

THE 'ME FIRST' MENTALITY

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Slide - Luke 9:57-62 "Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to Him, "Lord, I will follow You wherever You go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." Then He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father."

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Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God." And another also said, "Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house." But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

INTRODUCTION

1. As Jesus went about His earthly ministry, people either wanted to follow Him, or were invited by Him; yet some desired to do so on their own terms - Lk 9:57-62

- a. "Lord, let me first go and bury my father."
- b. "Lord, I will follow you, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house."

2. This "me first" mentality was fundamentally opposed to Jesus' concept of following Him...

- a. He demanded that one "deny himself" to follow Him –

Slide - Luke 9:23 "Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."

- b. He required that one "hate...his own life also" –

Slide - Luke 14:26 "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple."

Living in a culture that praises putting self first and then "Looking Out For #1",

it is easy for Christians to adopt this "me first" mentality.

Consider some ways we can be guilty of...

I. THE "ME FIRST" MENTALITY

A. IN OUR ATTENDANCE...

1. The Scriptures reveal the example and value of assembling together with other Christians –

Slide -Hebrews 10:25 “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”

2. Yet many will often put personal interests before opportunities to attend services:

- a. Recreational outings
- b. Family gatherings
- c. Elective work or school related activities
- d. Staying home to read or watch TV

-- Haphazard attendance is a sign of the "me first" mentality

B. IN OUR CONTRIBUTION...

1. Christians are instructed to give of their prosperity to meet certain needs –

Slide -2 Corinthians 9:7–8 “So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

2. Yet many will give sparingly because:

- a. They want to spend as much as possible on things for themselves
- b. They have failed to properly budget their contribution to the Lord
- c. They are burdened with bills for things that are not necessities, but actually luxuries

-- Negligent giving of our prosperity is a sign of the "me first" mentality

C. IN OUR SERVICE TO ONE ANOTHER...

1. God has blessed each of us with gifts to serve one another –

Slide -1 Peter 4:10–11 “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

2. Yet many make little effort to do their part in the work of the local congregation:

- a. They do not learn the names of the other members
- b. They do not seek to find their "gift" or ability God has given them
- c. Men do not attend the business meetings; women do not teach classes
- d. They may attend church, but only to receive, not to give of themselves

-- Lack of involvement in the local church is a sign of the "me first" mentality

D. IN OUR FAMILIAL RELATIONSHIPS...

1. Christians have duties to members of their physical families

Slide -Colossians 3:18–21 “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.”

2. Many families suffer when people seek their own interests above another

- a. When husbands and wives are selfish in their dealings with each other
- b. When parents divorce without regard to the impact on their children
- c. When children fail to honor and obey their parents

-- Dysfunctional families abound where the "me first" mentality exists

Our service to the Lord, His church and our families is greatly hindered by the "me first" mentality, and is detrimental to our souls those around us.

How much better, for us to learn and practice...

II. THE "OTHERS FIRST" PRINCIPLE

A. AS EXEMPLIFIED BY CHRIST...

1. He came to this earth because He put others first - 2Co 8:9;

Slide -Matthew 20:28 “just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

2. We are called upon to adorn the same mind or attitude - Php 2:

Slide -Philippians 2:3-5 “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus”

- a. To do nothing through selfish ambition or conceit
 - b. To esteem others better than ourselves
 - c. To look out for the interests of others

-- Jesus exemplified the principle of "others first" that He desires in us as well

B. AS EXEMPLIFIED BY THE MACEDONIANS...

1. Note their great liberality despite their own poverty - 2Co 8:

Slide -2 Corinthians 8:1-3 “Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing”

2. Note why they were able to be so gracious in thinking of others first –

Slide -2 Corinthians 8:5 “And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.”

- a. They first gave of themselves to the Lord, then to others!
 - b. The mentality of "Lord first" instead of "me first" enabled them to put "others first"
3. Their liberality continued in supporting Paul to preach the gospel - cf.

Slide -Philippians 4:10–12 “But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.”

4. Putting God and others first ensured that their needs would be met –

Philippians 4:19 “And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

-- The Macedonians exemplified the true value of putting "others first"

CONCLUSION

1. Do we have the "me first" mentality...?

- a. If we do, we cannot be Jesus' disciples
- b. If we do, the church and our own spiritual lives will suffer

2. Do we want to be rid of the "me first" mentality...?

- a. The "me first" mentality will be destroyed when we adopt the "others first" principle
- b. The "others first" principle will be developed as we make "the kingdom of God first" –

Slide -Matthew 6:33 “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

When we truly put the kingdom of God and others before ourselves,
then the Lord will see to it that we have the things that we need...! - cf.

Slide -Matthew 6:30–32 “Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things”

Slide -Note: The main idea and several related points for this outline were taken from an article entitled "The Me First Syndrome" by Wayne Jackson.

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