



Empowering People to Change the World

Seek the First Thing First

Matthew Ruppert

Title: Seek the First Thing First

Greeting:

Good morning everyone! If you don't know me, I am Matthew Ruppert, the children's pastor here at The Road! And I am honored to be with you and to have the privilege of sharing the message for today!

Today's message is titled "Seek the first thing first."
Before we begin, I would like to open in a word of prayer.

Prayer

Intro:

If you are not aware, Pastor Steve has written a new book entitled "Breakthrough Courage." This book challenges us as Christians to develop the habits and disciplines needed to empower us with courage in an age of fear.

He points out how God has a greater plan and purpose for our lives. One that will require great courage! Courage to face the challenges of life, but also courage to step out into the calling that God has for us! God desires to activate us to action, adventure, and impact, but it is going to require courage!

And I love how he starts the book. The first chapter is about laying a foundation. Understanding what is truly important. Knowing what is the number one priority.

The chapter is called *Seeking the First Things First*. As Christians, we can choose to seek a number of things!

- We can seek a life of pleasure allowing greasy grace to govern our thinking.
- We can seek a life of Christian ease where comfort and security are our top priority.

- We can seek a life of adventure, of influence, and making a difference.

But when we seek the first thing first, it informs every part of our being and changes the outcome of our lives. It aligns the focus of our lives.

This is a topic I am very passionate about, and I have seen it play out tremendously in my own life. So, I am excited to share with you today!

Passage:

So let's begin in the book of Matthew

Matthew 6:25-33

"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious 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? 26 Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? 28 And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

This passage is really well-spoken to the worrier. We worry about so many things.

- So many things related to selfish desires
- So many things related to our personal comfort or enjoyment
- But also legitimate stresses in life that want to weigh us down: work, school, our children, our futures...

And God is saying “Stop worrying. Stop being fearful about the future. I know you need all those things. Seek me first. I will provide all that you need.”

This passage was something I began to build my life on as a young adult.

- Story of my first crush
 - she was like Mary Poppins, simply perfect in every way
 - matching clothes

In my immaturity, I remember coming to the Lord with pages of my journal filled with my declarations of love. I remember asking, is this going to work out, is this Your will? Should I feel so worried or stressed about this? In that questioning, he led me to this passage.

“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

In that moment, I decided to lay this down. To stop striving for it and to put it in God’s hands. It was then that I had peace. It turns out that God has someone better in mind for me, and now I could not be happier.

For many of us, we need to stop worrying about all the factors of life, (clothes, finances, relationships,) and instead remember that if we seek God first, and His kingdom, His righteousness, all these things will be added to us.

What does it mean to Seek first the Kingdom of God?

Now, let's take a closer look at what it means to seek the Kingdom first. Steve outlines this so well in the book, citing that the Kingdom of God is a central theme of the New Testament.

- Jesus spoke on it more than 100 times in His life.
- He spoke about the Kingdom of God extensively through the famous Sermon on the Mount
- His Parables point to the Kingdom of God.

Yet, people throughout history have had a hard time defining it. And oddly enough, prior to a book study that our staff did several months ago, I wouldn't have been able to define the Kingdom of God.

But the definition that Pastor Steve uses is this:

The Kingdom of God is the place where Jesus Christ has power, dominion, and rulership.

Seeking the Kingdom first is allowing God to rule and reign over every element of our lives! So, what does that look like for us today?

1. Seeking the Kingdom is seeking God's will over our own comfort.

- *Luke 9:23-24: "And he said to all, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.'" (ESV)*

2. His righteousness over our own pleasure.

- *Romans 14:17: "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." (ESV)*

In The Road Kid's ministry, we do the ABCs of salvation every week.

- A - Admit that you are a sinner
- B - Believe in Jesus
- C - Confess and choose. Confess your sins and choose Jesus to be the Lord of your life.

It's one thing to confess, but it's another thing to *choose* for Jesus to be the King of our lives.

3. Replication

Pastor Steve uses the example of DNA of the Kingdom. How DNA is intended to replicate cells, duplicating to replace faulty cells and keep our bodies strong and healthy.

When we align ourselves with the DNA of the Kingdom: relationship with God and fulfilling the greatest command...

Matthew 22:37-39 "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

We begin to allow the rule and reign of God to translate into our families, our workplaces, our friend groups, and our neighborhoods. Even our church! And the Kingdom of God begins to replicate. Just like DNA.

Don't Lay up for yourself treasures on Earth

But what about my dreams??

Now here is the thing: I am an inspirational person, and I want for myself to accomplish great things in life, as well as my children and those under my influence. We live in the most opportunistic time in history, able to make a difference, to grow wealth, to use the tools we have to impact others. But sometimes we can get lost in all of the striving. So I often have asked myself, what is the balance? Is there a place for striving and working towards something? A place for dreaming for very tangible things?

Especially for this generation! We are achievers and builders. We want to develop something and chase our dreams. They want more than what they have seen in previous generations. They want to own big things, want to be entrepreneurs, expand and grow their wealth.

We live in a culture where there is an abundance of motivational speakers. They tell us that we can achieve our dreams, that we can push past our perceived boundaries and accomplish the unthinkable. We can get the house of our dreams, the passive income of our dreams. How we can shed the bonds of the 9-to-5 and live a life of extravagance and excitement.

They are pursuing methods and strategies to get there! And a lot of them have value and will provide some form of improvement. But the question arises: **What is all this striving really for?** What is the ultimate purpose behind our success, our growth, our achievements? Is it just for comfort, pleasure, or security?

Jesus speaks directly to this tension. He doesn't say that ambition, wealth, or hard work are wrong, but He does give us a warning.

In the passage proceeding Matthew 6:25, it talks about laying up treasures in heaven.

Matthew 6:19-24

19 "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. 22 "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, 23 but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

24 "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money

So, the real question is: **Where is your treasure?** If we pour our time, energy, and passion into things that won't last, what will we have to show for it in eternity?

Rather, if we choose to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness... We are seeking His rule and reign over our lives, His will over our comfort, and His righteousness over our pleasure. It informs our approach to striving and success.

No longer are we chasing achievement just for self-satisfaction, comfort, or pleasure. Instead, we begin to see our success as a tool for the Kingdom of God. A means for glorifying God.

We hear it all the time—stories of people who have achieved everything they ever wanted, only to find themselves feeling empty and unfulfilled because success apart from God never truly satisfies. But success that is surrendered to God's Kingdom has **eternal impact**.

My Story:

Several years ago, I began a journey of facing my shame. As I began to do this and surround myself with some blood-stained allies, I began to experience freedom like never before. As my soul received healing, my heart, mind, soul, and body began to align with God's will for my life.

I was not the dreamer, that was my wife.

- VBS writing example
- Mission trips example

I began having the most bizarre dreams and ambitions. Some big spiritual ones, others (what could appear as) very carnal ones.

- Becoming a millionaire
- Getting my pilot's license
- Becoming an extreme adventurer traveling all over the world

And I could have totally gone full fledge in perusing any one of them.

But I thank God that my foundation was right. That I was focused on seeking the first things first. Seeing first the Kingdom of God. Because of that, when I would have these dreams, I always knew they were secondary to my number one calling: Seeking God's Kingdom first.

But I didn't magically have this epiphany myself. It was something that was instilled in me from childhood. My parents, my Sunday school teachers (which happened to be my oldest brother and his wife... it was a large family in a small church), they didn't just talk about their faith, they lived it.

My Past Parental discipleship

- Prayer discipleship from my parents - I had the benefit of seeing answered prayer from a child. Jonathan, chairs for the church, my siblings and their future wives
- Bible Reading - as a child, I couldn't wait to learn how to read so I could read my own Bible. I remember coming to my parents so excited that I had read a "whole lot of the Bible" and I highlighted all that I had read.
- Worship - Dad told us to practice just 10 minutes a day. Worship services as a child, feeling the presence of God.

Summit International School of Ministry

Performance vs. Resting in God's Grace. It was at Summit that I dug into the New Covenant; that it is by grace we have been saved, not by works. That no amount of performance could ever earn me the righteousness of God—it was His free gift to me, and that is the place from which we are called to serve: not out of pressure to achieve, but out of gratitude and surrender.

This is what ultimately grounded me. It shaped my perspective on success, on calling, and on what truly matters in life. Because at the end of the day, I could chase every ambition, build wealth, and accomplish great things—or I could live a quiet, simple life. But if I wasn't seeking **the Kingdom of God first**, none of it would truly matter. Because only what is built on Christ will last.

Our mission in The Road Kids is:

"Partnering with parents to disciple children who are deeply rooted in the truths of God's word and walk boldly in the power of the Holy Spirit."

It's no accident that our mission starts with grounding kids in the truths of God's Word. Because **walking boldly in the power of the Holy Spirit**—while amazing and empowering—is **subjective** if it's not built on a firm foundation. We could mistakenly raise a generation that is passionately pursuing success, achievement, and influence "for God," but if they never get the foundation right—if they aren't rooted in the unshakable truths of

Scripture—they will be like the seed that grows in shallow soil, easily uprooted when the challenges of life come.

It's like building a house on sand instead of solid rock. Without the foundation of God's Word, everything they build—whether it's spiritual or worldly—can collapse when tested. But with that solid foundation, they'll know what truly matters: the Kingdom of God. They will be equipped not just to chase after success, but to seek first His Kingdom and live lives that honor God and impact others for eternity.

How do we seek the first thing first?

So how do we seek the first thing first? It's actually pretty simple. We have to recalibrate our minds to thinking Kingdom instead of self...

That is accomplished by developing daily habits of seeking God. Of putting Him as number one in our lives. Pastor Steve calls it PBJ. Prayer Bible Journal.

As we practice meditating and consuming God's Word, it renews our mind, it feeds our soul, it develops character. And through the practice of listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit, He leads and guides; directs us into a life of full and complete surrender.

This is something that is emphasized every week through our MCs and teachers in the Road Kids. In fact, I wanted to show you just a few pictures of this actually taking place.

Pictures of Kid's PBJ

In fact, my nephew, who is just 6 years old, told me that it was one of his favorite parts of our lesson that day! He commented on the calm music and how it felt relaxing!

We have to get this right, men and women. We have to model this in our homes. Allowing them to see in us a passion for the Kingdom of God that supersedes any material accomplishment. They need to see in us that every success achieved is a new tool or platform to tell of the wonders of God. To proclaim His greatness to the world.

We need to invest in the next generation through service. Perhaps in your child's school, or prayerfully in your children's ministry. Being exemplary leaders to them, inspiring children to make God the true ruler and Lord of their lives!

Closing:

Let me close with a quote from Steve's Book:

"When you make the Kingdom of God your primary, God begins to move in power in every area of your life. If you aim for the highest possible good, the things you need to survive and thrive will be close at hand."

We've talked a lot today about **seeking first the Kingdom of God**—about making God the priority in our lives and allowing His rule and reign to shape everything we do. But now, it's time for us to take action. It's easy to get caught up in the pressures of life. The striving for success. The endless pursuit of comfort. But none of that has eternal value unless it's rooted in God's Kingdom. So, I challenge you this morning... **What are you seeking?** Where is your treasure? Is it on the fleeting things of this world, or are you laying it up in heaven, where it will last for eternity?

Today, I encourage us all—myself included—to commit again to **seek first His Kingdom**. Let this be the driving force behind everything we do. Let's not just talk about it but live it out together.

- Because when we seek God first, everything else falls into its proper place.
- When we seek first the Kingdom, God's passions become our own
- When we seek first the Kingdom, His divine wisdom informs our decisions.
- When we seek first the Kingdom, His power becomes our resource.
- When we seek first the Kingdom, success becomes a tool for eternal impact.

Let's seek the first thing first, putting in the work to create daily habits of seeking God, and together, we can change the world.