

# ESCAPING THE VICTIM ROLE

by being other-centered

*A Full Life in the Emptiest of Places*

*"If you get rid of unfair practices,  
quit blaming victims,  
quit gossiping about other people's sins,  
If you are generous with the hungry  
and start giving yourselves to the down-and-out,  
Your lives will begin to glow in the darkness,  
your shadowed lives will be bathed in sunlight.  
I will always show you where to go.  
I'll give you a full life in the emptiest of places—  
firm muscles, strong bones.  
You'll be like a well-watered garden,  
a gurgling spring that never runs dry.  
You'll use the old rubble of past lives to build anew,  
rebuild the foundations from out of your past.  
You'll be known as those who can fix anything,  
restore old ruins, rebuild and renovate,  
make the community livable again."*

*Isaiah 58:9-12 (the Message)*

My devotional guide a few days ago had the following verse and notes:

*"Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love."*  
*Ephesians 4:2 (NLT)*

Your friends are not perfect. Your kids, people you work with, your spouse are not perfect. You are not perfect either. So lighten up!

- Whose faults bother you more – yours or others? Why?

What bothers me most is my own faults. My problem for years has been my tendency to focus on myself too much.

When I feel down I wallow in negative feelings. I very quickly start feeling bad about myself and the kind of person I am.

When I'm up I'm consumed with thoughts about my various plans and projects. I get together with friends and it seems like that's all I know how to talk about.

I really don't like this about myself and often pray for better other-centeredness.

Self-centeredness always seems to be a problem when we're stuck in unnaturally low or high moods.

- Is there anything at all we can do to escape this? Is there any way we can escape being a victim (of depression especially), needing other people's care?
- Can we possibly persuade ourselves to think of other people's needs when we are so self-consumed? Can we possibly put ourselves in other people's shoes and care about *their* needs?
- What can we do to start thinking about the needs of others, to empathize, or to have compassion?

There have been times when I've been so depressed that all I can think about is how miserable I feel. But I recall vividly something that helped elevate my mood, though only temporarily. I was reading a book and this sentence spoke to me and briefly snapped me out of it: "We don't live for ourselves alone." This helped me realize that life isn't all about me. It made me feel better. I felt the hope that one day I would escape the depression and I could go back to helping others. I could escape the victim role – escape being a person needing others. I could help others instead.

- And if caring about others' needs and helping them is an escape from depression, would it help us to stabilize?
- Would thinking of other people's needs and helping them help prevent depression from descending on us?

In Matthew 25: 34-40 Jesus said:

*"Then the King will say to those on his right [the sheep], 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'*

*"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'*

*"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"*

