

## **First Things First**

No. 184

### **Introduction.**

- I. Some years ago Abilene Christian University celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. At that time they held a contest to find a motto that would sum up its goals and accomplishments for the first 50 years. The motto chosen was, “First Things First For Fifty Years.” Later this motto was changed to “First Things First Forever.” What a splendid motto! Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we could each say that about our lives? “First Things First Forever.”
- II. For the next few minutes, I would like to speak on the theme, “First Things First.” This is one of the great needs of our age. Too many times we put secondary things first and neglect the most important things of life.
- III. Jesus emphasized the importance of putting “first things first.”
  - A. He looked out on the anxious and troubled multitude and said. (Matt. 6:25-34).

**25 "For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing?  
26 "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? 27 "And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life's span? 28 "And why are you anxious about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, 29 yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these. 30 "But if God so arrays the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more do so for you, O men of little faith? 31 "Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?'  
32 "For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. 34 "Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.**

- B. Jesus urged us to always put “first things first” in our lives. Let us consider four areas in which it is important to put “first things first.”
- I. **“First Things First” In The Church** - In the first place we must put “first things first” in the church.
  - A. Would the fire department be of value if it did not put out fires? Would the hospital be of value if it did not help save lives?
  - B. **Members of the church need to frequently ask the question, “Why does the church exist? Why did God establish the church? What is its mission?”**

1. Many people have thought the church exists primarily to satisfy the social needs of men. Though the church may satisfy some social needs, it does not exist mainly for that purpose.

2. **The church is a soul-saving institution.**

- a. The church exists to teach God’s word so that souls can be saved. (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15, 16).
- b. In these verses we find that the church is to be busy preaching, propagating the truth and winnings souls to Christ. Yet, if the church is not busy saving souls, it has lost its purpose for being.
- c. If we are not careful we can get so involved in “busy work” and “keeping house for the Lord” that we lose sight of the church purpose and put forth little effort to save souls.

C. **Once an elderly lady was being shown through one of the magnificent Cathedrals in Europe.** Her guide showed he all its great treasures and told her its thrilling history, but she did not seem too impressed. His description became more eloquent, but finally she stopped him and asked this question, “But how many people have been saved here lately?”

- 1. **This is really a soul-searching question!** This is a question that should stir and haunt our souls!
- 2. How many people have been saved here lately? Are we putting “first things first”? Are we putting the saving of souls above every consideration?

D. **A lady was once talking to a friend** of hers who claimed to be a Christian . She said, “I’ll tell you why I am a doubter. I was in a sewing group last week. Forty ladies were present and every one a church member except myself. We were there 3 hours. We talked of everything, even down to crazy patchwork, but not a word about Jesus. Do you suppose I can believe that He is precious to them, when they never say anything about Him?”

- 1. I wonder if our friends and neighbors are asking the same question? Are they skeptical because we are not speaking out for Christ?
- 2. Oh, how we need to put first things first! Oh, how we need to love the lost souls of men. The world is going to hell and so will we unless we put first things first.

3. An unknown author has written these provocative lines that Christian should meditate upon.

You talk about your business, Your bonds and stocks and gold; And in all worldly matters You are so brave and bold. But why are you so silent About salvation’s plan? Why don’t you speak for Jesus, And speak out like a man?	You talk about the weather, And the crops of corn and wheat; You speak of friends and neighbors That pass along the street; You call yourself a Christian, And like the Gospel Plan - Then why not speak for Jesus And speak out like a man?	Are you ashamed of Jesus And the story of the cross, That you lower His pure banner And let it suffer loss?  Have you forgot His suffering? Did He die for you in vain? If not, then live and speak for Jesus, And speak out like a man.
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II. **“First Things First” In Business** - In the second place, we must put “first things first” in business.

A. **During a gospel meeting a woman came forward** and wrote these words on her response card.

**“I am entering business and I need the prayers of the church that I many never let business or anything else keep me from doing my duty to the Lord.”**

1. This woman was really putting “first things first.”
2. Too many people in her position would say, “Goodbye church - from here on I will be busy,” but this woman prayed that God would help her never to neglect the church.

B. We need more people like her. We need people who will put the kingdom of God before the dollar.

1. The **Lord** said. (Matt. 6:33).
2. The Lord promises that if we will seek first the kingdom of God that God will see that we have all the things we need for our existence. Unfortunately many of us go at it in reverse. We neglect the kingdom of God to procure our material needs when the Lord says that He will give us these things if we will seek the kingdom first.

III. **“First Things First” In The Home** - In the third place, we must put “first things first” in the home.

A. **Why does the home exist?** What is its purpose for being? Can it be that here, too, we have gotten so involved in the mechanical processes of providing a house and groceries that we have forgotten why the home was established.

1. The home was not established to give man an **opportunity to work**; that, man can do without the home.
2. Neither was it established **so that the woman could keep the house** in perfect order; that, woman can do without being part of a family.

B. The home was established for the happiness of man and so that children could be raised and trained for an eternal inheritance with God!

1. The first few chapters of the book of Genesis tell us about the establishment of the first home. After God created Eve for Adam, He said. (Gen. 2:24).
2. He said to the first couple. (Gen. 1:28).
3. Later **Solomon** said to parents. (Prov. 22:6).
4. **Paul** said. (Eph. 6:4).
5. These verses from God’s word show that a major purpose of the home is to raise and mold children in the right way.
  - a. This being true, we need to stop from time to time to ask ourselves whether or not we are really putting “first things first” in the home.
  - b. Do we take the time to love and train and teach and play with our children? Do we let outside activities crowd out the time we spend in the home? Are we more concerned about keeping a house or making a dollar than we are in making a home?

c. May God help us to fulfill our God given task by raising children in His image!

IV. **“First Things First” In Our Personal Lives** - In the fourth place, we should put “first things first” in our personal lives.

**A. Consider the use of our money.**

1. Think of how much we spend on the **bread for the stomach** and how little we spend on the bread of life.
2. Think of how much we spend on **clothing for our physical bodies** and how little we spend that the world may put on the robes of righteousness.
3. Think of how much we spend to **shelter us from the storms of this life** and how little we spend to shelter us from the storms of eternity.
4. Think of how much we spend for **entertainment to make us laugh here** and how little we spend to give us eternal joy.

**B. Consider also the use of our time.**

1. Think about how much time we spend **reading the newspaper and watching TV** and how little time we spend reading the Bible?
2. Think about how much time we spend talking about **sports and the weather** and how little time about souls.
3. Think about how time we spend working self and how little time working for others and especially for the Lord!

C. Indeed we often find ourselves majoring in minor or secondary things.

**Conclusion.**

**I. And now I would like for each one to do some serious thinking about our souls.**

- A. Are we putting “first things first” if we have insured our house, our cars, our furniture, our life, but not our souls?
- B. There are some people who have insured about everything in this world but their souls. They are neglecting to insure the most precious and most important thing in all the world. (Matt. 16:26).

III. Christians resolve to put “first things first forever”. And if you are not a Christian, why not put “first things first” by stepping out into the aisle and give your life to Christ? Come now as we stand and sing!

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