

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Matthew 6:25-34

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** Over the next few weeks we will be embarking on a series of lessons with the general theme of “growing in grace and the knowledge of the Lord.”
 - A. **3** This is a scriptural theme (2 Pet. 3:18: “but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”).
 - B. These lessons are designed to help Christians grow and be strong in the Lord (1 Pet. 2:2).
 - (1) After one has obeyed the gospel, he is added to the Lord’s church (Acts 2:47).
 - (2) But, regardless of chronological age, a new member of the Lord’s church is a “babe” in Christ and must learn what his/her responsibilities are to Christ and His word (1 Pet. 2:2).
 - (3) We cannot remain “babes” in Christ (**1 Cor. 14:20**: “Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.”).
 - (4) And, those who’ve been a Christian for decades need to be reminded of first principles (1 Cor. 4:17: “...who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.”):
 - (a) Our young people really need this!
 - (b) I really need this!
 - (c) We all really need this! Even if we are older and more mature in the faith.

2 Pet. 1:12: “For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth.”
2. After obeying the gospel, we are then called to put first things first (Matt. 6:25-34, esp. v. 33: “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”).
3. ****** Let’s study some things we all need to put first in our lives.

II. DISCUSSION:**The very first thing we must do to put first things first is to:**

1. **4** Give ourselves to the Lord:
 - A. When we obeyed the gospel we are no longer our own:

1 Cor. 6:19-20: “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.”
 - B. We need to always remember the tremendous price God paid for us! Acts 20:28; **1 Pet. 1:18-19**: “knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” **He paid a debt we owe and could never repay!**
 - C. The saints in Corinth were told that the churches of Macedonia put first things first (**2 Cor. 8:5**: “And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.”).

D. Other things will come easier if we will first give ourselves to the Lord.

Another first thing we must do is to:

2. **5** Develop a willing mind:

- A. **2 Cor. 8:12:** “For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have.”
- B. God has always required that His people have a willing mind:
- (1) Building of the tabernacle (**Ex. 35:5:** “Whoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it as an offering to the LORD...”).
 - (2) Building of the temple (**1 Chron. 28:9:** “...Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever.”).
- C. Whatever we do in serving God, God wants us to do it with a willing mind! **Rom. 1:5:** “obedience to the faith”; **Rom. 16:26:** “obedience to the faith”; **Rom. 6:17:** “...yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.”

Another first thing we must do is to:

3. **6** Cleanse first the inside:

- A. In obeying the gospel, one purifies his soul (**1 Pet. 1:22:** “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart,”).
- B. We must constantly focus on keeping the “inside” clean.
- (1) Every Christian must beware of developing a hypocritical, self-righteousness; recall Jesus’ rebuke of the Pharisees (**Matt. 23:25-28**).
 - (2) When we profess one thing, but do another we are hypocrites! (Hypocrite: an actor, a stage player, a pretender (Thayer)).
 - (3) One can do no greater harm to the cause of Christ than to be hypocritical.
- C. We must exert all effort to remain pure on the inside.
- (1) Paul’s exhortations to Timothy (**1 Tim. 4:12:** “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”; **1 Tim. 5:22:** “Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people’s sins; keep yourself pure.”).
 - (2) Requires a certain mindset! We are what we think! Prov. 23:7 (**Matt. 15:17-20:** “Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? 18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. 19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. 20 These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.”; **Phil. 4:8:** “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate on these things.”).

Another first thing we must do is to:**4. 7 Cast out the beam in our own eye:**

- A. It is always easier to see the faults of others than our own: **Matt. 7:3-5**
- B. Does not mean that we are not to make “judgments” (**Matt. 7:1-2, 6, 15-16; I Jn. 4:1**: “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”; **I John 4:6**: “We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”).
- C. But we are not to make hypocritical or hypercritical judgments! **I Cor. 13:5-7**: “does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”; **Jn. 7:24**: “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”;

Another first thing we must do is to:**5. 8 First be reconciled to thy brother:**

- A. Problems among brethren are bound to happen.
- B. The key is how we handle problems when they occur!
 - (1) First, we must try always to be “peaceable” (**Rom. 12:18**: “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.”).
 - (2) Must put the interests of others above our own (**Phil. 2:2-4**: “fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. 3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”).
- C. **Matt. 5:21-24**—Note that God will not accept our worship when we are at odds with our brother (**Matt 5:23-24**: “Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”).
- D. Jesus also prescribes proper conduct when a brother sins against us (**Matt. 18:15-17; 2 Thess. 3:15**: “Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.”; **Eph. 4:31-32**: “Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”).
- E. Never let your anger get the best of you! **Eph. 4:26**: “Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath”; **Jas. 1:19**: “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath”; **Eccl. 7:9**: “Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools.”

Another first thing we must do is to:**6. 9 That first of all prayers be made for all men:**

- A. Paul tells us in **I Timothy 2:1-4**; who we are to remember in our prayers: “Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. 3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

- (1) “kings,”
 - (2) “all that are in authority,”
 - (3) “all men.”
- B. There is nothing more important we can do for someone than to pray for them.
- C. When is the last time you prayed for:
- (1) Our leaders in government?
 - (2) The church and brethren here?
 - (3) The work here?
 - (4) The lost? I Tim. 2:4
- D. We need to remember the power of prayer! Jas. 5:16
- E. But we must pray in the proper manner:
- (1) Model prayer: Matt. 6:9-15 (short, sweet, to the point!)
 - (2) Pray with faith and persistence: Lk. 18:1-8
 - (3) God only hears the righteous: **I Pet. 3:12:** “For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.”
 - (4) Pray without doubting: **I Tim. 2:8:** “men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting”; **Jas. 1:6-8:** “But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”

Another first thing we must do is to:

7. I O First findeth his own brother:

- A. After learning the truth of the gospel, we need to find others and share the truth with them. We are saved to save! I Tim. 2:4
- B. We need to prepare ourselves to teach others:
 - 2 Tim. 2:2:** “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”
 - I Tim. 4:16:** “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”
- C. Each of us needs to be an Andrew (Jn. 1:40-42: **vv. 41-42:** “We have found the Messiah’ ...And he brought him to Jesus.”).
- D. We sing a song, “You Never Mentioned Him to Me.” What a sad refrain.
- E. No matter how much we may dislike someone; when we consider the stark reality of an eternal hell, surely we can overcome that dislike and have true concern for their eternal welfare (Ezek. 33:8-9).

Another first thing we must do is to:

8. I I Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness:

- A. God promises to provide us with our needs **IF** we “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matt. 6:33).
- B. What is the “kingdom”? “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” (Matt. 3:2)
 “‘Kingdom of God’ points to God’s rule (v 13, 3.2). To seek first the kingdom means we have an undivided loyalty for and obedience to the things of God. The most important thing in life that we constantly seek (present indicative) to do God’s will on earth, as it is done in heaven (v 10).” (K. L. Chumbley, *The Gospel of Matthew*, p. 131)
- C. What is God’s “righteousness”? cf. Rom. 10:1-4; 1:16-17
 “‘Righteousness’ likely refers to the forgiveness God (v 12) gives and the right conduct that befits a son of God (5.6).” (K. L. Chumbley, *The Gospel of Matthew*, p. 131)
- D. What it means to seek first the kingdom:
- (1) Attending regularly.
 - (a) The Lord expects His people to attend the services of the church faithfully! Heb. 10:25
 - (b) How could one legitimately claim to be “seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” when they only attend when you don’t have anything better to do?
 - (2) Giving purposely and liberally.
 - (a) God requires His people to give with purpose and as one is prospered (2 Cor. 9:6-7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2).
 - (b) What would happen to the work here if everyone had your attitude toward giving?
 - (c) Remember the widow? Mk. 12:41-44
 - (3) Studying often.
 - (a) God expects us to know His will (Eph. 5:17; 3:3-4).
 - (b) “Knowing” requires study (2 Pet. 1:5; 3:18; 2 Tim. 2:15; Acts 17:11; Rev. 1:3).
 - (c) Why wouldn’t you want to study? **Acts 20:32:** “So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”
 - (4) Being zealous in church work.
 - (a) Note **Titus 2:14:** “who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.”
 - (b) First century Christians were zealous and steadfast (Acts 2:42; 8:4).
 - (c) Need always to remember **1 Cor. 15:58!** “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

Matt. 6:19-21: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

(5) Taking time for God.

- (a) It takes time to be holy! (recall song, "Take Time to Be Holy")
- (b) Time goes by so swiftly! If we are not extremely careful we can let the everyday things of life steal all of our time!

Psa. 90:12: "So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom."

Jas. 4:14: "For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away."

Eph. 5:16: "redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

- (c) "Life is what happens to you when you're making other plans." (John Witt)

III. CONCLUSION: 12

1. Whether we obeyed the gospel this morning or 60 years ago, we need to always put first things first!
2. By putting first things first, one will "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."
3. Have you been putting first things first?
 - A. If yes, great! Continue to do so!
 - B. If not, why not change your priorities now!

Adapted from: *Growing in Grace and Knowledge of the Lord*, by Johnie Edwards, Titus Edwards, Johnie P. Edwards, Edwards Publishing, pp. 1-3)