

Voices: Looking up for Number One

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Back in 1977, the year I turned 24, at the beginning of my business career, a man named Robert Ringer wrote a book that became a huge international best-seller, which is unusual for a business book. I think Robert Ringer himself was surprised by the book's success.

It was called "Looking Out for Number One." Perhaps you read it.

The book's jacket boldly stated the basic message: "This book will clearly demonstrate how to get from where you are now to where you want to be—with friends, lovers, finances, and all other areas of your personal world..." by putting YOUR needs first.

I read the book as a neophyte to the business world, and, as a Christian, I couldn't believe how different what this man advocated was from what I'd been taught in Sunday School all my life. "*Look out for Number One!*" became a mantra in the business community.

"Because if you don't," it was understood, "who will?"

I recall thinking, "Well, God will."

Look out for each other

I had two good friends who were coworkers back then, and I remember talking about the book with them. "Look," I said, "if I look out for Number One, and my friend Dale looks out for Number One, and my friend Bob looks out for Number One, then we each have just one person looking out for our best interests: ourselves. But if we do it Jesus' way, and put others

interests before our own, then we each have at least *two* people looking out for our own best interests. I have Bob and Dale looking out for me. Dale has Bob and me. And Bob has me and Dale looking out for him.”

That math holds up today. If you multiply that throughout the Christian community, in a typical Baptist church each of us has roughly 100 to 300 people looking out for each other’s best interests, not just one.

That wasn’t bad reasoning for a 24-year-old. I think the Holy Spirit gave me that thought. And I shared it with the Bible Study class I was teaching then. With them I took it even further, going at it in the other direction.

‘Me against my brother’

This is what I reasoned. If everyone is looking out for Number One, then quite naturally, it is me against my brother. My interests take precedence over my brother’s. If push comes to shove, then my brother and I will link arms against my family. We’re right; they’re wrong.

And, naturally, my family would come together in a dispute against other clans—think Hatfields and the McCoys. And if the state started meddling in our business? It would be our community against the state.

And, by God, if the feds try to step on states’ rights, why, *don’t tell us what to do!* We’ll just secede from the Union!

And God help us if the Russians push us Americans too far, because we’ll link arms with other nations and they will link arms with their allies and we’ll all rain nuclear warheads down upon each other’s heads!

That is what comes from “Looking Out for Number One.”

What’s the alternative?

'A new commandment'

We all need to look UP for Number One (the real Number One), look OUT for one another, and look IN to determine if our own hearts are right with God.

In the end, that's the only thing one can control. Is your heart right with God? If not, then *you got yourself some repenting to do!*

Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, you should love one another" (John 13:34).

Well, how did Jesus love you? By looking out for Number One?

I don't think so.

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