

# Who Is Number One?

One of the greatest challenges in our culture today is the manifestation of a bold and assertive self-centeredness that seems so prevalent. We may be surprised, but we really should not be, particularly because nearly every aspect of the media reminds us that we are number one, we owe it to ourselves, and we go around only once; and there are countless other clichés and on-going references telling us that life really is all about us.

On August 11, 1957, at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke about the immaturity of self-centered people in a sermon titled *Conquering Self-Centeredness*: “They are the victims of arrested development and they are still children. They haven’t grown up. And like a modern novelist says about one of his characters, ‘Edith is a little country, bounded on the east and the west, on the north and the south, by Edith.’ And so many people are little countries, bounded all around by themselves, and they never quite get out of themselves” ([www.stanford.edu/group/King/publications/papers/vol4/570811-00-Self-Centeredness.htm](http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/publications/papers/vol4/570811-00-Self-Centeredness.htm)).

Self-centeredness very easily evolves into a most frightening characteristic: greed, which Jesus strongly condemned. I am astounded by the force He put behind this condemnation as He made the point while teaching His followers by parable in the story of the rich fool. Jesus focused on how we must “get out of ourselves.” His parable tells of the rich man who was about to harvest a bountiful crop. The rich man’s conclusion was, “And I’ll say to myself, ‘You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry’ ” (Luke 12:19, NIV).

Then, in His conclusion of the parable, Jesus painted the end picture of greed from God’s perspective: “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you.

Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’ This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:20–21).

As we celebrate this Christmas season, I urge you to consider how you might engage your children in a growth step that would help them mature and get out of themselves. It is most evident already in this Christmas season how our culture imbeds the message of self-centeredness—and nearly every Christmas message is about the acquisition of more stuff. Although it will mean swimming against the tide, would you consider this Christmas how you might, with God’s help, turn that tide in the lives of your own children? How might your family consider a special gift back to God by giving in some way to others less fortunate?

Your own Christian school or church is undoubtedly sponsoring some kind of gift drive for the needy, and perhaps you would like to take part in providing a Christian school opportunity for children in great need. We invite you to visit our website at [www.acsi.org/~givehope](http://www.acsi.org/~givehope), which provides a list of Christmas giving opportunities that directly make Christian schooling a reality for some children through our Student Sponsorship Program, as well as a list of other projects that strengthen the effectiveness of schools and educators worldwide. Perhaps this opportunity can add a new dimension to your Christmas celebration as you join with us at ACSI in getting out of ourselves.



Ken Smitherman, President  
Association of Christian Schools International

We welcome you to download *Christian School Comment* and print it for distribution to your school’s constituency. You are also granted permission to place this publication on your school’s website. ACSI must grant permission for other forms of distribution.