

# GOD

## Keeping God First in our Lives

God, our loving heavenly Father, wants only the best for His children. He has already given us so many things! First, when we confessed His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, as Lord and believed in our hearts that God raised him from the dead, we were saved (Romans 10:9), and God made us His children (I John 3:2) and accepted us into the Household (Ephesians 1:6). We are joint-heirs with Christ, our “big brother” (Romans 8:17). God blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). When we got born again, we received the gift of holy spirit, power from on high (Ephesians 1:13; Luke 24:49). We can operate nine manifestations of holy spirit (I Corinthians 12:7-10), and we enjoy nine fruit of the spirit as we do (Galatians 5:22-23). We have five God-given “sonship rights”: redemption (Colossians 1:13-14), justification (Romans 3:24), righteousness (II Corinthians 5:21), sanctification (I Corinthians 6:11), and the ministry of reconciliation (II Corinthians 5:18-20). In God’s perspective, we are already seated in the heavenlies (Ephesians 2:6). We look forward to the Return of Christ, our Hope (Acts 1:11 and Ephesians 1:18), when we will receive new bodies (Philippians 3:21) and enjoy eternal life (Titus 1:7).

Recognizing all that God has already given us, we should not only be thankful but we should endeavor to keep God first in our lives. As we keep God first, our lives will abound and be fruitful as God continues to load us with benefits. We pray to Him with believing, knowing that our heavenly Father hears us (I John 5:14-15). And, as we keep God first as we believe Him, we can overcome the world with all its negative influences, as we read in I John 5:4: “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith.”

The Gospel of Matthew contains a verse that expresses the importance of keeping God first in our lives:

### Matthew

6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

In his great teaching on a mountain, Jesus Christ instructed his disciples to seek first “the kingdom of God, and His righteousness.” If they did that, “all these things” would be “added unto” them. What things? Take a look at the previous verses, beginning in verse 31:

6:31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

6:32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

We see that “all these things” refers to the basic necessities of life: food and nourishment to maintain good health; and clothing to provide protection to the body. God knows we all need these things, and He does not want us to be anxious, or have undue concern, about receiving

them. As we put God first, “all these things” shall (absolutely) be “added”, or provided. We may need to work for these, but we do so without any anxiety, knowing that God will supply our needs, as it says in Philippians 4:19: “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus”.

Let’s take a closer look at the phrase “seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness” in Matthew 6:33. The word “seek” is from the Greek word *zēteō*, which can be understood as “seek with desire”, “endeavor to find”, or “require”. From the word “first” we know that we are to do this “seeking” as our priority, relying on God rather than on the senses world.

What are we to seek, so all our needs will be met? Verse 33 says “the kingdom of God, and his righteousness”. The Kingdom of God refers to the dominion, sovereignty and care, of the one true God, who is over all; and applies to all time (as opposed to “the kingdom of heaven” which is in effect only when Jesus Christ, God’s only begotten Son, is personally present as king). To seek, to desire and endeavor to find, the kingdom of God, is to endeavor to find the things of God and to apply them in our lives. Colossians 3:2 tells us “Set your affection (*thoughts, mind*) on things above, and not on things on the earth.” We’ll come back to this, but first let’s consider what is meant by seeking God’s righteousness.

In Old Testament times, which included the time covered by the four Gospels that record how Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law and redeemed mankind, the only way one could be considered righteous before God was by their believing: then righteousness was “reckoned” to them. We see this in Romans chapter 4, verse 3, with the example of Abraham:

#### Romans

4:3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted (*reckoned*) unto him for righteousness.

Abraham believed the promise of God, being fully persuaded that what God promised He was able to perform (Romans 4:21), and this believing brought Abraham to the point that God could count him as righteous. So, in Gospel times, when Jesus Christ taught these great truths, in order to seek God’s righteousness, people had to believe His Word.

Today in this Administration of Grace in which we live, when we got born again, believing in our hearts that God raised His Son from the dead, God made us righteous. We no longer need to seek his righteousness because we already are righteous in God’s sight. But, to keep God first in our lives so we can enjoy all the benefits of the more abundant life, we need to walk in that righteousness: we need “instruction in righteousness”. Look at a couple familiar verses in II Timothy chapter 3:

#### II Timothy

3:16 All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God (*God-breathed*), and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for (*which is*) instruction in righteousness.

3:17 That the man of God may be perfect (*fully equipped*), thoroughly furnished (*equipped*) unto all good works.

We find “instruction in righteousness” in God’s Word, whether it be by doctrine, reproof, or correction.

This brings us back to how we are to seek “the kingdom of God”. The only way we can find the things of God and know our heavenly Father is to go to His Word. God’s great desire is not only that people become saved, but that they come to know Him:

### I Timothy

2:4 Who (*God*) will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

God wants us to “come unto the knowledge of the truth (His Word)”. The Greek word translated “knowledge” is *epignōsis*, meaning “a full, experiential knowledge”. We get that only when we go to God’s Word and make it our own.

### II Peter

1:3 According as his (*God’s*) divine power hath given us all things *that pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge (*epignōsis*) of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

1:4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

We’re not just to read God’s Word; we are to study it and make it our own.

### II Timothy

2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

The word “study”, from the Greek word *spoudazō*, implies that we are to study God’s Word with diligence, keeping in mind the brevity of the time. This is more than just reading it; and it is also more than listening to somebody else teach it, no matter who the teacher is. We are reminded of the example of the Judeans in Berea who heard the teachings by Paul and Silas, as recorded in Acts chapter 17, verse 11:

### Acts

17:11 These (*the Judeans in Berea*) were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

If the Judeans in Berea “searched the scriptures” to confirm what the Apostle Paul taught them, in our day and time we too should go to God’s Word ourselves and “search the scriptures”. Today, because the adversary has destroyed all the original manuscripts that were written as “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the holy spirit” (II Peter 1:21), leaving us with translations and versions that may differ from what God originally said, for us to “search the scriptures” we need to research God’s Word. Never let anybody tell you that the research has already been done for you, so you don’t need to bother. It’s your responsibility before God to at

least go to God's Word yourself, checking for understanding and doing any research that might be needed so you reach the point that you are convinced in your own mind.

So, from Matthew 6:33, we see that keeping God first involves going to His Word, which is instruction in the righteousness we in the Grace Administration already have, and making that Word our own. The more we know our loving heavenly Father, the greater our love for Him will be. You may recall "the first and great commandment", quoted by Jesus Christ as recorded in Mark chapter 12, verse 30: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Part of keeping God first is to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. The repeated usage of the word "and" in Mark 12:30 is the figure of speech *polysyndeton* ("many ands"), giving emphasis to each of the four things we are to love God with.

As we keep God first in our lives, loving Him as we recognize what He through His love and grace has done for us, we give Him the glory in everything we do:

### I Corinthians

6:19 What? Know ye not that your body (*the body of believers collectively*) is the temple of the Holy Ghost (*holy spirit*) which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

6:20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body (*the rest of the verse is not in 6 of the 7 Critical Greek Manuscripts and should be omitted*).

I Corinthians chapter 10, verse 31 tells us: "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

As we keep God first in our lives, we operate the principle of giving and receiving, knowing that as we give to God the first-fruits of all our increase, we will be blessed with more:

### Proverbs

3:9 Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase:

3:10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.

As we put God first and give, recognizing God as our sufficiency (II Corinthians 3:5), He will supply all our needs (Philippians 4:19).

As we keep God first in our lives, our lives will be blessed as we enjoy benefits. Psalm 68:19 tells us: "Blessed *be* the Lord, who daily loadeth us *with benefits, even* the God of our salvation. Selah." We'll conclude by taking a look at a few of the many benefits God gives us as we keep Him first in our lives.

When we keep God first in our lives, we can believe to enjoy good health and prosperity:

### III John

2 Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

In fact, as we keep God first in our lives, keeping His Word in our minds, we can prosper in whatever we do:

### Psalms

- 1:1 Blessed *is* the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.
- 1:2 But his delight *is* in the law of the Lord (*God's Word*); and in his law doth he meditate day and night.
- 1:3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

When we got born again, we were made free. As we keep God first, we can do what Galatians chapter 5, verse 1 exhorts: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

As we keep God first in our lives, we can boldly go to our heavenly Father, as Hebrews 4:16 tells us: "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." And, when opportunities arise and we need deliverance, we can look to God knowing that He has a solution:

### I Corinthians

- 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*.

Keeping God first in our lives, we can expect "all things *to* work together for good" as it says in Romans 8:28.

As we keep God first in our lives, we can experience a dynamic prayer life, with answers to our prayers as we pray with believing:

### Mark

- 11:24 Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive *them*, and ye shall have *them*.

### I John

- 5:14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:
- 5:15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

Finally, as we keep God first in our lives, we never need to be anxious about anything; instead, as we pray to God with believing, we will have peace in our lives:

Philippians

4:6 Be careful (*anxious*) for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

4:7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through (*in*) Christ Jesus.

We have considered what it means to keep God first in our lives. As we go to His Word first and foremost, making His Word our own, believing it and walking on it, we will experience many great blessings in our lives.

- Dr. Rick Batt