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# **A New Dimension For Living**

## **LUKE 2:41-52**

### **Introduction**

1. Life is a wonderful thing, but not everyone enjoys a fulfilled life.
2. Some people spend so much time telling us about themselves and the things they have done or plan to do that we wonder if there isn't some emptiness they are trying to hide.
3. Others seem to be negotiating their way through life, always asking, "What's in it for me?"
4. Then there are those who . . .
  - a. Do not live in the nicest home or drive the finest car.
  - b. May have experienced physical or emotional setbacks in life  
. . . but still walk through each day with a smile on their face and a song in their heart.
5. If either of the first two scenarios or one similar to them describes you, please know that there is another dimension of living which God offers to you.
6. It is more like the third scenario which I just described, and it is one which I want to share with you this morning.
7. In our Scripture reading, the physician Luke, shares with you an event from the early life of our Lord which is not found in any of the other gospel accounts.
8. Joseph and Mary, took Jesus and the rest of their children to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover.
9. When the feast had ended, they started home, assuming Jesus to be in the caravan.
10. However, when Jesus' parents learned that He was not among "their relatives

and acquaintances” they returned to Jerusalem to look for Him.

11. When they found Him, His mother, Mary, asked Him “Son, why have You treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for You” (Luke 2:48).
12. Jesus responded “Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in the things of My Father?” (v. 49).
13. Today, I would like for us to reflect upon three ways we choose to live our lives.
14. It is my prayer that each of us will choose the one which, according to Jesus, will bring us the greatest fulfillment.

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### I. Self-Centered Living

#### A. WE ARE THE CENTER OF OUR WORLD

1. It as if we are the sun and everything else in our solar system revolves around us.
2. We have the habit of turning the topic of any conversation to who we are and what we are doing.
3. Our favorite words are me, myself and I.
4. We expect such an attitude from a small child . . .
  - a. Who demands that his or her needs be met.
  - b. Who becomes angry if someone is playing with his/her things.
    - ❑ As parents, we seek to train our children to outgrow these behaviors.
5. However, as adults, when . . .
  - a. Our own personal gratification remains our sole concern in life.
  - b. We direct and organize the lives of our family and friends around our own needs and desires, we have a problem.

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#### B. WHO WOULD ACT THIS WAY?

1. In the O.T. book of Esther, we encounter an enemy of the Jewish people by the name of Haman.
2. The Persian emperor, Xerxes, had elevated Haman to a position of authority, second only to himself.
3. In the story of Queen Esther, Haman encounters a Jew named Mordecai, who unbeknownst to him is Esther's older cousin.
4. Because she has no parents, Mordecai is raising her as his own daughter.
  - e. Haman becomes angry at Mordecai for a perceived slight and seeks to have Mordecai hanged on a gallows which he has ordered to be built.
  - f. It just so happens that on the morning Haman enters the king's court to request permission to have Mordecai hanged, the king asks Haman, "What is to be done for the man whom the king desires to honor?" (Esther 6:6).
  - g. Haman immediately begins to say to himself, "Whom would the king desire to honor more than me?" (Esther 6:6b).
  - h. Haman then tells king Xerxes, "let them bring a royal robe which the king has worn, and the horse on which the king has ridden, and on whose head a royal crown has been placed; and let the robe and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble princes and let them array the man whom the king desires to honor and lead him on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him, 'Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honor.' "" (Esther 6:8-9, NASB95)

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## II. Quid Pro Quo Living

### A. INDIRECT RECIPROCITY

1. This way of living is often captured in the principle:
  - a. "I'll scratch your back if you scratch mine," or

- b. "You do this for me, and I'll do that for you."
2. When we live this way, we find ourselves giving with the expectation of receiving.
3. We often ask ourselves, "what's in it for me?"
4. We reason within ourselves, "I'm doing my part. Others need to do theirs!"
5. Marriages built on this principle are destined for trouble:
  - a. Especially when you believe your spouse isn't doing his or her part.
  - b. You may find that your spouse doesn't even understand what his or her part is supposed to be.
6. Perhaps you as a parent have attempted to guilt one of your children into doing something for you with the words, "Is this the way you treat me after all I have done for you?"
7. Sadly, we as Christians become caught up in this mindset and try to bargain with God:
  - a. "Dear God, if you will heal my wife from her cancer, I promise I will be in worship from now on, every time the doors are open."
  - b. "Dear God, if you will let me have this job, I promise I will give you 10% of everything I bring home."

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## **B. SCRIPTURE'S RESPONSE TO QUID PRO QUO LIVING**

1. Jesus' teaching in His teaching to His disciples:

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"Treat others the same way you want them to treat you.

"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.

"If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.

"If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that

to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount.

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“But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.”

(Luke 6:31–35, NASB95)

2. Jesus’ words to Peter concerning the disciples’ reward (Matthew 19:27-30).

“Then Peter said to Him, “Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?”

And Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. “And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name’s sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life. “But many who are first will be last; and the last, first.”

(Matthew 19:27–30, NASB95)

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### **III. God-Centered Living**

#### **A. INCREASING IN FAVOR WITH GOD AND MANKIND**

1. When we choose to live this way, we first realize that God is at the center of every relationship.
  - a. We do not see ourselves as the center of the universe.
  - b. Neither do we see others as owing us something.
2. We refuse to manipulate or coerce others.

3. We practice self-denial and personal sacrifice (Philippians 2:3-4).

“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”

(Philippians 2:3–4, NASB95)

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**B. EXAMPLES OF GOD-CENTERED LIVING**

1. Jesus Christ

“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” (Matthew 6:33, ESV)

“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.” (**John 15:13, NASB95**)

“We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” (**1 John 3:16, NASB95**)

2. Paul

“To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now.” (1 Corinthians 4:11–13, NASB95)

“. . . I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.” (1 Corinthians 9:22b,23, NASB95)

**Conclusion**

1. How are you living your life?
2. Are you living it for yourself, for your own personal gratification?
  - a. If so, please know there will come a point in time when you will find yourself empty, with nothing to satisfy.
  - b. Let me encourage you to give yourself in obedient faith to Jesus Christ, and find the joy which comes from a humble life of service to Him.
3. Are you living your life with a quid pro quo mindset?
  - a. If so, please know that while you may negotiate your way through this life, you have nothing to offer God.
  - b. However, He offers to take away your sin and the guilt which weighs down your soul.
  - c. While you will never be able to pay Him back, you can pay it forward by sharing the good news with others.
4. Today, if you are living a God-centered life, you are blessed beyond measure.
  - a. You have an eternal home which awaits you prepared by our Lord Himself.
  - b. The redeemed of all the ages await your arrival along with countless angels.
5. Let me encourage you today, if you have not already done so, choose to live a God-centered life.