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Lakeland Hills Leader

Lakeland Hills Blvd Church of Christ - 2510 Lakeland Hills Blvd, Lakeland Florida 33805

God Before All Others

By Chuck Richardson

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."
[Matthew 6:33 NKJV]

Seeking God first before all others is Jesus' simple and direct command, but application is the challenge that has no equal. Inside the text of this statement, Jesus is providing instruction on fretting over the necessities of temporal life at the neglect of spiritual life, and yet, there is a broader application. Not only does Jesus' teaching cover the temporal necessities, but with equal force, the allurements of them. An attachment to this life in all aspects is a clear and present danger for all of us. (1John 2:15) When Jesus says to seek *first*, He means *primarily*, not of order. Order could naturally apply if you are seeking primarily. But *primary* may exclude order in the sense that whatever comes first, may not be necessary, but what is primary always comes first. No matter what, *primary* is the intent of Jesus' command in all respects. In the context, we can see that one may have no control over the provisions of life, but God does; therefore, He can provide what we are powerless to provide for ourselves. Besides our affinity for the temporal, we may neglect trust in God's power to provide our needs.

Then we see the clear and present danger of inordinate affection toward the temporal things that will destroy our everlasting soul in a devil's hell. So let us see two ways to help seek the kingdom first.

The first order of business in seeking first God, we must believe in our own mortality. Paul tells the Corinthians in simple terms that our mortal must put on immortality (1Corinthians 15:53).

"And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." [Matthew 25:46 NKJV] The bottom line is, we are mortal and will not escape eternity because we have an everlasting soul. Then, the most important concern is how we prepare that everlasting soul for bliss and not pain. We must nurture an eternal perspective to our view and use of this life. Why do so many limit their view to the present? *"But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death."* [James 1:14-15 NKJV]

Temporal life allures us with her intoxicating beauty and pleasure. (Genesis 3:5; 38:2, 15-16; Judges 14:3; 1Samuel 2:12-17; 2Samuel 11:2-5; 1Kings 11:1-3; 12:1-16; 19; 20; 21; 2Kings 22; Hosea; Matthew 26:14-16; Acts 5:1-10; 8:14-23) Therefore, with the appreciation of our own mortality, we seek the kingdom first by cultivating the heavenly things above all others. (Col. 3:1-5)

Because temporal life is so alluring, Jesus says to seek the kingdom of God and righteousness. In other words, God will not draw us into His kingdom without our desire to come in. *"Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse [your] hands, [you] sinners; and purify [your] hearts, [you] double-minded."* [James 4:7-8 NKJV]

Submission to God means we will seek the practices that please God, first, and even foremost. We have a choice every day we live as to what we will do, and what we do determines what we consider important to us.

A person who desires to eat will make work a priority. A man who has a wife and children will desire to take care of their needs, thus he will put first the things necessary to achieve that goal.

If I desire to please God first (primarily), then I will seek His pleasure over mine. Jesus said this much (Luke 2:49; Matthew 10:35-39), and Jesus said we are to seek the same thing He sought (Matthew 5:10,16). A Father's primary work is the training and discipline of his children (Ephesians 6:4), and the wives primary work is submission to her husband (1Timothy 2:11), as a man's primary work is to lead his family and others in spiritual pursuits (1Timothy 2:8).

And all are to live sacrificial lives before God (Romans 12:1). Very little of the New Testament is reserved for social responsibilities and the places it is addressed emphasizes our relationship with God in our social interactions (Ephesians 4:28-32; 5:22-32; 1Corinthians 8:1-5; Acts 6:1-7; James 1:27; Romans 12; etc.,)

A desire to seek the kingdom is the only way to obtain eternal life. Our temporal lives are passing as a vapor (James 4:14), therefore there is no value in earthly things for their pleasure alone.

Hence, we must cultivate our spiritual lives. If I live as if this is my last day on earth, then I will naturally prioritize and ignore the inconsequential. In so doing, I will live a satisfied and peaceful day. (Romans 13:12-13; 1 Thessalonians 5:4; Philippians 4:4-8) Observe the dying person's conduct and concerns, and you will know the possibility of a changed life before you're at death's door.

It is imperative we understand and embrace our eternal life as a guide in all our doing. (Proverbs 3:5-8; 2Peter 3:10-13)

Who is before you?