

Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TEACHER'S PACKET

3rd - 5th Grade

Sunday Morning

Study 23

Seek First the Kingdom of God

Seek First the Kingdom

The Objective is the key concept for this week's lesson. It should be the main focus of the study.

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verses support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the "reward box" found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word.

Objective To teach that God and His kingdom are to be prized above all others.

Key Verses

Matthew 6:19-34—Main Teaching Passage

Romans 12:1-2

1 John 5:14

James 1:17

Memory Verse - 1 John 5:14

"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us."

Hook

Review last week's memory verse, 2 Thessalonians 3:3.

Start the class by taking prayer requests. Make a list of the prayer requests on the board for later.

Ask a selection of students, "If you had 3 wishes, what would you wish for?" Compare the "wish list" to the prayer list taken earlier. Ask why they are the same/different.

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

BOOK

In Matthew 6, Jesus continued His Sermon on the Mount with a teaching addressing three things: the value of God's Kingdom, the worthlessness of money, and the futility of worry. The section opens by declaring that we should treasure and store up eternal things that we can never lose and prize those over temporary things that fade away. In light of this, Jesus tells us that we cannot serve two masters. We always prioritize our greatest love over everything else. We can see the things that we favor in this life by looking at what we spend our time and money on, for, "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." If we devote our time, talents, and treasure to the things of God, it demonstrates our love toward Him. Jesus then finishes the section by showing that we can't extend our lives even by a second through fret and worry. God has clothed the lilies in the field and gives shelter to animals, and yet loves us so much more than those things. The passage closes with our promise, that if we "seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, all these things will be added unto you."

The interpretation/exegesis of the passage. What does this passage mean? How does this passage apply to my life?

LOOK

It is very important to understand who God is. The Bible gives us several great analogies for our relationship with God. He is called (among many other things) our Father, our Lord, our Shepherd, our Light, our Shield and Defender, our Rock on which we stand. All of those things give us insight into the way that God relates to us and acts towards us. But nowhere in the Bible does it say that God is our employee. It doesn't say that God is our slave. Nor does the Bible say that God is a magic genie who has to give us whatever we wish for.

When we read through promises like the ones in Matthew 6, we have to be very careful about the way that we interpret them. Matthew 6:33 does NOT say that if we seek God, then whatever we ask Him he MUST give to us. What Matthew 6 is saying to us is this: if we change our desires so that they match what God wants for us, then God will give us what we want. In other words, the key to contentment is not getting our own way, but rather it is wanting the things that God is already going to do for us.

Look at the rest of the passage that we just read and see how the passage is trying to get us to not think like everyone else, but rather have our thinking transformed (Romans 12:1-2). This passage tells us all of the stuff that people try and sell us everyday is meaningless. Think about any commercial that you saw last week. They all tell you that if only you had

LOOK (Continued)

this new cell phone or that new pair of sneakers, you would be happy. The Bible says that simply isn't true. If you place your happiness in something that can break, when you drop that cell phone on the ground your happiness breaks with it. If you put your joy in something that fades or wears out, your joy fades and wears out with it. Instead, in Matthew 6:19 we are told that if we put our happiness in something that never breaks or gets old, or even stolen, then there is no way that our happiness can be stolen from us either. Verse 21 tells us that where our treasure is, there our hearts will be also. What are the things that you spend your money on? What are the things you spend most of your time doing? The answer to those two questions tell us a lot about what we treasure the most in our lives. Are you spending time in prayer every day? Or are you too busy playing Minecraft?

The passage finishes by telling us that unlike everyone else we should not allow worry and stress to rule our lives. Matthew 6 tells us that worrying about what is going to happen to us tomorrow doesn't help us in any way. Instead, because we know that God loves us (like a Father), we should rest in Him and trust that He will provide for us, direct us, and guide us. Jesus uses the analogy of a lily in the field. If God will clothe something that doesn't even have a soul as beautifully as He clothes a lily, how can we, whom God loves infinitely, worry about what is going to happen tomorrow?

The main point of the passage is this: Don't be like everyone else. Don't strive after material possessions, don't live in greed, don't stress about what is going to happen to you tomorrow. Instead, seek God, treasure Him and His kingdom, and trust that He loves you and will give you His very best, whatever that may look like.

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

TOOK

As a class, memorize 1 John 5:14.

Spend some time taking prayer requests from the students. Pray for any specific concern that they have and ask the Lord to move in those areas.

Pray: Ask the Lord to transform and renew the students minds in Christ Jesus. Ask Him to give all of us a greater love and faith in Him. Thank Him that He has overcome the world, and that because of Him we have no need to worry or fret about what tomorrow may bring.

Parent Question: How had God answered prayer in your life?

FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on Matthew 6 by David Guizk

B. The place of material things: a warning against covetousness.

1. (19-21) The choice between two treasures.

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

a. **Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth:** The ancient Greek more literally says *do not treasure for yourself treasures on earth*. The idea is that earthly treasure is temporary and fading away (**where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal**), but heavenly treasure is secure.

i. The issue isn't that earthly treasures are intrinsically bad, but they are of no ultimate value either. If this is the case, then it is wrong for the disciple of Jesus to dedicate his life to continually expanding his earthly treasures.

ii. To **lay up for yourselves treasure on earth** is also to doom yourself to a life of frustration and emptiness. Regarding material things the secret to happiness is not *more*, it is *contentment*. In a 1992 survey, people were asked how much money they would have to make to have "the American dream." Those who earn \$25,000 or less a year thought they would need around \$54,000. Those in the \$100,000 annual income bracket said that they could buy the dream for an average of \$192,000 a year. These figures indicate that we typically think we would have to have double our income in order to find the good life. But the Apostle Paul had the right idea in 1 Timothy 6:6: *Now godliness with contentment is great gain.*

iii. "The Master does not say it is wrong to possess earthly treasure. He does say it is wrong to lay it up for self. We are to hold it as stewards." (Morgan)

b. **But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven:** In contrast, heavenly treasures are everlasting and incorruptible. **Treasures in heaven** give enjoyment *now*, in the contentment and sense of well-being that comes from being a giver. But their ultimate enjoyment comes on the other side of eternity.

i. It has been wisely observed that a moving truck full of possessions never follows a hearse. Every thing one might take with them to the world beyond is left behind. The pharaohs of Egypt were buried with gold and treasures to take into the afterlife, but they left it all behind. Even further, though gold is a precious thing on earth, God uses it to pave the streets of heaven.

ii. Jesus once told a parable that has troubled some. In Luke 16:1-14, He spoke of a dishonest manager, who was about to be called to account. Knowing he would be fired, he began to settle accounts with his master's debtors at terms favorable to the debtors, so they would treat him kindly when the master fired him. The master ended up complimenting the manager for his shrewd tactics (presumably before he fired him). This

dishonest manager was praiseworthy for two reasons. First, he knew he would be called to account for his life and he took it seriously. Second, he took advantage of his present position to arrange a comfortable future - and we can use our material resources *right now* for eternal good - even though we can't bring them with us.

iii. Our material treasures will not pass from this life to the next; but the good that has been done for the kingdom of God through the use of our treasures lasts for eternity, and the work God does *in us* through faithful giving will last for eternity.

c. **For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also:** Jesus drew the conclusion that you can only have your treasure (and your heart) in one place; we can't store up treasure on earth and on heaven at the same time.

i. "It is not so much the disciple's wealth that Jesus is concerned with as his loyalty. As Matthew 6:24 will make explicit, materialism is in direct conflict with loyalty to God." (France)

2. (22-23) The choice between two visions.

"The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"

a. **The lamp of the body is the eye:** Simply, the idea is that "light" comes into the body through the eye. If our eyes were blind, we would live in a "dark" world.

b. **If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light:** The idea behind having a **good** eye is either being *generous* or being *single minded*. Both principles apply to the disciple's attitude towards material things.

i. "There seems to be a deliberate *double-entendre* here, with *haplous* taking up not only the theme of undivided loyalty but also that of detachment from material concern, hence of generosity." (France)

ii. Being *generous* brings light to our lives. We are happier and more content when we have God's heart of generosity. But if we are not generous, it is as if **your whole body will be full of darkness**. Our selfish, miserly ways cast darkness over everything that we think or do.

iii. Being *single minded* brings light to our lives, and we are also happier and more content when we focus on the kingdom of God and His righteousness, knowing that all the material things will be added to us (Matthew 6:33). But when we are double-minded, it is as if **your whole body is full of darkness**. We try to live for two masters at the same time, and it puts a dark shadow over everything in our life.

c. **Full of light...full of darkness:** In any case, Jesus tells us that either our eye is directed at heavenly things (and therefore **full of light**) or it is directed at earthly things (and therefore **full of darkness**).

i. "An *evil eye* was a phrase in use, among the ancient Jews, to denote an *envious, covetous* man or disposition; a man who repined at his neighbour's prosperity, loved his own money, and would do nothing in the way of charity for God's sake." (Clarke)

d. **How great is that darkness:** Building on the analogy of the eye, Jesus reminds us that if we are blind in our eyes, the whole body is blind. The **darkness** is then **great** in our whole body. In the same way, our attitude towards material treasure will either bring great **light** or great **darkness** to our lives.

i. Often a materialistic, miserly, selfish Christian justifies their sin by saying, "It's just one area of my life." But

even as the darkness of the eye affects everything in the body, so a wrong attitude towards material things brings darkness to our whole being.

3. (24) The choice between two masters.

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

a. **No one can serve two masters:** Having **two masters** is not like working two jobs. Jesus had the master and slave relationship in mind, and no slave could serve two masters.

i. Jesus states that serving two masters is a simple impossibility. If you think that you are successfully serving two masters, you are deceived. It can't be done. As ancient Israel struggled with idolatry, they *thought* they could worship the Lord God and Baal. God constantly reminded them that to worship Baal was to forsake the Lord God. To be **loyal to the one** is to **despise the other**.

ii. "In the natural sphere it is impossible for a slave to serve two masters, for each claims him as his property, and the slave must respond to one or other of the claims with entire devotion, either from love or from interest." (Bruce)

iii. It can be simply said: Don't serve your money. Let your money serve the Lord and it will serve you.

b. **You cannot serve God and mammon:** There are different opinions regarding the origin of the term **mammon**. Some think it was the name of a pagan god. Others think the name comes "From the Hebrew *aman*, to *trust, confide*; because men are apt to trust in riches." (Clarke) Whatever its origin, the meaning is clear: **mammon** is materialism, or "wealth personified." (Bruce)

i. According to France, the idea of **mammon** itself was morally neutral. The word was used in some ancient Jewish texts that showed this, translating Proverbs 3:9 as *Honor God with your mammon* and Deuteronomy 6:5 as *You shall love the Lord your God with...all your mammon*. Therefore **mammon** itself represents material things we possess or want, and those things can be used for God's kingdom and glory or as idols.

ii. Certainly, Jesus is talking about the *heart* here. Many people would *say* they love God, but their service of money shows that in fact they do not. How can we tell who or what we are serving? One way is by remembering this principle: *you will sacrifice for your God*. If you will sacrifice for the sake of money, but will not sacrifice for the sake of Jesus, don't deceive yourself: money is your God.

iii. We must remember that we don't have to be rich to serve **mammon** (money and material things); the poor can be just as greedy and covetous as the rich can be.

C. The place of material things: anxiety over material things.

1. (25) Therefore: because the Kingdom of God is so greatly superior to earthly pursuits, *it* deserves our attention.

"Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?"

a. **Do not worry about your life:** We should not get tangled up worrying about the things of this world, because our life is more than those things.

i. "You can be as unfaithful to God through care as well as through covetousness." (Bruce)

ii. **What you will eat or what you will drink...what you will put on:** "These three inquiries engross the whole attention of those who are living without God in the world. The belly and back of a worldling are his compound god; and these he worships in the lust of the flesh, in the lust of the eye, and in the pride of life." (Clarke)

iii. Perhaps Adam Clarke would add in our own age, "What you will do to entertain yourself."

b. **Do not worry:** There is a difference between a godly sense of responsibility and an ungodly, untrusting worry. However, an ungodly, untrusting sense of worry usually masquerades as responsibility.

i. "You cannot say that Jesus Christ ever troubled his head about what he should eat, or what he should drink; his meat and his drink consisted in doing his Father's will." (Spurgeon)

ii. We *are* to be concerned with the right things; the ultimate issues of life - and we then leave the management (and the worry) over material things with our heavenly Father.

c. **Is not life more than food:** The worry Jesus spoke of debases man to the level of an animal who is merely concerned with physical needs. Your life is **more**, and you have eternal matters to pursue.

2. (26-30) Example and arguments against worry.

"Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, *will He* not much more *clothe* you, O you of little faith?"

a. **Look at the birds of the air...your heavenly Father feeds them:** God provides for the birds, and He takes care of them. Therefore, we should expect that God would take care of us.

i. Yet take careful note: the birds don't *worry*, but they do *work*. Birds don't just sit with open mouths, expecting God to fill them.

ii. "This argument presupposed a biblical cosmology without which faith makes no sense. God is so sovereign over the universe that even the feeding of a wren falls within his concern." (Carson)

b. **Are you not of more value than they:** The worry many people have over the material things of life is rooted in a low understanding of their **value** before God. They don't comprehend how much He loves and cares for them.

c. **Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature:** Worry accomplishes nothing; we can **add** nothing to our lives by worrying. There may be greater sins than worry, but there are none more self-defeating and useless.

i. **Can add:** The ancient Greek may mean *adding to life* instead of *adding to height*, but the thought is the same. Indeed, instead of *adding* to our life, we can actually harm ourselves through worry. Stress is one of the great contributors to disease and poor health.

d. **If God so clothes the grass of the field:** God even takes care of the **grass of the field**, so He will certainly take care of you. We are confident of the power and care of a loving heavenly Father.

i. **You of little faith:** " 'Little faith' is not a little fault; for it greatly wrongs the Lord, and sadly grieves the fretful mind. To think the Lord who clothes the lilies will leave his own children naked is shameful. O little faith, learn better manners!" (Spurgeon)

3. (31-32) You have a heavenly Father that knows your needs.

"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things."

a. **Therefore do not worry:** We are invited to know a freedom from the worry and anxiety that comes from undue concern about material things. We can reflect the same kind of heart that Matthew Henry showed when he said the following after being robbed:

Lord, I thank You:

That I have never been robbed before.

That although they took my money, they spared my life.

That although they took everything, it wasn't very much.

That it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed.

b. **For after all these things the Gentiles seek:** Jesus contrasted the life of those who do not know God and are separated from Him with those who do know God and receive His loving care. Those who know God should **seek** after other things.

4. (33) Summary: Put God's kingdom first - He will take care of these things!

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

a. **But seek first the kingdom of God:** This must be the rule of our life when ordering our priorities. Yet it is wrong to think that this is just another priority to fit onto our list of priorities - and to put at the top. Instead, in everything we do, we **seek first the kingdom of God**.

i. For example, we rarely have to choose between honoring God and loving our wives or being good workers. We honor God and **seek first the kingdom of God** by being good husbands and good workers.

ii. We should also remember this statement in its immediate context. Jesus reminds us that our physical well-being is not a worthy object to devote our lives unto. If you think it is worthy that your god is mammon, then your life is cursed with worry, and you live life too much like an animal, concerned mostly with physical needs.

iii. Jesus didn't just tell them to stop worrying; He told them to *replace* worry with a concern for the kingdom of God. A habit or a passion can only be given up for a greater habit or passion.

iv. "What this verse demands is, therefore, a commitment to find and to do the will of God, to ally oneself totally with his purpose. And this commitment must come *first*." (France)

b. **And all these things shall be added to you:** If you put God's kingdom first, and do not think that your physical well-being is a worthy object to live your life for, you then may enjoy **all these things**. He promises heavenly treasure, rest in divine provision, and fulfillment of God's highest purpose for man - fellowship with Him, and being part of His kingdom.

i. This choice - to **seek first the kingdom of God** - is the fundamental choice everyone makes when they first

repent and are converted. Yet every day after that, our Christian life will either reinforce that decision or deny it.

5. (34) A conclusion with common sense.

"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

a. **Do not worry about tomorrow:** If you *must* worry, worry only for the things of today. Most of our worry is over things that we have absolutely no control over anyway, and is therefore foolish as well as harmful.

b. **Sufficient for the day is its own trouble:** Jesus reminds us of the importance of living for the present **day**. It isn't wrong to remember the past or plan for the future; to some degree both of those are good. Yet it is easy to become too focused on either the past or the future and to let **the day** and **its own trouble** be ignored. God wants us to remember the past, plan for the future, but live in the present.