

The Age of *Narcissism*

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When I was at university I did an English course where we analysed magazines published for women. Although these magazines were all aimed at different age groups and social classes, I found that they all printed similar articles. Almost every article had a major focus on looking out for number one - yourself. These articles contained phrases like: ***“Make decisions that will make YOU happy,”*** ***“Make sure he gives YOU what YOU want or divorce him”*** or ***“Give money to charity, it will make YOU feel good.”*** Everything was aimed at making the reader feel like she was in charge of her own destiny and that her main focus should be on ensuring that she is fulfilled.

I'm not saying that all women's magazines are like that, or that men's magazines don't publish similar articles. In fact all one has to do is switch on the television and watch one of these day time talk shows to hear the message that we need to love ourselves and fight for our own happiness. Teenagers seem to thrive on this message. It's the age of instant gratification (I want this now and don't care what it could do to me in the future) and narcissism. We are becoming a people so insanely obsessed with ourselves that we forget about other people.

It's very easy to get caught in the trap of narcissism. Not only is the media promoting it, but it's also very easy for us to make situations about ourselves. When things go wrong we tend to internalise it. We ask ourselves ***“Why did this have to happen to ME?”*** or ***“Why is everyone always out to get ME?”*** I know that this has happened

to me many times. But we need to realise and constantly remind ourselves of that incredibly true statement: ***“It's not about you!”***

We were not created to be narcissists. We were made by God, for God. He gave us particular gifts so that we could do what He has planned for us to do. Our sinful nature wants us to be selfish and self-loving but when we choose God as our Lord and saviour, we are no longer slaves to our sinful nature. We realise that we have a greater purpose which is way bigger than our selfish longings. In Mark 8:34+35 Jesus says: ***“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and the gospel will save it.”*** It's not easy, but it's what we are called to do.

How do we prevent ourselves from becoming narcissists? Firstly we need to realise that God's plans are way bigger and way more important than ours. We need to start to see our worth through Him. We have got great worth not because of who we are but because of whose we are. We need to look at ourselves with humility. A good way to do this is to read the Bible. It teaches us about what God's plans are for our lives and is a reminder that everything we do, our lives, are for His glory. We've also got to spend time with Him, asking Him to help us get over ourselves. When we pray we need to try not to focus so much on what we want or need, but on praising God for who He is.

Another way of getting over ourselves is by serving others. In this way, we're serving God, helping others and learning to put other people before ourselves. Step out of your comfort zone and do something completely selfless. Find



a way to help out at church or help a friend who is going through a rough time. It's amazing how God can use us when we take our minds off ourselves and look to help others.

There will be times when you start to feel the narcissism return but in those times remember John the Baptist. He was sent to prepare the way for Jesus just like we have been sent to share Him with the world. In John 3:30 when speaking about Jesus he said: **"He must become greater, I must become less."** Let's adopt that attitude. As we take our eyes off ourselves and our attention off all the things we are going through, may we look up and remember that actually it's all about Him!

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