



LIVE  
BEYOND  
SELF

EDWARD AGYEMAN

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Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Holy Bible unless stated otherwise . All scriptures marked AMP are taken from the Amplified version of the Holy Bible.

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## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this book to all the partners and the global team members of STG Ministries.

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## INTRODUCTION

In a day and age where the notion or ideology of self has become the order of the day, the Christian must make the conscious effort to live above self and the ever increasing desires of the self. A life beyond self, is a life of sacrifice and a life sold out to the will of God. A life beyond self is a life that has responded to the call of duty by God, to live for His cause than a self-focused life.

John 3:16, a commonly known scripture that holds many truths that with time as one begins to meditate, challenges one to rethink his/her concept of love and manner of living. The privilege of being born again is graced to the believer, even the opportunity to conform to the image of Christ. Throughout scripture we see

Christ, during His days on earth, focused on the will of the Father and not His own. Therefore the onus is on each of us as believers to live in the manner of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Living beyond self, should be one of the hallmarks of every believer and this should be the order of the day as followers of Christ. This book aims at giving a general call to Christians to live beyond self, for the fatigued to be revived, for those asleep to wake up and snap to attention. It is such a privilege for us as believers to be given an opportunity by God to live like Christ. We find ourselves in a world where the basic human desires for some people is self, even some professing believers are much more in love with self than God. Sadly, some people are busily going to and fro, for one need or the other of self. You realise that the toil of such people under the sun, through several ventures, are all based on their self. Some people want to make money because of

self. Due to a self-focused life, many have been misled unto all kinds of sinful paths that ensnare and jeopardise one's life. However, as believers we need to be reminded that we are not called to self or for self but called to live for God, which is a life beyond self.

**"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called"**

### **Ephesians 4:1 KJV**

If we can grasp this concept of living beyond self, it will sincerely change our perspective on a lot of activities that we engage in including our attitude towards our resources and possessions. It is my prayer that as you go through the pages of this book written in simplicity that God will give you understanding and His grace to live beyond self.



# Chapter One

## A LIFE BEYOND SELF

God sets the ultimate example of a life beyond self. As believers we recognise and acknowledge the fall of Adam and how sin brought forth separation between man and God. However, throughout the Old Testament, God through different means has always sought and built relationships with man. In as much as Adam had sinned against God, right from the Garden of Eden, God went beyond the sin Adam had committed to cloth him. We see God's love demonstrated towards humanity throughout time. Man had sinned against God, yet God who is rich in mercy had always showed mankind mercy and grace. In the New Testament, we read of God's expression of redemption where He gave up His only begotten Son. It is impor-

tant to recognise that God gave up His Only, emphasis on the word "Only". What a wondrous love. I am continually challenged by God's word according to John 3:16.

**For God so loved the world, that he gave his ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**

### **John 3:16 KJV**

It is important that we recognise that God was the person to whom humanity had sinned against and we are all deserving of the penalty of sin. However, not because we came to an agreement as humans to appease God, but by Himself decided to satisfy and settle our debt to Him in Himself by Himself. This is what John 3:16 expresses. God satisfied His holy requirement by giving the life of His only Son to be crucified on the cross for our redemption to appease Himself. This expression of His

love was not because of any agreement humanity had reached with Him. But God, full of grace and truth, chose voluntarily to give up His only begotten Son. God paid a debt He didn't owe and loves a people who had fallen short of His glory. We see clearly through the life of Christ as documented in the Holy Bible, how Christ lived on earth and died for the purpose of God. Jesus on numerous occasions taught and spoke to the disciples about His focus on doing the Father's will. God gives and sets the stage of what it means to live beyond self through Christ. As believers, it is easy to love those who are kind to us, those who have once helped us or shown mercy towards us. It is easy for us to go beyond ourselves to help people we know can benefit us in the future. We find it very easy to be able to do good to those that are in good positions politically, financially and business wise. Generally it is easy to engage in any activities when you know you stand to benefit. However,

Jesus primarily gave up His life to please the Father and not Himself, not for what He can gain but what pleases the Father.

As believers, we are called to a life beyond self, a life focused on living according to the will of God and not self. We are not called as believers to serve our own interests, but rather we are called to conform to the image of Christ, keeping in mind the one theme about His life which centred on the will of the Father as He demonstrated during His days on earth. It is however important to note that there isn't any given point in our lives where we have been called to self or to please and serve our own interests. We are called daily to honour God. However, some believers are tempted to live for self. This is sometimes seen even in our attitude and approach towards certain prayer topics during congregational worship. I have often seen people pray passionately on topics that seeks for God to divinely intervene in their

affairs, whiles topics relating to others receiving a sluggish conduct. However as believers we need to rise above such mal-practice and express love as we should. It is important that we come to terms pragmatically on what a life beyond self-entails as believers. I believe that will help us to live in a manner delightful to the Lord. A life beyond self means, a life that is primarily lived to fulfil God's will by God's way. Meaning that one decides to live sacrificially within the boundaries of God's word.

Living a life beyond self isn't just about self-sacrificing to appease your conscience as many believers unknowingly walk in the army of the enemy under banners of self-righteousness, respectability and pride. A life beyond self is one that must be in accordance to God's way. It is natural as men to choose to make sacrifices for people we know can return the favour. However, we need to keep in mind that when the need arises for sac-

rificing for others, it must be done on the basis of fairness and not segregation or discrimination. It is very important that we take note that a life beyond self is a life that is sacrificial but in God's way.

For example, it is easy in some instances for help to be rendered to a rich man's ward than that of a poor man. Due to the notion that, a rich man's ward might later bring remuneration. Therefore it is easy for a sacrifice to be made as one sees the potential for benefit. Notice that a life beyond self doesn't just sacrifice but does so, on the basis of scripture. Just as God gave the life of Jesus for all, so must our good works be an expression of worship, demonstrated to all without any iota of discrimination.

Living beyond self is when our very life and resources at our disposal are at the service of the Lord in His way without question.

## THE ISSUE OF SELF

And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

### Matthew 19:16-22 KJV

The above scripture talks about a rich young ruler, who could not let go of his riches for the sake of following Christ.

In the passage above, you realise that the rich young man did not have a problem with any of Jesus' instructions that he was already upholding. Regarding the law, he already upheld according to him. But when there was a call to live beyond himself, that, he found challenging and went away sad. Similarly some have not been able to follow God's way because of their own interest, whether it be riches, professions and other assets or dreams. They have things that means more to them to the point that those things have become deities. This young rich ruler, his riches had become a deity in His life and he could not submit that for the sake of Christ.

**Some believers have walked out of God's call to serve because they have personified many things in this world as idols or even gods and as a result their lives revolve around those things. It is important to note that self always conflict with worship, so God calls us to deny self if we desire to worship him. "And he said to them all, If any man will**



**come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”**

**Luke 9:23 KJV**

A high estimation and a sense of entitlement to self will always restrict you in worship, so the admonishment to deny yourself will enable anyone to give God the reverence He deserves. Self is a serious issue when it comes to our call to duty, because self will always conflict with the call of God. For this reason we are taught through scripture to crucify self and as the scripture puts it in the book of Matthew to deny self. Learning to deny self is a good step towards living beyond self.

**Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.**

**Matthew 16:24 KJV**

In order for God to use us as vessels, we must deny ourselves daily of the pleasures of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life.

To deny yourself comes through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is by the Spirit that we are able to put to death the desires of the flesh as we surrender and yield to the leading of the Holy Spirit. By the Holy Spirit we are therefore empowered to live the divine life He has called us to.

**“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”**

### **Romans 8:13 KJV**

It is needful that as a believer you yield to the leading of the Holy Spirit so that you have the power to overcome your flesh.

Also you need to constantly make a decision to live beyond yourself. Meaning that when it comes to us living a life that pleas-

es God we must voluntarily choose such a life by making a conscious decision to do so. By that the Holy Spirit empowers us. Our willingness paves a way for God's strength for us to live a life He has called us to. A voluntary will to live beyond self must be a desire of yours as a believer and that must enable you to yield to God for His empowerment through the Holy Spirit.

Living beyond self should be the focus of any believer as it expresses our newness of life. However due to many factors to which it will be lengthy for me to address should I choose to do so. For the believer, professing Jesus as Lord means to live for God's interest. Sadly in some cases, we fail to understand what the Lordship of Jesus means. Accepting the Lordship of Jesus Christ, means that one is recognising that from hence his/her life is not his/her own but God's. And the ownership of God is duly recognised. Therefore, what is expected is the submission of the believer to the word

of the Lord. However, we can attribute the believer's inability to live beyond self to the lack of proper understanding of what the Lordship of Jesus Christ means. As a believer our life must be reflective of the Lordship of Jesus in our lives. It is important that we deal with our selfish desires to prevent us from wandering from God's will. God calls us to always live a life beyond us, even in the aspect of prayer we are called to intercede as well as petition God regarding our own needs. We are asked to love our neighbour as ourselves. These are just a few examples of God's requirement for us to live beyond ourselves and it takes selflessness to fulfil God's will.

## Chapter Two

### GOD NOT SELF

As believers God through Jesus Christ has saved and called us into a relationship for His purpose and glory. Our salvation is not for us to do what we want but for us to live solely for God's purpose.

**Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?**

**Matthew 16:24-26 KJV**

The scripture quoted above, highlights one teaching of Christ during His days on the earth. In the passage, Jesus teach-

es a powerful truth, that when we grasp it will motivate us to live beyond ourselves. This truth He taught then extends to us. Whereas in our former life it was about us, doing things in our own and best interest so it seemed. In the newness of life through Jesus Christ, God wants us rather to give off ourselves and it is in doing that, that we find fulfilment.

The selfless actions of Christ is unlike the old carnal mind-set of our thinking, by seeking our own interest, exerting all energies towards achieving our own goals and the things we love and not what is pleasing to God. Jesus teaches us a powerful truth that life comes to those who are losing it here on earth for God and not those who are disregarding God for self interest on earth. See Matthew 16:25. Jesus Christ our role model taught us through His life and utterances that one's life must be about God's purpose. During His days on earth, He made references to

doing the Father's will. From the scriptures, isn't it amazing that our Saviour lives purposely on earth for the Father's will? Jesus during His time on earth and even as He is seated at the right hand of the Father (God) is sold out for God's will and glory. We can therefore take a lesson and make it a living truth in us to follow Jesus's example.

Jesus was sent by God for our redemption and after His life, death, resurrection and ascension, the call and mandate of the great commission was given to the then disciples, which extends to us and generations to come. The call to duty given to us needs us to live beyond ourselves in order to be able to serve.

## **CALL TO DUTY**

**And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy**

**Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.**

### **Matthew 28:18-20 KJV**

Jesus Christ before His ascension gave an instruction to His disciples then to be carried out which also extends to us. This instruction is what we call or commonly known as the great commission. This is about us sharing the gospel and making disciples. We read throughout the book of Acts how the Apostles and disciples lived beyond themselves in honour to God's word by spreading the gospel and making disciples. Through biblical records, we read of the sufferings the Apostles and disciples in obedience to what we know as the great commission. Church history also gives us accounts of horrific deaths suffered by the early church and throughout many generations. Currently and in recent centuries, we read of many harms suffered by



some believers who travelled far and near to spread the gospel. The Apostles and disciples then and throughout generations till now served and fulfilled God's word because they lived beyond themselves. They were sold into the interest and purpose of God and not their own interest.

The truth is, self is always in conflict with the will of God and to be able to respond to the call to duty as God calls us, we must live beyond us.

**And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew**

**no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.**

## **2 Corinthians 5:18-21 KJV**

This wonderful ministry of reconciliation given to us can be fulfilled on the platform of sacrifice on our part. Sacrifice, because in order for others to hear the gospel we have to commit something, either time, funds and other resources. This will be at one's expense or a group. So yes, if we cannot live beyond ourselves there will be no way we can honour God's word because our selfish interest will oppose our call to duty.

For instance, if you don't give time to witness, how would your neighbour, relative, work colleague hear the gospel?

If you don't give to your local church and also to missionaries how can they have resources to undertake their work?

The truth is that, sacrifice is required on our part, if we want to respond to God's call. Some believers are not fulfilling God's word because they are not living beyond themselves for God's will. To some, it's absurd to take part of their annual leave, to join forces with their local church outreach team or believers to spread the gospel. Go out on foreign missions or to devote and volunteer to share the gospel within a locality. However for some it is perfectly normal for a work leave to be taken for a holiday break in any of the Caribbean islands, Europe, South America etc. it is considered well spent. But we need to come to a place where we understand that God's call to duty to us is important and therefore we need to come to a place of living beyond our dreams and self for God.

I do not believe you and I make light the gory death of Jesus on the cross. However, have we learned lessons from the cross?

Let's just consider a few things I believe the cross teaches us;

1. Sign of an unconditional love

God gave His Son to die for us. He who knew no sin was made sin for us.

2. A sign of humility

Jesus humbled himself, even to death on the cross although He had power over death. But for our sake, He bled and died.

3. Selflessness

Jesus is not a sinner, yet He came and died for sinners. Simply because God, the Father, gave Jesus for the propitiation of our sins. He endured the pain of his crucifixion yet was not a sinner. His blood atones for our sins.

Dear friend, I would ask, which of these three lessons can we say was self-motivated on Jesus' part because of a selfish gain? I guess the obvious answer is NONE.

However, God exalted Him and gave Him a name above all as a result of His obedience. Jesus sold out His will, glory and

power for God's will. Hence, He teaches us by losing so we can gain. This is because, as we give our lives here on earth for His work, He gives us life for eternity.

Therefore as a Christian you need to understand that just as Christ gave Himself, so must we emulate it in our time. We want others to come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ not to make followers of ourselves.

Just as God used someone as a vessel to speak the gospel and you and I responded to God's call. So must you and I be willing to give of ourselves to God's work.

## Chapter Three

### YOUR LIFE FOR HIS INTEREST

God delights in the salvation of men and not their destruction. In as much as we are all in different professions in life, ultimately, we are all called to share the gospel, and this call to duty is not just to those we regard as the fivefold. That is, pastor, prophet, teacher, apostle and evangelist. But rather the sharing of the gospel is a work and a call to every Christian. Meaning wherever we find ourselves we should share Jesus Christ with people. To be committed to others hearing the gospel requires that we go beyond our self and learn to sacrifice for the others to hear the gospel.

We must learn to commit and devote time to serve people and to share with people. Sometimes, it means we might have to travel far and near to visit friends,

relations, colleagues in order to gain the opportunity of sharing the gospel. Too often a time, we are not effective in sharing the gospel because we don't have interest in the lives of the people we are called to reach. During Jesus' ministry on earth, it was evident that He had interest in the lives of the people that He reached out to. The same could be said of the early Apostles. In our time we need to ensure that we are taking interest in peoples' lives. Our love for and towards people must be sincere, because the sincerity of our love will grasp their attention.

**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**

**John 3:16 KJV**

The above scripture is very enlightening and speaks of a truth that love is demon-

strated by giving. God, who is rich in mercy and grace, extended His grace to us through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross for our redemption. Through the giving of God, today many have received salvation. Love doesn't just show concern but acts in remediation of the concern at hand.

Therefore if we can accept that people need to come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, then the onus is on us to extend the love of God to people. Whatever you can give up or sacrifice to enable others hear the gospel, I believe it's honourable. Whether you can give your time, resources etc. commit it to the work of God.

The believer is equipped through the ministry of the Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor and Teacher for the work of ministry. The ministry to which God equips the believer is for the ministry of reconciliation. The ministry of reconciliation is whereby the believer is used as a vessels



to share the gospel to others of the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is important to recognize that to do the work of ministry does not mean one has to be in what we call the fivefold ministry. The jobs, professions and other godly enterprises one finds themselves in is a platform to help the believer to connect and reach people. The enterprises one also finds themselves in allows them to come into several resources that will help them utilize in supporting and creating an avenue to share the gospel. For an example, one's salary will enable him/her to invite someone for lunch and share the gospel or give to the poor. Our professions and revenue sources gives us resources to primarily help us cater for our basic needs and also use it to support and reach others through a variety of mediums with the gospel. Living beyond self is about us ensuring that the totality of our lives are in focus to the will of God. Our resources and material wealth are not at our disposal for showmanship

but for service. It is important that as believers we remind ourselves of this, so that the management of resources will have the right focus. We are given to give, share and be a blessing to others. Throughout the first century we have seen believers lay their lives and resources for the sake of the gospel which is the message of reconciliation. This commission can be fulfilled through sacrifice on our part as believers. God loves the salvation of men and we are instruments to be used. But requires us to be positioned to live beyond self. In the early church we see how people gave up their professions to travel far and near to share the gospel and in the case lost their lives. We need to as believers in our time have a heart to live beyond self and become relevant in society in reaching people with the gospel. Let us move away from being self-focus because that is not a reflection of one who has encountered God. As believers we see a world decaying continuously at a fast pace, sadly it won't stop.

However we are called to be equipped as ministers of reconciliation. That in the midst of the chaos we need to be a solution. We need to be vessels declaring and demonstrating God's love. Our call is not just to declare but to demonstrate in our lives, the gospel and Christian living. Many who wish not to live beyond self-will rather choose to proclaim the gospel but we are not just called to proclaim, but demonstrate it. So our lives must reflect our proclamation. We need to preach what we believe and live what we believe. That should be a basic identification for us as believers. The life beyond self is needed so that we can create that platform to share the gospel.

Let us at this point consider what the gospel is, so that we can reach people with the right message. The word gospel literally means "good news", and this good news is that God saves sinners by His grace through Jesus Christ and not by works.

Man by nature is sinful and by sin, is separated from God with no hope of remedying the state of sin. But God, who is rich in love made a way through the life, death, burial and resurrection of His only begotten Son, who has become the propitiation of our sins, that through Him, all men might be saved. To truly understand how good this news is, we need to first understand a terrible news. As a result of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, (that I believe is no news to you), every part of man has been corrupted by sin. Man, by his sinful nature could not seek God nor make amends by works to atone for his sin. The sin of man had also therefore doomed him eternally. The penalty of separation was not just for the first man "Adam", but also for anyone born of a man and a woman which covers the entire human race. This means by default of birth, man is born a sinner and certainly doomed by eternal separation. This is the bad news to humanity. God who is rich in mercy and grace paved

a way through the sacrifice of His only begotten Son to redeem us from the life of sin. And this good news is that anyone who believes and receives the Lordship of Jesus Christ is reconciled and delivered from the penalty of eternal separation which is by grace and not works. This certainly can only be good news that our penalty of sin is paid for in full by the very God whom we had sinned against.

The gospel therefore is not about material gain but rather reconciliation to God. It will therefore be wrong for one to think that the gospel is about the material prosperity of man because, honestly speaking, many people are rich materially, they have everything money can buy. What humanity lost by sin was a divine life and relationship with God. Therefore the gospel is about the good news of reconciliation by grace and not works with God. If the focus of the gospel was about telling people to come to Christ and all their problems will be over,

they will have money etc. then what will one preach to a wealthy man who does not have a need for any material thing? We must be careful as believers not to change the message of the gospel. Because if men will come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, it will be by the gospel and nothing else but the gospel. The gospel is a message that brings hope of salvation on a silver platter. This is why it is a good news, even too good to be true but it absolutely is true. And it is by the gospel men come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Whether rich or poor, every man is in need of salvation because redemption is not by the rich giving huge sums of money, neither is the poor receiving pity party. However, both rich and the poor are by nature alienated from God and in need of a Saviour. Due to the depravity of man, there is need for a Saviour and God has made that possible through Jesus Christ. Therefore, salvation is in no man except

Jesus Christ. Hence both the rich and the poor are all saved by grace. By the gospel, regardless of your social class, you will come to the realization for the need of Christ. Because salvation is not in anything nor anyone except Jesus Christ.

**And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.**

**Acts 2:21 KJV**

**Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you build-**

**ers, which is become the head of the corner.  
Neither is there salvation in any other: for  
there is none other name under heaven given  
among men, whereby we must be saved.**

### **Acts 4:8-12 KJV**

There is only one message that calls people to the hope of salvation and that is the gospel and it is important that we focus on spreading the gospel in the environments in which we find ourselves in. The gospel brings people to the realization for the need of God and shouts out to them God's amazing love towards them regardless of the bond of sin, how God's love is stronger than the law of sin and God is offering free redemption in Jesus Christ.

**For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ:  
for it is the power of God unto salvation to  
everyone that believeth; to the Jew first,  
and also to the Greek.**

### **Romans 1:16 KJV**



## Chapter Four

### LOVE

**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.**

#### **John 3:16-18 KJV**

The scripture above indicates love as God's motivation to send Jesus Christ His only begotten Son, to die for humanity. It is amazing how God by love sent His Son for our redemption yet we had offended Him by sin.

Without love we will see even the ministry of reconciliation as a trophy activity

than the sake of souls. Sometimes, people are motivated to be witnesses of the gospel not because of love but because they want a reward in heaven. Therefore, they do not necessarily extend themselves to relate and show brotherly love because they see the souls as trophies.

In reaching out to people, we need to cultivate love as a base for our act of witnessing or evangelism. If we fail to love, we cannot go to the extent of pointing people unto salvation in Christ like God did. God, due to love was able to send His only begotten Son for our redemption. Jesus during His days on earth suffered many things at the hands of men and yet did not abort his mission.

If we can learn to love, we will realize there is no sacrifice that is not worth giving for the sake of others hearing the Gospel. Look and consider the lives of the early Apostles' and disciples and how even in the

face of death persevered to preach the gospel and did not desist from preaching when they were even warned by the then authorities and even at the face of several persecution. If we can learn to love, we will gladly make sacrifices and choices that will enable others to know God and we will endure suffering to this cause.

Sadly in our days, as believers we have failed to understand love and thereby do not even see gospel outreaches as anything worth sacrificing for. In some of our churches around the world, people are motivated to rather give in their local churches for the benefit of being blessed so to speak, not necessarily of responding to a need, but if a call is made on members of a congregation to give for outreaches in some churches it is very sad to witness its members attitude towards it. Should a preacher make promises to the effect of God blessing or opening doors, some individuals are rather quick

to respond. This kind of lackadaisical culture is a clear indication of some people's lack of love towards the souls of others.

Secondly, consider the budgets or the end of year spending on events such as conferences, conventions etc. in some churches which is geared towards believers and even the honorarium we give to visiting speakers and consider the same church's budget towards gospel outreach, it will sadden your heart. We have become a global community in some sense. Not all but some people/churches have developed a heartless approach to gospel outreaches. I used the word heartless because we were saved freely by God's grace, therefore it is cruel for us not to desire for others to also experience the saving grace of God knowing exactly the blessedness of having received God's free salvation in Jesus Christ by His grace.

If we learn to love through the power of the Holy Spirit there is not a single sacrifice that will be required for others to hear the gospel that we will shun away from. Love is what propels a man to be able to extend himself for others to also hear the gospel. The apostles lived in danger and their lives were at times threatened and opposed yet they were steadfast and continued to share the gospel, because I believe they were motivated by love following the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Severally the early apostles' had received different threats yet they persisted in the ministry of reconciliation not fearing death but willing to die for others to come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

This is our time to also further on with the work of ministry. Equally, we need to be motivated by God's grace to love and remain steadfast in love and to love our brethren who are in the bondage

of sin. Just as God who is rich in mercy and grace showed us kindness whiles we were dead in our sins, He loves all men and His grace to save is still available.

Ponder over a few scriptures of how God through His love has shown us mercy.

## **TAKE INTEREST**

One of the traits of love is that, it takes interest. God takes interest in our lives and recognizes that every individual is important and therefore loves each and every one uniquely.

**Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave**

the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

### **Luke 15:1-10 KJV**

Everyone is important to God and He places value on each and every one of us, therefore He does not love anyone any less but loves us all equally.

Consider the above scripture and the story Jesus shared during His time on earth. His message and focus from the above scripture shows how each and every one is important to Him and the extent He is willing to go for the sake of one. The ministry of reconciliation committed to us as believers, is a ministry that God calls us to engage in on the platform of love and to genuinely show interest in the people we meet and love them as we love ourselves. We also need to see souls as souls and not trophies. Some people are motivated to share the gospel because their focus is on a crown in heaven. So their motivation is the reward and not the soul. It is on the basis of what they can get in return rather, our focus should be on the souls.

God showed love to humanity not because of self-interest but to our benefit. Therefore we must learn to engage in this commission on the basis of love and for the welfare of our brethren also coming to



the saving knowledge of God and not because of our selfish interest. It is very sad that we live in a day and age where, people are motivated mostly to work for their self-interest, but when love is involved, it is about the welfare of others and as believers regarding the ministry of reconciliation we are to engage and take interest in people's lives for the sake of their souls.

We need to cherish people that we have the opportunity of sharing the gospel with. In John chapter 4, Jesus sat by the well and gave audience and interacted with one woman not women but only one. If our Lord and master could take interest in the welfare of just one person then it is important that we recognize that every single person is important and we must learn to have a passion and compassion to care for people and communicate the gospel to them.

Taking interest in the life of the people we are called to serve also demon-

strates love and also communicates to the hearts of the people we are called to reach to our genuineness towards them.

Consider Zacchaeus in the Bible (Luke 19:1-10), Jesus took interest and went to his home. Look at the repentance that he demonstrated. It is important that you and I learn to show interest in people's lives and show a level of care motivated by love and our desire for them to also come to the saving knowledge of God.

## Chapter Five

### BE SELFLESS

Our call into a divine relationship with God is a call for us to live beyond self for the interest of God. Having established in previous chapters, on how God uses our profession and resources as a means to create a platform to reach people. It is important that during these perilous times, we begin to harness resources individually and collectively to share the gospel with others and also use our skills and professions in reaching people. To serve God's interest doesn't mean we have to be called as pastors or any other office stated in Ephesians 4:11. Being a believer and a disciple positions you to serve God's interest.

God wants the hearts of men reconciled and we as believers are the ves-

sels to be used, therefore it is important that we have the right heart to live beyond self. As believers, we need to make a firm decision regardless of the challenges of life and the course of this world to stand for the things God desires.

Your profession as a tool is extremely important that you have the right perception. Aside from acquiring income through your work, the skills and knowledge is also a tool for service which then helps others and creates a platform for you to share the gospel.

Example: A medical doctor, can easily organise health talks in a community which would help build a rapport with the community. This creates a relationship to further organise outreach meetings including sharing the gospel during the health talk. This becomes a side thing from the wages one gains from the profession to give to the poor.

A photographer, can easily organise free photo shoot sessions that can create an avenue to share the gospel. Our professions and skills are for service and it is important that we recognise how it can be used. Daniel in Babylon through his position became an avenue for God to use. Nehemiah's position was strategic which helped with the mission of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. See the book of Nehemiah chapter 1. We must come to a place where we need to make a solemn decision in our hearts for the sake of God's interest. In our attempt to fulfilling the cause of being witnesses of the gospel, it is important that we understand that we need to be practical in our approach. What we commonly know as the great commission is indeed a noble cause and therefore we must remain committed to it.

Having established in previous chapters, speaking on us as believers taking interest, it is important that I stress

on this by admonishing you as a believer to be practical in spreading the gospel.

We have been called to reach out to people, keeping in mind that the people we have been called to serve differ from person to person. However, we must learn to love them just as they are. But I am not saying we should condone the life of sin. If we can understand the people we are to serve it will help us to reach them relevantly.

In reaching out to people as witnesses of the gospel, it is important that we reach them relevantly and build good relationships with them by taking interest in their lives and not seeing them as trophies. Jesus Christ during His ministry on earth was effective in reaching out to many who lived in the same communities with the Pharisees than them because of so many factors including Christ's practical approach.

In being practical we need to present

ourselves in a manner that is welcoming. Sometimes, people will shun and feel very uncomfortable to receive from us because we present ourselves in an unfriendly manner. It is therefore important that each and every one of us presents himself or herself in a manner that is welcoming and inviting. We need to be approachable in order to create that atmosphere that will help us in the presentation of the gospel.

Another factor we must consider is the language we use in sharing the gospel. We must take several factors such as educational background etc. into consideration, so that in our act of sharing the gospel we do not talk over the heads of the people we are witnessing to. Sometimes the language that one may use can cause a person to disconnect from the message because they simply don't understand. It is therefore important that we present the gospel in simplicity for the purpose of comprehension.

We are not called to prove a point but to bear witness unto others about God's grace of salvation. It is therefore important that we do not become people who are unapproachable or people with a repellent character. Our character must be that of Christ or else we will repel many from this good news. We must be people who are down to earth, not pompous or with a segregative mindset. We need to develop a sincere heart for the salvation of men and by that desire, we must allow the wisdom of God to govern our path in our act of witnessing unto others about the gospel.

We must be practical with people, we must communicate in a manner that will enable them to understand the gospel well. There is no relevance using jargons that will confuse the audience or speaking in a manner that the audience cannot relate.

Part of our practical approach is to demonstrate interest in the life of the



person or people we are trying to witness to. So sometimes you can do these:

- Invite the person for lunch or for dinner with your family or fellow Christians
- Give them a helping hand in an area of present need
- Pay attention to their needs, offer help according to your ability
- Pray and fast to God for them
- Check up on them regularly
- Invite them to church, meet them up and go together

Be respectful towards them and see yourself as a servant to them

Engage in sporting activities that they might enjoy such as soccer. You can go and watch a game at a stadium with them.

Do things that are within your power and also within your budget.

Having a practical approach will allow any person you are sharing the gospel with to be able to relate to the message. It is important that you always take into consideration the person or people you are ministering to and ensure that whatever you are saying is comprehensible. Regarding the act of reaching out to souls, it is not a moment to show off knowledge as in a way to pride yourself but rather an opportunity to humbly share Christ with the person or people.



Live Beyond Self is a book that will be life transforming to its readers. The book was written in simplicity by its author. It demonstrates how as believers we can be vessels of honour used by God to reach many and make a meaningful difference in our communities.

### **About the Author**

Edward Agyeman is a minister of God whose passion is to see lives transformed by the preaching of the Gospel and the teachings of Christ. Edward Agyeman's ministry has been a blessing to many through his outreaches and charitable work. He serves as the founder and Global Head of STG Ministries which works in some parts of Europe, Asia and Africa.



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