

“Living for Jesus” #1- Prerequisites for *Living*

Probably aided by brother Sebo’s recent excellent sermon, “Living for Jesus” (specifically regarding *praise, sacrifice, work, taking a stand, manifesting Jesus’ beauty, telling His story, and doing all in His name*), our Elders have decided that our theme for 2018 is “Living for Jesus.” Surely we can all see the wisdom in this choice as a point of emphasis in a concentrated effort to both understand and accomplish this worthy goal. To that end, at least once each month (perhaps more), we’ll try to focus our attention on “**Living for Jesus.**” In and with this lesson, perhaps we can come to better understand some of the preliminary requirements.

Motivation is a huge part of any human endeavor. To some degree at least, we must understand why we do what we do. As I’ve often said, “I have reasons for what I do- they may not necessarily be *good* reasons, but I have them nonetheless.” The truth is, we all do. Unless we come to understand and control our own motivations such as perceived *needs, wants, and desires*- our *pleasure sources* (where, how, and in what we seek pleasure), we will find it very difficult, if not impossible, to change or control our actions. Thus, “Living for Jesus” first requires us to be willing to change our current course of living *for self*. But how do we accomplish this seemingly monumental task given that so many and so much of society around us encourages if not demands the exact opposite?

Prerequisites for *Living* (for Jesus):

1. Dissatisfaction with Current Life/Living

- a. Please think about this question with me: **When we consider ourselves “blessed” (or “count our many blessings”), what *kind* of things do we typically have in mind?** A *spouse* that loves and cares for us and makes us happy? *Children* that are mostly happy and healthy, and bring us great pride, joy, and satisfaction? A *job/occupation* that allows us to provide safety, freedom from want, and at least a measure (if not overdose) of the pleasures this life has to offer? A *home* that keeps us warm or cool and protected from the elements of nature and the evil doer, as well as a haven of rest and recreation? A *measure of health* that enables us to enjoy all of these blessings for many years to come? Yes, “*Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights...*” (Jas.1:17), but are these *blessings* the ones under consideration in Jas.1 (cf.vv.2-4,5-8,9-11,12-18? And perhaps even more to the point, are these types of *blessings* what Jesus had in mind when He first “*saw the multitude*” and fashioned that great first Sermon on the Mount, cf. Matt.5:1-10? Or did He, instead, speak of being *poor in spirit, mourning, being gentle, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, being merciful, purity of heart, peaceful* (by *making peace*), and even being *persecuted for the sake of righteousness*? You see, before we can *Live for Jesus*, we must first become dissatisfied with *living for self*, and the things of *this* life by:

- 1) Matt.5:11-12, *rejoicing at heavenly rather earthly blessings*

- 2) Matt.6:19-34, *valuing* and *laying up* spiritual rather than earthly things;
- 3) Matt.6:22-24, *focusing on* and *seeing* spiritual things;
- 4) Matt.6:25-34, *seeking* spiritual things over physical ones;
- 5) Matt.5:13-16, then our *lights* can *shine* so that others may see and *glorify God*, rather than us.

To “live for Jesus” we must refocus our attention and primary pursuit(s) from the earthly things of *this* life to the heavenly things of the *next life*. Wouldn’t “living for Jesus” mean living for the things where He is rather than where we are? Thus, we must *focus* or *refocus* upon and *value* the things of heaven more than those of the earth, Matt.6:24.

b. But how do we accomplish this *valuing* of and *refocused attention* on spiritual rather than physical things? Read Jas.4:1-11; and please note:

- 1) v.1, The *source* of *quarrels* and *conflicts* is our own (cf. Jas.1:14) *pleasures*. How so?
- 2) v.2, *Lust* (inordinate or excessive desires) and *envy* (desire for other’s possessions) are unfulfilling (*cannot attain*) not only because they are never enough, but because they are *selfishly motivated*. Thus, the *Giver of good gifts* will not fulfill our desires. Why?
- 3) v.3, Our *motives* are obviously wrongly based, since our *desires* are to fulfill *our own pleasures* rather than His!
- 4) v.4, Thus, through *thinking* like, being *motivated* like, and *acting* like the world rather than God, we *make ourselves* the *enemy of God*.
- 5) vv.5-6, God made us *in His image* (Gen.1:26-27), and desires that we *think*, are *motivated*, and *act* like He does!
- 6) vv.7-10, So how do we change our *thinking*, *motivations*, and *actions*? These verses have the answers!

To “live for Jesus” we must realize that the *source(s)* of our (and the world’s) *problems* are our own *motivations* and *pleasure-sources*. We are *lustfully* seeking to *please ourselves* rather than *lovingly* seeking to please Him. Remember, true/biblical love seeks to please the object of its affection rather than self!

c. Perhaps a biblical illustration will help to make these things clear. Let’s go back to the beginning...

- 1) Gen.1:26-27, God created *man* and *woman* in *His image*.
- 2) Gen.2:8-9, He provided for their every need.
- 3) So how did Satan get them to forfeit *paradise*? He *denied the consequence of sin*, Gen.3:4. He *impugned God’s motives*

suggesting selfish *suppression* and *restriction* rather than selfless *love* and *provision*, Gen.3:5. Then Eve abandoned God's selfless love and provision for her own selfish envy, pride, and desires, Gen.3:6.

She allowed herself to become *dissatisfied* with God's provision, and became selfishly motivated. If we are going to "live for Jesus," we must do the exact opposite: We must become dissatisfied with our own selfish motivations, and live selflessly for God's motives and purposes.

Conclusion.

In future lessons (Lord willing!), we'll also look at other prerequisites and requirements involved with "Living for Jesus" such as:

- **Willingness to Crucify (put to death) Old Self** (Gal.2:20; Rom.6:1ff)
- **Being Born Again** (John 3:1ff); and,
- **Living a Resurrected Life** (Col.3:1ff; 2Pet.1:9).

But for now, please understand that for us to *live for Jesus*, we must first become dissatisfied and discontent with *living for ourselves* by:

- a. Not only "counting our blessings," but being sure we're counting the *right things* as *blessings* by *valuing* the *spiritual* over the *physical* things of life;
- b. Understanding our own *motivations* of *why* we do *what* we do, and being sure that God's *selfless spiritual* interests supersede our own *selfish physical* ones.