

Matthew 6:25-34 Heavenly Living: God's Priorities

A big lesson we all learn is that of righteous discrimination: things that God puts first in order of importance. Many things clamor for priority, therefore we need to know how to assess their value and not to give first place to secondary things. For example, the soul is more important than the body (**Mark 8:36**); the things of eternity are of greater importance than the things of time (**Hebrews 9:27**); life itself is far more important than possessions (**Luke 12:15-21**); spiritual strength is far more important than physical strength (**Ephesians 6:10**). Much of our trouble personally and culturally arises from the fact that we have reversed God's priorities. How can we know what God wants us to put first? Here, as in every matter of faith and practice, the Word of God is our all-sufficient guide:

Matthew 6:33: "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

- **Grammatical Usage:** "seek" or in the Greek, "zēteite" meaning, "pursue; to worship"; "righteousness" or "dikaïosynē" meaning, "approval"; "will be added" or "prostethēsetai" meaning, "provided".
- **Literal Interpretation:** Pursue with a worshipping heart God's kingdom and His approval, and all these things will come to you as a matter of course.
- **Contextual/Comparison:** God keeps His Word: God continually uses His Word. It is common to hear a Christian say, "I'm putting God first" or to counsel others to "make sure God has first place in your life." Such expressions are used so often they run the risk of becoming a Christian cliché. But there's nothing trite about the idea of putting God and His priorities first for we who know Him: it's thoroughly biblical. The Gospel of Matthew records our Lord's five-fold law of priorities:

1. In **Matthew 5:23-24** – FIRST your brother, then your gift.

Notice how clear God's order is. The Devil loves to sow seeds of discord in God's people, but here the Lord tells us of the way of victory – not an easy way, but one that commands His immediate blessing. To worship Him, bring gifts to Him or enter into His service are all in vain if we fail to obey His requirement in **Matthew 5:23-24**. God's work is often paralyzed, and His servants are frequently powerless, because of an unwillingness to seek and secure the reconciliation that is commanded and that will alone glorify Him and release His blessing. No Christian can be right with God if he is consciously wrong with someone. If the tides of God's blessing are dammed up in your life, is it because you need to 'first go and be reconciled...'? As you think of the matter at this moment, what is it that you...remember (**v. 23**)?

2. In **Matthew 6:33** – FIRST the spiritual, then the temporal.

Here is a wonderful promise: if we will put God's claims first and seek to do His will first, then we need have no anxiety about anything else, for He will provide for us, even in days of shortage! Compare **vv. 31-32**, which precede this great law of priorities, and notice from **v. 33** that we are to seek first not only justification (indicated by "His

kingdom”), but sanctification (indicated by “**His righteousness**”). It is possible to be in the kingdom of God and yet not really seeking His righteousness; saved, but not going on with the Lord (**Romans 6:11–14**). In the same way, it is possible to be justified and to disregard God’s call to sanctification (**1 Thessalonians 4:3**). Therefore, the promise of **Matthew 6:33** is made to the Christian who is willing to go all the way with the Lord. He knows all about our temporal needs, and He waits, wants and guarantees to meet those needs if we will put first things first (**1 Kings 17:13-16**; compare **Psalms 32:1-2; 34:9-10; Philippians 4:19**).

3. In **Matthew 7:3-5** – FIRST judge yourself, then your brother.
How blind we often are to our own faults, and how quickly we observe the faults and failings of others! Nearly every time we criticize someone else for a certain thing we unconsciously criticize them for the thing of which we ourselves are guilty. The very solemn and searching words in **Matthew 7:1** were spoken by the Searcher of hearts Himself (**Jeremiah 17:10**). Be careful how you use your critical faculty; look up **Galatians 6:1** – and notice the last part of the verse!

4. In **Matthew 8:21-22** – FIRST what Christ wants, then what I want.
‘Me first...’! How terrible – and yet how frequently we act in this way! A disciple, but a ‘me-first’ disciple – a self-centered Christian going his own way instead of the Lord’s way! There is only one answer to each of the following seven questions:

- Why do you allow that doubtful habit?
- Why do you always put others down?
- Why do you pursue that harmful friendship?
- Why do you allow that crooked method in business?
- Why do you still attend worldly places?
- Why do you not try to win souls?
- Why do you not obey the voice of the Lord?

Is the answer to some of these questions – ‘ME FIRST’?

5. In **Matthew 23:25-26** – FIRST the inside, then the outside.
The Christian life is not just an outwardly reformed life; primarily it is an inwardly cleansed life (**1 Samuel 16:7**; compare **Psalms 51:6,10**). When the inward cleansing is thorough, the outward transformation is unmistakably evident. God does not want outward profession merely. First: He wants inward possession (**2 Chronicles 29:15-17**).

Scripture purposely provides the practical outworking of God’s ‘first things’:

- The first and greatest commandment – **Matthew 22:36-38**.
- Why we love Him – **1 John 4:19**.
- The prerequisite to discipleship – **Luke 14:28, 31**.
- Where giving must begin – **2 Corinthians 8:5**.
- Where piety (consistent living) must begin – **Titus 2:11–12**.
- Where soul-winning must begin – **John 1:41**.
- Where judgment must begin – **1 Peter 4:17**.

➤ **Conclusion:** Am I prioritizing God and His desires first in my life?