

Living Starts When You're Not Living for Yourself

Living for God rather than ourselves transforms everything about our existence. When we shift our focus from self-gratification to glorifying God and loving others, we discover what it truly means to be alive.

What Does It Mean to Stop Living for Yourself?

The apostle Paul understood this principle deeply. In Acts 20:24, he declared, "But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy." Paul deliberately chose not to count his life precious to himself so he could complete God's purpose for his life.

This isn't about self-hatred or neglecting our needs. It's about recognizing that our lives have a higher purpose than mere self-satisfaction. When we live primarily for ourselves, we become trapped in cycles of temporary pleasures that ultimately leave us empty and unfulfilled.

Why Does Faith Work by Love?

Everything in the Christian life operates through love. Faith works by love, healing flows through love, and spiritual maturity is measured by our capacity to love others as God loves us.

Love isn't just an emotion - it's the ultimate sign of spiritual maturity. You can quote scripture extensively or flow in spiritual gifts, but if you lack love, you're still spiritually immature. The real test of spirituality isn't knowledge or supernatural experiences, but how well you love others.

How Do We Protect God's House?

Just as Jesus drove the money changers from the temple with righteous anger, we must protect God's house - both the physical church and our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus cleansed the temple, He declared, "My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves."

Immediately after this cleansing, the blind and lame came to Jesus in the temple and were healed. This connection isn't coincidental. When we drive out the "thieves and robbers" - things like sickness, oppression, and ungodly influences - from God's house, healing and restoration follow.

Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Don't allow sickness, addiction, or any form of demonic oppression to set up residence there. Take the whip of God's Word and drive out anything that doesn't belong in His holy temple.

What Happens When We Live for Ourselves?

King Solomon provides a sobering example of what happens when we shift from living for God to living for ourselves. He began his reign with humility, asking God for wisdom to serve His people rather than requesting personal gain. God blessed this selfless heart with unprecedented wisdom, wealth, and honor.

But Solomon lost sight of what made him great. In Ecclesiastes 2, he describes how he pursued every pleasure and possession his heart desired. He built great works, accumulated vast wealth, and denied himself nothing. Yet his conclusion was devastating: "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done... and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind."

The more we live for ourselves, the more miserable we become. Selfishness leads to emptiness, broken relationships, and a wasted life. Those who spend their lives gratifying their flesh often end up as the most frustrated and angry people on earth.

How Do We Develop Holy Zeal?

True spiritual zeal comes from caring more about God's glory than our own comfort. King David fought countless battles not primarily for his own advancement, but for the advancement of God's kingdom. His zeal for God's house motivated him to gather resources and make plans for building the temple.

When our motivation shifts from "What's in it for me?" to "How can God be glorified through this?", we tap into supernatural strength and determination. We develop the kind of bulldog tenacity that refuses to let go of God's promises and purposes.

This zeal isn't just about our personal health and prosperity - it's about ensuring that God gets the glory He deserves through our lives. We fight battles, overcome obstacles, and pursue excellence because He is worthy of our best effort.

What Does Spiritual Maturity Look Like?

Spiritual maturity isn't measured by how much Bible knowledge we have or how many spiritual experiences we've had. The Corinthian church had abundant spiritual gifts and revelation knowledge, yet Paul called them carnal because they were full of envy, strife, and division.

True spiritual maturity is demonstrated through love - specifically, loving others as we love ourselves and ultimately loving them as God loves us. This means laying down our lives for others, just as Jesus laid down His life for us.

When we walk in this kind of love, life becomes sweeter and more fulfilling. We stop being a burden to others and become a blessing. We stop being weights that drag people down and become sources of encouragement and strength.

Life Application

This week, make a deliberate choice to stop counting your life dear to yourself. Instead of asking "How does this affect me?" or "What do I get out of this?", start asking "How can God be glorified through this situation?" and "How can I be a blessing to others?"

Examine your daily motivations. Are you working, serving, and living primarily for your own satisfaction, or are you driven by a desire to advance God's kingdom and bless others? When you catch yourself being selfish, immediately redirect your focus toward God's glory and others' welfare.

Take inventory of your "temple" - your body and your life. What thieves and robbers need to be driven out? What habits, attitudes, or influences are defiling God's house? Use the authority you have in Jesus' name to cleanse your temple and make it a place where God's presence can dwell freely.

Questions for Reflection:

- What areas of my life am I still living primarily for myself rather than for God's glory?
- How can I demonstrate the God-kind of love to the difficult people in my life this week?
- What "thieves and robbers" do I need to drive out of my temple so God can be glorified through my life?
- Am I willing to let go of temporary pleasures that distract me from God's eternal purposes?

Quotes

1. When you stop living for yourself, that's when you truly begin to live.
2. Love is the highest evidence of spiritual maturity.
3. Faith works by love—everything in the Kingdom works by love.
4. If it's not rooted in love, it's unacceptable in the Kingdom.
5. We don't allow thieves and robbers in the temple—sickness is a thief and infirmity is a robber.
6. Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit—treat it accordingly.
7. Jesus already defeated the devil; now take the whip of the Word, use your authority, and drive him out.
8. Nothing changes until you say, "Enough is enough—this will turn out the way God said it will."
9. We will be healthy, we will prosper, and we will walk in every good thing for the glory of God.
10. If you give your life to God, you will finish your race and finish strong.
11. We will overcome and walk as more than a conqueror for my King and His Kingdom.

12. We are not leaving this earth until we finish what God called us to do.

13. The more we walk in love, the sweeter and better life becomes.

14. Selfishness makes life harder; love makes life richer.

15. If you keep watching the world, it will train you to lose.

Verses

1. First Corinthians 13

2. Romans 5:5

3. Matthew 21:12-14

4. Acts 10:38

5. Acts 20:22-24

6. Ecclesiastes 2:4-11

Summary

Living for God rather than ourselves transforms everything about our existence. When we shift our focus from self-gratification to glorifying God and loving others, we discover what it truly means to be alive. The apostle Paul exemplified this by not counting his life precious to himself so he could complete God's purpose. True spiritual maturity isn't measured by knowledge or spiritual experiences, but by our capacity to love others as God loves us. King Solomon's life demonstrates the emptiness that comes from living for ourselves - despite having everything his heart desired, he concluded it was all vanity. When we develop holy zeal for God's glory rather than our own comfort, we tap into supernatural strength and find true fulfillment in blessing others.