

SERIES: BE THE BEST YOU CAN BE
SERMON: THE BEST VERSION OF YOU
1-8-23

OPENER:

There are many messages we are receiving from the world versus the truth God has already given us in His Word.

The pursuit of self-actualization (the realization of one's talents and actual potentials and true desires) is one of the persuasive themes in the world today. You find it in most blogs and podcasts and articles and product advertising, and it's even filtering into some pulpits across the country. Example: the gender activism that has become an industry providing hormone therapy, puberty blockers and sexual transition surgery for children.....

We should want to strive to be the best that we can be. The Bible teaches us to run the race, fight the fight, to be holy, walk in faith, to press toward that mark, to grow in the character of God..... I believe that you are here today, because you want to be the best that you can be, you want to grow in God, but.....

There are voices out there, loud voices that coin catch phrases and hashtags. Some of these will fade away into the next sunset and others will persist, like this cultural yearning to always be the "best version of yourself". There are entire books devoted to discovering your "true you" and telling you how to achieve that very thing. It sounds motivational and especially empowering, doesn't it? What version of anything would you want to be except the best one, anyhow?

IT SEEMS LOGICAL THAT UNCOVERING YOUR BEST SELF IS THE PATH TO TRUE HAPPINESS.

HERE IS THE THING THOUGH, WHEN YOU ARE STRIVING FOR THE BEST VERSION OF YOU, THE TEMPTATION TO BECOME YOUR OWN IDOL IS VERY REAL.

THIS WAVE OF SELF-ACTUALIZATION IS NOTHING BUT SELF-WORSHIP.

2 Timothy 3:1-5 (NLT) You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. ² For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. ³ They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. ⁴ They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. ⁵ They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that!

So I want to give you some truth about realizing your full, God-given potential. You won't find this wisdom to be readily available in your social media feed. These concepts are harder to grasp and they don't sell as many t-shirts — but they speak a truth that has existed before Time itself.

Here is my response to the “be your best self” philosophy, and three grounding principles of truly being the best version of you I hope you will embrace in its place:

Point: FOCUSING INWARD WON'T BRING YOU LASTING JOY

In the world's version of Happiness 101, satisfying your own wants and needs, in whatever way you see fit, is the key to happiness. The perfect combination of the right hair, clothes, relationships and position all equate to the perfect, happy life. But do they really?

**SO OFTEN, THE PEOPLE AND THINGS THAT ARE SUPPOSED TO FULFILL US
CAN DISAPPOINT US INSTEAD.**

Simply put, spending too much time wrapped up in our own thoughts and pursuits of what WE want is a sad way to live.

**BECAUSE THE ROAD TO EMPTINESS IS PAVED
BY SELF-ABSORPTION.**

So what do we do? How do we have true joy? Where should our focus be?.....
Matthew 6:32-33 (NLT) So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' ³² *These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs.*
³³ *Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.*

This verse tells us to seek the kingdom of God **FIRST BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE IN OUR LIVES** – and he'll provide all those other needs that vie for our attention – in his timing and within His will.

LET'S TALK ABOUT JOY:

Joy defined: is not just a feeling ; it is an attitude of the heart determined by confidence in God.

**YOUR JOY IS PROPORTIONATE TO THE CONFIDENCE YOU HAVE IN YOUR
RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST.**

True joy comes from letting God be in charge. True joy comes from the trust you have in Him to watch over you, protect you and bring about His good and perfect will in your life!

- > If you are having issues with being content, or you are struggling with depression evaluate if you are pursuing your own desires for you or God's desires?
- > If you deal with cycles of sorrow, look at your life and see if you are following an agenda or timeline you have created for yourself. Or have you surrendered your dreams, your desires and your timeline to God's plan?
- > If you feel like you can't ever lay hold of true joy in your life, are you living for yourself, pursuing your needs, your wants, your desires..... or are you living for God?
- > You say that you have surrendered your life to God, but do you fully trust Him to bring about His goodness in your life?

INSTEAD OF LOOKING INSIDE YOURSELF - LOOK OUTSIDE YOURSELF.

Shift your thoughts to consider what God wants for you and how you can glorify Him with your life. That's where we find REAL joy. It brings us a deeper, lasting happiness that isn't dependent on other people or things. It comes from our relationship with God, which no person or circumstance can take from us.