance, drought and famine set in and all the land was suffering. But, because of God's wisdom through Joseph, Egypt had food. To survive, Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to buy food. So, after all those years away from home, bowed before Joseph were the very men who had sold him into slavery. (Genesis 42:8-9)

***“And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew him not. (9) And Joseph remembered the dreams he had dreamed of them...”***

How many times over that nearly 20 year period had Joseph thought about those dreams? Now, Joseph had the opportunity to do whatever he wanted to his brothers. Nonetheless, he did not take revenge. What we see is a man who has not focused on his own circumstances, but has kept his heart right and as a result has enabled God to move him into the place he was supposed to be.

Living beyond yourself requires you to realize that sometimes you are going to experience difficult times, not because God wants to hurt you or break you, but because you are on a path. Joseph recognized this, which is evident in these words. (Genesis 45:4-7)

***“And Joseph said unto his brethren, ‘Come near to me I pray you’. And they came near. And he said, ‘I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. (5) Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that you sold me hither, for God did send me before you to preserve life (6) For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. (7) And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.’ ”***

The life Joseph saved was not only that of his family. Joseph's actions made possible the life of God to enter the earth by way of Jesus. The great deliverance

facilitated by Joseph was more than delivering them from the famine. His actions enabled the continuation of the life of Judah through which David and ultimately the Seed of David, Jesus, would come.

Thank God for Joseph and his continued focus on the dreams God had given him. Thank God for his refusal to drown himself in despair because of how wrongly others had treated him time and time again. Clearly, his right heart attitude enabled God to continue to move him in the proper direction no matter what others did to him. This is what God expects of us. He expects us to keep our hearts right towards Him and towards others, no matter what they do to us. This allows Him to work His plan in our lives despite the actions of others, or the lack thereof.

We live in a world that is constantly trying to program us to be self-centered and worry only about ourselves. To be a success in God's kingdom we must constantly be aware of the world's pressure to conform. We must focus on living beyond ourselves and being a blessing to others. If we will do this, I believe then and only then will we come to realize the fullness of all God has planned for our lives and experience the joy and fulfillment of serving Him.

~ Jesus Loves You!

*Mark Jenkins*