

THE BLESSED LIFE
Week 3: The Principle of First
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



RECAP

In the third sermon of this series on money and giving, Josh discusses the Principle of First and looks at the compelling example of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17) from Scripture as a real-life example.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Last week's principle was *The Happiness Principle: You're happier when you give*. Did anyone in the group experience the truth of this principle in the past week?
2. Josh introduces us to the third Blessed Life Principle, the Principle of First: *If God is first in your life, everything will come into order. If God is not first in your life, nothing will come into order*. How have you experienced the Principle of First play out in your life (for better or worse) in the past?
3. Josh used the illustration of the big and little rocks and the glass jar. In your life, what have been some of the smaller rocks that you tend to put in first before God?
4. Recap the story of the widow at Zarephath in 1 Kings 17. Josh made the argument that God didn't send Elijah to the widow so that the widow could provide for Elijah but so that God could provide for the widow. What are some times in your life when you've given to God first and He's provided for you as a result?
5. What are some specific ways that you can and should put God first in the following aspects of your life? Brainstorm some ideas and pick one or two to implement this week:
 - Relationship with God
 - Marriage
 - Parenting/Family
 - Job/Career

NEXT STEP

What's one specific way you can increase your giving to God's kingdom this month?

For more information (training and support) on how to start and lead a small group, contact steve.lizzio@cbcva.org

CENTREVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2018
WEEK 3: THE PRINCIPLE OF FIRST
MATTHEW 6:33, 1 KINGS 17:8-24

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

The Principle of First: If God is first in your life, everything will _____.

If God is not first in your life, then nothing will _____.

PREVIOUS BLESSED LIFE PRINCIPLES

The Greed Principle: The more you get, the less you have.

The Happiness Principle: You're happier when you give.

Bonus Content

Sunday (This Handout) - 7 Questions Worksheet on Matthew 6:33 and Small Group Questions for this week

Monday (Blog) - The Principle of First: The concept too many Christians are ignoring

Thursday (Blog) - God Doesn't Want Your Money, He Wants Your Heart

For bonus content and much more, visit: joshdaffern.com

MATTHEW 6:33

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

1. WHAT DID IT MEAN TO THE ORIGINAL READERS?

If you start with today you're twenty centuries too late.

Jesus is doing several things in this powerful verse with an incredible promise. First, he is calling people back to a passionate pursuit of God's kingdom when many had fallen away from the faith. Righteousness in context here (Matthew 6:1) is similar to what we would describe today as "justice," so Jesus is calling people towards a life of outward service. In a society where the natural gravitational pull towards self had caused an entire generation to look out solely for their own interests (sound familiar today?), Jesus beautifully and clearly declared that our highest aim should be to seek God's kingdom and His righteousness (justice) on earth. It's a call toward a Godward and an outward life.

The promise is that when we do this, God will supply all of our needs. This promise inherently reorients our view of God from a cold, distant, deity to a warm, personal, loving Heavenly Father who cares for His children as any loving parent cares for their offspring. Inherent in this promise is the element of trust. For us to truly seek first God's kingdom, we have to truly trust that God will provide all of the things we would normally spend our time pursuing. And perhaps that's the point. God wants us to trust Him, not as a way for us to prove our trust in Him, but as an opportunity for God to showcase His wealth of provision and lovingkindness towards us. If we quit chasing scraps long enough to truly trust God, we'll discover that the owner of cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10) wants nothing more than to gloriously supply all of our needs through Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19).

GREEK WORD OF THE WEEK

προστίθῃμι (*prostithēmi*) is the verb translated into English as "will be given." The verb itself is straight-forward. It means "to be added to," almost the picture of things stacked on top of one another. What's unique is that Jesus uses this verb in the singular tense, not the expected plural. It's a very personal (as opposed to general) promise that God makes to us here. And it stands in stark contrast to the last time when the verb was used (v. 27), declaring that we cannot ultimately provide for ourselves the way only God can.

2. WHAT'S THE CONTEXT? *Scripture without context makes no sense.*

The context (as always) is very important for Matthew 6:33, because if you simply pluck it out of context you can wrongfully attempt to use this verse as a blanket promise for anything and everything you want God to give you. Without context, "these things" that Jesus promises to add to us can be anything. But this is not a blank check. In the verses prior, Jesus says that the pagans run after what they will eat, what they will drink, and what they will wear (Matthew 6:31). The greater context is a teaching against worry. So, the promise that God will add "all these things" is not a Christmas wish list for our greatest indulgences but a promise that God will always provide our basic needs for survival (food, water, clothing).

3. WHAT TIMELESS TRUTHS ARE THERE?

Since the Word doesn't change it still matters today.

- God's ability to provide for us far outstrips our ability to provide for ourselves.
- God promises provision for our daily needs when we trust Him and seek Him first.
- The call to seek God first is also a call to seek His righteousness (justice) here on earth.
- We have a good, loving, perfect Heavenly Father who wants to richly provide all of our needs.

5. HOW DOES IT APPLY TODAY? *Information without application becomes stagnation.*

- We waste most of our time worrying and pursuing the wrong things, things God has already promised He would provide for us.
- God wants us to trust Him not to punish us, but to free us from the corrosive effects of worry and to fill our hearts with trust that leads to freedom.
- If we say we are seeking God first but we're not also helping our fellow brothers and sisters, we are mistaken on what it means to pursue God's righteousness.

4. WHERE ELSE IN SCRIPTURE DOES IT SAY THIS? *The best interpreter of Scripture is Scripture.*

For every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. *Psalm 50:10*

And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. *Philippians 4:19*

If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! *Matthew 7:11*

6. HOW SHOULD THIS CHANGE THE WAY I LIVE IN COMMUNITY? *The Bible comes alive in me when I live it in community.*

- If you were honest, what are some things that you spend too much time worrying about and pursuing?
- Seeking God's kingdom first also means pursuing His righteousness (justice) here on earth. What are some specific ways you can do that in your world?
- What are some examples where God has provided for you as you've sought His kingdom and His righteousness?

7. HOW CAN MY LIFE GET BETTER BECAUSE OF THESE VERSES? *If I trust God and step in faith, what kind of life will God create?*

Imagine how freeing it will be to get out of the rat race, and instead of spending countless hours pursuing things that have no lasting value, you spend your life pursuing God and His kingdom. Imagine how real God will be in your world as you see Him provide for you in big and small ways, again and again as you trust in Him. Imagine how different your world around you will be when you stop trying to make money and start trying to make a difference. Imagine how weightless and free your soul will feel when God fills you with His purpose and love. Imagine the contentment and peace you'll experience when you can stop worrying about what tomorrow will bring because you have full trust in the God who richly provides for you. All this, the life you've always wanted, is waiting for you as you seek God's kingdom first.