

# Seek First

***But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.***  
**-Matthew 6:33**



Father God created each of us with needs – the physical need for food, clothing, shelter, health, the emotional need for unconditional love, security, value and purpose in our life, and most importantly, the spiritual need for an intimate relationship with Him. He created us with these needs and He fully intends to meet them! Yet, how often do we look everywhere else to find our own answers and to meet our own needs? How often do we by-pass God’s love and abundant provision in favor of some imposter who seems appealing at the time, only to leave us empty and hurt? I know in the past, I have sought man’s love instead of God’s love, job security instead of God’s security, prestige instead of God’s value, power instead of God’s purpose for my life. This verse is about seeking God and about receiving His protection, provision and direction in our lives.

***...all these things will be given to you as well.***

I love words. This is one of my favorite verses because the revelation of its application into our lives comes to life through defining and exploring the individual words within it. Matthew quotes Jesus in this verse and He uses the word all. He says, “all these things.” Now, in the context of the verse Jesus is speaking about physical, material items – food, clothing, and shelter – yet Jesus is talking about so much more. What does the word all mean? What is included in all?

All means everything! Jesus is talking about every promise our Father God has made for our provision and protection. He is talking about our physical, emotional and spiritual needs as well. Jesus states that all, love, joy, peace, comfort, protection, and material provision, will be added to us. They are added to our lives until they overflow. We receive so much that it spills out to others without regard for our own loss. I am a visual person and I love to see words turn into pictures. When I see the word all, I see the hand of God reaching out to us. His hand is big! His hand is full of everything we need. The pile is heaped up and slipping through his fingers, running over the edges and teetering at the top, so much is in His hands. He is reaching out with all. His heart is waiting for us to receive it.

God is waiting for us to respond to His gifts. He is waiting for us to take freely of this abundance from His hand and then to share our blessings. He never gets tired of holding His hand there, and He waits patiently. Yet, how many of us only receive a small portion of all that He holds in His hand? How many of us miss it? I know I have missed much of what my loving Father holds for me. He has enough love for me in His hand to satisfy my deepest craving. However, I look many other places for love. His hand is full of everything I need: healing, security, a meaningful and enriching purpose for my life. He wants to give me ALL!

### ***...will be given to as well.***

Jesus states a scriptural principle here that needs to be understood. God wants to give to us! Yet most of us have been spending our time, instead of receiving from Him, trying to earn what we need ourselves. We try to attain it or get it! The Lord is holding out His hand; it is heaping full of all we need, and yet we go in another direction. We run here and there, sometimes over treacherous and slippery ground, but we don't stop and receive His abundance. Does God ever remove His hand? I have walked, run and crawled right past His gifts in my life but I know with a deep assurance that God has never removed His hand. God wants to give you all... will you receive it?

- What does "all" mean to you physically, emotionally and spiritually?
- How have you tried to attain God's blessings and provisions in the past?

### ***But seek first...***

How often have situations and relationship in our lives been falling apart, but we have not sought God nor have we sought Him first. What does first mean? First means first! Do we seek God's way of handling things first or as an alternative? How many times in the past have we sought God as a last resort? Seeking God as an alternative comes about when we cannot fix the problem or when we finally can't handle the problem. For example, in my relationship with Steve, when he asks me a question or makes a statement, what comes immediately to my mind is my answer. The answer is based on my logic and upon my feelings, which vary greatly from one time to another and let's face it, are pretty intense at times. If the feeling is anger, watch out! Seeking God first? So often we don't even realize how infrequently we actually seek God first.

#### **Did you ask God how to handle it?**

A couple years ago I was counseling a young woman experiencing many problems in her marriage. She came in one day tremendously upset with her husband. She wanted to tell me everything he had said and done to hurt her the night before. Usually I don't allow this in sessions, but this time the Lord directed me to stand at my white board and listen to her story. As I listened to this hurting young woman, the Lord told me to make a mark on the board every time something she said referred to a choice or decision she made regarding her response to her husband. So... as she started her story she told me what he said when he came home from work, how she felt and what she said back. I made a mark, just an inch high. Then, every time they interacted and she made a decision about how she would respond I made another mark, each one just an inch higher than the last. After 4-5 decisions the marks were getting pretty high, and the tension between this young woman and her husband was escalating. I kept making marks on my board. Finally the situation between my client and her husband exploded. As she told of the explosion she cried, and I asked her a question. "Did you ask God how to handle it?" "Yes," she cried. "I asked Him if I should sleep on the couch!"

At the final mark, finally, at the decision she made when they stepped on the landmine and it blew up, she asked God. What about all the decisions made right from the start of this interaction? Seeking God first means seeking him first. The moment her husband walked in the door and said something, she made a decision that would determine how the rest of this young couple's evening would go. How often do we get wounded and wound others because we respond without first seeking God?

- What does first mean?

- Where and/or to whom, do you usually look for answers?

### **Kingdom...**

What does Jesus mean when he says we are to seek his kingdom? He is talking about his Father's kingdom; we know that. But to truly understand this we need to ask some more questions. As Christians, who are we in God's kingdom? We are His children, aren't we? We are joint heirs with Christ into the kingdom of God. Because of Jesus we are called sons of God. How well does a son live in his father's kingdom? What is his life like? Imagine yourself as the son of the King. What will you do when you need something? Who will you go to when you are hurt or confused? How many of your needs go unmet? When Jesus says to seek first his kingdom He is telling us to remember whose we are. Remember that we are sons and daughters of the King and that His desire is to give us everything we need. That is our identity in Christ, and only our lack of seeking God has kept us from experiencing it.

- Who are you in Christ?
- How do you receive the benefits and blessing that come with your identity as a child of God?

### **Righteousness...**

In the Amplified Bible we are given a clearer understanding of the word righteousness:

***But seek (aim at and strive after) first of all His kingdom and His righteousness (His way of doing and being right), and then all these things taken together will be given you besides. (Amplified Bible, emphasis mine)***

We are to seek God's way of handling every situation - "His way of doing and being right." We need to consider what is meant by doing and being.

Doing = behavior.

Being = attitude.

In all circumstances and interactions with others seeking God's righteousness means conforming our attitudes and behaviors to Him. Instead of righteousness as a standard for our behavior it becomes the driving force behind our behavior. How? Because righteousness is received when we seek God! He will provide it through His leading. It is not something we achieve! It is something we receive by faith! In every circumstance He will guide, protect and provide for us. The focus is upon Him, not us. If there is a problem, it is His problem! He is able and He wants to solve it.

### **Choices and decisions...**

To understand this principle we must consider again the choices and decisions we make. In every situation we make a decision how we will respond. In every circumstance we choose what our attitude will be. What percentage of the choices and decisions in your life in the past have you made God's way, and what percentage have you made your own way? God's righteousness is received when we seek God, ask God how to handle it, and then choose to respond His way! Left to our own strength we are unable to "do right", but with Christ living within us by faith, we can choose His way.

Again, what percentage of choices and decisions have you made God's way? What percentage have you made any other way? My answer to those questions was 20% of the time I asked God and the other

80% I responded MY WAY. That means that 80% of the time I was saying “No” to Jesus, saying “No” to my Father God, and saying “Yes” to the enemy. Without God’s way of doing and being right, I had given Satan permission to influence and lead me right into sin. With that permission, Satan then had the right to destroy me. When I tell God “No,” any percent of the time, then God will not intervene. He will not stop Satan, nor will He force Satan out because I have given Satan permission to be there and have rejected the direction, power and protection that are God’s righteousness.

Seeking God’s righteousness involves the principle of 0% tolerance of sin in our lives. We need 0% tolerance for giving Satan permission to persuade and destroy us. We need to believe Satan 0% of the time and believe God 100% of the time. It is always a matter of choice!

- How does your righteousness differ from His righteousness?
- What percentage of decisions do you make God’s way versus what percentage of decisions do you make any other way?
- If you give Satan even 1% of you decisions, what will happen?

### ***Seek...***

Matthew 6:33 says to seek God, His kingdom and His righteousness, but what have we been seeking? I know that I have sought after all sorts of things in the past. Physically I have sought my basic needs such as food and shelter, material possessions and the money to buy them. I have sought a good job to provide me with these things. In my relationships I have sought a good marriage, happy and healthy kids and fulfilling friendships. Emotionally I have always sought joy and peace, value and purpose in my life. These are some of the things I seek and these are also the things God is faithful to provide. Take a good marriage as an example. God’s plans for marriage are always good. When we apply the principle of seeking God first it becomes His responsibility to provide us with a good marriage. But...most of us, instead of seeking God and His way of doing things, are seeking to make the marriage good with our own decisions and in our own way, by-passing God trying to get what we want. How many of us succeed?

### **Opportunity to seek Him...**

Have you ever gone on a family vacation or done a group activity as a family? Family vacations are supposed to be fun, aren’t they? Before we go, everyone in the family is looking forward to a good time. We are making plans and anticipating our activities with that outcome in mind. We are seeking a good time. Yet, how many of us can say that when we returned from our vacation everyone in the family had a good time all of the time? This question usually brings laughter. Why? Despite the fact that every member of our family is seeking to have a good time, the unfortunate outcome of family vacations is rarely unanimous fun. Why? Each person’s idea of a “good time” is often different. The activities Mom and Dad want to do will sometimes greatly differ from the children’s ideas. Now, let’s say that everyone agrees on what we will do. Let’s say we are going to Florida to the beach. Everyone agrees that we will sun, surf, swim and we all agree that everything “beach” will give us a good time. Then, we get to Florida and its 40 degrees and raining. Will our family have a good time? More Laughter! The answer is usually, “Watch out!”

How does this relate to this verse? “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” God’s plans for this family vacation are good; He wants to give them

all. It is His will that each of His children relaxes and enjoys themselves, yet how often do we simply forget this? What would happen with the families' vacation if, no matter what the situation, the father would use his spiritual headset and ask God, "Lord, what should I do? Please give me some ideas so my family will still have a good time on our vacation. How should I respond to my wife and kids?" Then, would this family have a good time? Instead of seeking the good time – this man is seeking after God and His way of doing things. It now becomes God's problem to give them the good time, not his. What would happen if the entire family would seek God?

A successful vacation, a successful marriage, a successful relationship with family, friends and with a lost and dying world comes from putting Christ first. Just like the 40 degree Florida vacation, it may still be raining, but we will see things differently, respond differently and receive all that God has in store for us.

- What have you been seeking?
- Whose problem is it to provide for you when you are seeking God?
- If you believe it is your problem, how does that affect what you do?
- Do you take control, or do you give control to the Lord by seeking Him and doing what he tells you to do?

### **The enemy tries to convince us...**

Who else knows this principle? Satan, and he uses it to his advantage. In this battle Satan wins if he can convince us to seek anything other than Christ. He knows the principle of God in seeking and receiving all will be shortchanged, and we are not in the position to receive what God has for us. If Satan can persuade us not to seek God first, not to remember whom we are in Christ, not to choose His righteousness but to seek our own way, then we will never receive from the Father. If Satan can persuade us to seek with less than our whole heart, we will miss all the blessings God wants to give us.

### **Seek... what is our attitude in seeking?**

***But seek for (aim at and strive after) first of all His kingdom...*** The Amplified Bible expands on the word seek with "aim at" and "strive after." What kind of words are these? Are they active or passive? Are they strong or weak? These are strong, active words used to describe the attitude with which we seek. The best way to get a revelation of this is to do a little imagining...

Let's say I tell you and you believe me, that hidden in the room you are sitting in right now is a ten-dollar bill. If you find this \$10 you may keep it, use it for anything you like, buy lunch or whatever. Would you look for it? (Seek it?) Most likely yes. But, what if after an hour of looking you still had not found the money, would you continue to look for it? Maybe. What about two hours later? Probably not! Most likely you would leave the \$10 and go wherever you need to be at the time.

Now, let's say I tell you and you believe me, that hidden in the room you are sitting in right now is a cashier's check for one million dollars and if you find it, you may keep it. You can use it for anything you want. You may give it away, whatever you wish. Would you look for it? Yes! But, what if after an hour or two of looking you still had not found the check, would you continue to look for it? Almost certainly! My guess is that you would look everywhere, search and remove, peel back and look under everything in that room, carpet, furniture, wallpaper, everything! You would not stop looking until you found the check.

## Value...

What is the difference between seeking ten dollars and seeking one million dollars? The difference is the value. There is tremendously more value in a million dollars than in ten dollars; therefore we are going to seek a million dollars until we find it. There is an attitude of seeking that depends upon the value we place on what we are looking for. That attitude will determine if we find it.

How does this relate to this verse? *“But seek for (aim at and strive after)...”* How much is God worth? We need to ask ourselves, how have we been seeking God? More like the ten dollars or more like the million dollars? Our answer will show us why we often miss what God has for us. Most of us are not seeking God like a million dollars, but we have a low level of seeking. We use God like a “yellow page” God, looking to Him when we need help fixing a problem that we have failed to fix ourselves or when our own answers prove to be inconvenient. Then we turn to God. Yet, even then, we often seek Him as though He is only worth \$10. We will never find Him because with a \$10 attitude we will give up or be dissuaded. We need to seek God like a million dollars. Then we will not give up, nor will we allow Satan to discourage us. When we place God as a priority in our lives we recognize His value. Seeking God becomes a necessity and as a result we are not going to give up seeking Him until we find Him.

## Treasure...

***The kingdom of heaven is like something precious buried in a field, which a man found and hid again; then in his joy he goes and sells all he has and buys that field.***

***Again the kingdom of heaven is like a man who is a dealer in search of fine and precious pearls, who, on finding a single pearl of great price, went and sold all he had and bought it. - Matthew 13:44-46 (Amplified Bible)***

In this verse, Jesus compares the kingdom of God to a treasure in a field and a precious pearl, both of great value. The man realizes the value of the treasure, the kingdom of God, and gives up everything, sells everything in order to obtain that treasure. Jesus is not just talking about material possessions here. He is talking about an attitude of the heart! What are we willing to sell? I know that as I learn the meaning of this verse I face opportunities to sell, or to give up quite a few attitudes of my heart. I sell my “right to be right” in situations with my husband and children; I sell my anger over past injustice and emotional wounding from my past; I sell my stubborn, striving, determined attitude that causes me to perform for my own glory and pride rather than rest in the way my Father has for me. The crucial question here is: What value do I place on the kingdom of God?

## Commitment...

There is another principle of seeking we need to consider. My husband is a runner and has run several marathons. A marathon is 26.2 miles long! Each time he does this, he decides about in January that he will run the marathon planned in October and he begins his training right away. Within a short time this decision begins to affect every area of his life. Training involves his diet, the amount of sleep he gets, and spending time running nearly every day. He makes a decision that in ten months he will run 26 miles. What might keep him from his goal?

Let's say, one evening Steve comes home from work intending to train for the marathon. He plans to run before we have supper, but when he gets home I have supper cooking and it smells delicious. Running will mean he has to eat later than the rest of us, so he decides to skip his run that evening and enjoy the meal. Another night that week it is raining and humid outside. Running will be uncomfortable in this weather, so he decides to stay in and watch TV that evening. Will this affect his performance when he runs the marathon? Maybe not too much, but what if he continues in this pattern? Will it affect his performance, or even if he can run the marathon at all? Yes.

For Steve to reach the goal of running 26.2 miles he needs to move beyond the decision he made in January. He needs to make a commitment to that goal! If running the marathon is important to him, if he is committed to that particular goal, he is going to run every day regardless of the weather or things that would interfere with it. He will plan around it and make sure he has time to do it.

### **Count the cost...**

Value and commitment are intertwined in determining success. If Steve does not value the goal of running the marathon, then he is apt to let some of the days go by without training. There will be all kinds of reasons: it's too cold; he is too busy, etc. When the day of the marathon comes he will find himself unable to compete at the level he wants to, or possibly not able to compete at all.

***Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? -Luke 14:28***

Jesus says in Luke 14:28 that we need to estimate or count the cost of being His disciple. To seek first God's kingdom and righteousness requires an attitude that places a priceless value upon, and unswerving commitment to Jesus. With this, we receive ALL!

- What does it mean to seek?
- What value do you place on God? More like a \$10 bill or more like a million dollar check?
- What do you need to "sell" to obtain God's kingdom here and now?
- What reasons do you use to not stay committed to seeking God?

### **The wonderful blessings of all...**

There is nothing we can sell that compares to the wonderful blessings of all. First and foremost God has given us the gift of His Son Jesus for our salvation. That alone is priceless! Yet He continues to give to us every day. Do you seek Him?