

## **Putting God First Study**

Lesson 4: God First or Self First?

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A Bible Study Series of  
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**INTRODUCTION:** Have you ever heard someone misquote the Bible by saying, “Money is the root of all evil.” The phrase is found in 1 Timothy 6:10 and actually reads, “For the LOVE of money is the root of all kinds of evil. So often this verse has been taken out of the context for which it was written. In context, we find that Paul was writing to a young pastor named Timothy and reminding him about the contentment and satisfaction we should find in life. Additionally, Paul taught that the Word and ministry are not to be used as tools for riches. Rather, they are to be used to pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness (1 Timothy 6:11).

Whether the Christian ministry is our vocation and how we make a living or not, one idea is true: Money is not our master. Money is a tool. When used correctly and to God’s glory the tool of money may or may not bring us wealth. Those who place their priority on money instead of God will soon find that money does not love them back. The following lesson was written to challenge us to analyze who or what is our main love. By the end of this lesson, each of us will be able to determine if we truly are in love with Jesus or are we in *like* with Him. Enjoy the lesson.



Key Verses; Mark 10:17-22 and Matthew 6:33

<sup>17</sup> As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” <sup>18</sup> “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. <sup>19</sup> You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.’ <sup>20</sup> “Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.” <sup>21</sup> Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” <sup>22</sup> At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad because he had great wealth.

Matthew 6:33

<sup>33</sup> “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well.”

## Background of Text:

During the third year of Jesus' ministry, Mark records the vast number of people who wanted to see and hear Jesus' teaching. Chapter 10 begins with the explanation that believers and nonbelievers sought Jesus. In all instances, Jesus used the opportunity to teach with the hopes of listeners accepting His message about the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus wanted people to know how to gain access to eternal life and how to live as followers of God here on earth. These short snippets of teaching allow readers to step into the scenes of Jesus' daily life. Here in Mark, we see the crowds and then learn of one man who had an encounter with Jesus.

### I. The Richness of the Young Ruler—Mark 10:17-22

**<sup>17</sup> As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”**

The young man knew about Jesus, and even paid homage to Him when he fell on his knees as he approached. If we assume the young man genuinely wanted to attain a place in heaven, we can hear the desperation of his question. “How can I get to heaven?” When Jesus answers, we learn of the first struggle issue of the young man. He replies to Jesus about his adherence to the commandments. With pride (richness of self), we hear the checklist of actions he did daily. Yet, the challenge had nothing to do with his behavior toward others.

**<sup>19</sup> You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.’ <sup>20</sup> “Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.”**



The commandments which Jesus quoted are not the first commandments. The first commandment of Exodus 20:3 is that there is to be no other God before Jehovah. This commandment comes after a reminder of God's relationship toward the Israelites. He was the one who took them out of Egypt by defeating Pharaoh, brought them through the Red Sea, cared for them in the wilderness despite their disobedience, and brought them into their land which fulfilled the promise given to Abraham. Jesus did not challenge the man's ability to act good towards others (the commandments Jesus highlighted). Jesus challenged the young

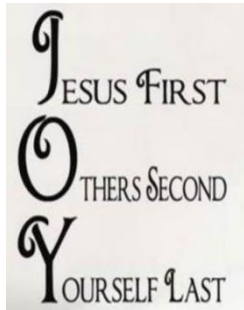
man's relationship with God. The man was rich in his deeds but poor in his love of God. This was evidenced by his reluctance to put God over possessions. His wealth had become his god.

- What treasures do you place before a relationship with God?
- What do you possess that would be hard to give up if Jesus asked?

**<sup>21</sup> Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”<sup>22</sup> At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.**

If one were to check the young ruler's bank account, they would see he was rich financially. Unfortunately, he was poor spiritually and made a poor choice by leaving Jesus. He did not even accomplish his original objective. He walked away from the very person who could give him the right to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.

- What treasures do you own that can be used for God's kingdom?
- How will your treasure lead others to Christ?



You and I invest in or store up treasures in heaven when we make daily choices that benefit God's kingdom. At times we also may benefit from those choices, however, the motivation is not primarily for our attainment of earthly riches. The correct order of our lives is God first and everything else after Him. Even our charitable deeds must come from a love of God or we will use them in prideful ways which put us first. Jesus lovingly wants us to understand nothing on earth is worth the place of our soul. Heavenly investments and the currency of Heaven never lose value. They are actions done out of love and loyalty to God first.

- What are some ways that you can increase your Heavenly bank account?

## II. Getting the Right Order—Matthew 6:33

**<sup>33</sup> “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well.”**

Matthew records these all too familiar words as a phrase which solves a problem that Jesus taught. Similar to the Rich Young Ruler of Mark 10, we all worry. Our concerns are for our families, future, finances, and other daily issues. None of these worries or concerns create a problem for us. However, when our worries override our worship, witness, and work for the Lord we have ordered our lives incorrectly.

To seek first the kingdom of God means prioritizing the love of God over unnecessary and extreme worry about self. The attainment of more financial resources is not inherently wrong. Saving money is not wrong. Owning an affordable home is not wrong. Needing to eat and have clothing are not sins. All of these things are fine until they become distractors from the spiritual purposes of God. Our worries and concerns become idols if and when they become the primary focus of our lives.

To have anxiety and unnecessary worry can pull our attention away from God. Remember the Rich Young Ruler? He was worried about things to the point where he walked away from eternal safety. Jesus taught that our needs are already at the forefront of God’s mind. God already knows what we need (Matthew 6: 32). Therefore, we can confidently devote ourselves to Him because His eye is on the minute creatures of this world (sparrows) and His eye is on the crowning glory of creation (us).



- How can you restructure the way you approach matters of life to ensure that God is always first?

Conclusion: Jesus embodied God-first thinking and behavior throughout his teaching and living. This was especially true on the cross. In Matthew 26: 36, Jesus asked The Father to remove the cup of responsibility and suffering from Him. We can understand Jesus’ anxiety over the last step of His purpose. However, we read in the final phrase of verse 36 that Jesus willingly put God first by saying “Not my will but thy will be done.” How can you follow Jesus’ example of putting God over self each day?