

LOOKING TO GOD #1

God-Centered Living

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I. Introductory Remarks.

In the Book of Genesis we have the accounts of how God began to establish and accomplish His purposes through mankind. For example, we have the account of God accomplishing His purposes through Abraham. God used Abraham as the seed for the nation of Israel.

Genesis 12:1-3 Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

The focus of God's relationship is not on Abraham's walk with God, but rather God accomplishing His purpose through Abraham. The focus was on God, not necessarily on Abraham. Can you see the difference?

In this message today, I want to begin a short series of messages entitled "Looking to God," and more specifically in this message what it means to live in a God-centered lifestyle vs. a self centered lifestyle.

- The focus of the Bible is God.
- The essence of sin is a shift from God-centeredness to a self centeredness. We see this in the fall of Adam and Eve - Genesis 2:16-17, 3:1-7.

God placed Adam and Eve in a beautiful and bountiful garden. He told them not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Eve saw that the fruit was pleasing to the eye and desirable for gaining wisdom, so she ate it. She chose to look to self rather than to God.

Genesis 3:6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

- The essence of salvation is the denial of self, not an affirming of self. We see this in the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife.

Potiphar's wife daily begged Joseph to come to bed with her. He told her he could not do such great wickedness and sin against God. When she tried to force him, he fled the room and went to prison rather than yield to temptation - Genesis 39.

Genesis 39:7-9 *Now it came to pass after these things that his master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me." But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. "There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"*

If we are to see God accomplish his purposes through us we must come to a denial of self just as Joseph did, and come to a God-centeredness in our lives. What would have happened to the purposes of God if Joseph would have given into his fleshly desires instead of looking to God?

II. God-Centeredness Vs. Self-Centeredness.

1. Self-Centeredness Traits.

- Life focused on self
- Proud of self and self's accomplishments
- self confidence
- Depending on self and own abilities
- Affirming self
- Seeking to be acceptable to the world and its ways.
- Looking at circumstances from a human perspective.
- Selfish ordinary living

2. God-Centered Traits.

- Confidence in God
- Dependence on God and His ability and provision
- Life focused on God and His activity
- Humble before God
- denying self
- Seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness
- Seeking God's perspective in every circumstance
- Holy and godly living

3. Biblical Examples of Self-centered Living vs. God-centered Living.

- **The Ten Spies: Self-centered lives** - God had promised to give the land of Canaan to Israel. Moses sent 12 men into the Promised Land to explore it and bring back a report. The land was bountiful, but the people living there were seen

as giants and as a result 10 of the spies came back with a negative report that was focused on self rather than looking to God - Numbers 13--14.

Numbers 13:31 *But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we."*

- **Joshua & Caleb: God-centered lives** - The other two spies, Joshua and Caleb had a report that was based on looking to God rather than self, but the people of Israel listened to the self-centered report and missed out on an opportunity to go into the Promised Land. Because Joshua and Caleb looked to God rather than self they were the only two who came out of Egypt, who were allowed to go into the Promised Land and be a part of the wonderful purpose of God for their generation.

Numbers 14:8-9 *"If the LORD delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, 'a land which flows with milk and honey.'" "Only do not rebel against the LORD, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the LORD is with us. Do not fear them."*

What promises are you not inheriting because of self-centered living? What self-centered traits are hindering you the most from entering into God's wonderful promises?

- **The Example of King Asa:** This example shows us that God centeredness requires a daily death of self and submission to God as he walked in both directions at different times.

2 Chronicles 14:9-11 *Then Zerah the Ethiopian came out against them with an army of a million men and three hundred chariots, and he came to Mareshah. So Asa went out against him, and they set the troops in battle array in the Valley of Zephathah at Mareshah. And Asa cried out to the LORD his God, and said, "LORD, it is nothing for You to help, whether with many or with those who have no power; help us, O LORD our God, for we rest on You, and in Your name we go against this multitude. O LORD, You are our God; do not let man prevail against You!"*

2 Chronicles 16:1-3 *In the thirty-sixth year of the reign of Asa, Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah and built Ramah, that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. Then Asa brought silver and gold from the treasuries of the house of the LORD and of the king's house, and sent to Ben-Hadad king of Syria, who dwelt in Damascus, saying, "Let there be a treaty between you and me, as there was between my father and your father. Here, I have sent you silver and gold; come, break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel, so that he will withdraw*

from me."

Self-centeredness is a subtle trap. It makes sense (humanly speaking). Like King Asa you can avoid it at one time and fall right into the trap at another time. God-centeredness requires a daily death of self and submission to God.

III. God's Purposes Not Our Plans.

To live a God-centered life, you must focus your life on God's purposes not your own plans. You must seek to see from God's perspective rather than from your own distorted human perspective. When God starts to do something in the world, He takes the initiative to come and talk to somebody. For some divine reason, He has chosen to involve His people in accomplishing His purposes.

- What was God about to do when He came to Noah and asked him to build an ark? (Genesis 6:5-14)? God was about to destroy the world with a flood.
- What was God about to do to Sodom and Gomorrah when He came to Abraham - Genesis 18:16-21; 19:13)? He was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah He came to Abraham.
- What was God about to do when He came to Gideon - Judges 6:11-16? He was about to deliver the Israelites from the oppression of Midian.
- What was God about to do when he came to Saul (later called Paul) on the road to Damascus -(Acts 9:1-6)? God came to Saul when He was ready to carry the gospel message to the Gentiles around the known world.

At each of these moments the most important factor in each situation was what God was about to do, not what the individual wanted to do for God.

2 Timothy 1:9 *...who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began...*

When we are truly living God-centered lives rather than self-centered lives we find ourselves in the right position to be used by God for His kingdom purposes. God has purposes all around you in your field of labor every day of which He is waiting to use you as you yield your life to Him. The pattern in Scripture is that we submit ourselves to God and allow Him to reveal to us what He is about to do in our field of labor. We watch and see what God is doing around us and join Him.

John 4:35 *"Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!"*