

Spiritual Growth Lessons from Christian Ambassadors

Lesson 10, May, 2000

“Seek First the Kingdom of God”

by Sharon K. Griffiee

Matthew 6:30-33 (KJV) - Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

In these verses from Matthew, Jesus describes two different groups of people. One group is called the Gentiles or heathens. These are people who do not know God, but who spend all their time seeking after ‘things’. Because of their anxiety over the physical, material things of the world, they are constantly worried about the unknown tomorrow. The questions they ask are filled with fear, “What are we going to eat? Where are we going to get the money to buy the clothes we need?”

Jesus warns his followers, the second group, not to get caught up in and consumed by the same worries as the Gentiles. If they were to act in the same manner, they would be demonstrating to the world that they are a people of little faith.

Notice that Jesus does not suggest, he **commands** them not to go chasing after physical things, but to put their trust in him to meet their needs. Those who are true followers of Jesus Christ are people of faith, who live by the daily assurance that God is the only source of supply they will ever need. It is His Kingdom, and it is His righteousness that we should be pursuing. Followers have already settled it in their heart that there is no real or lasting security to be found in the pursuit of things.

Pay close attention to the following scenario. A Gentile (heathen) meets a follower of Jesus Christ who is living by faith. The heathen begins to eyeball the material things God has blessed the Christian with. Without any thought of seeking spiritual answers to learn how they could achieve similar success in their own life, the sin of greed begins to surface. Desiring

in their heart things from the Kingdom of God, they set their course and aggressively make their move.

There is only one problem in the above scenario, and it’s a big one! Those who seek the Kingdom of God for the purpose of obtaining physical blessings, are seeking the Kingdom of God for all the wrong reasons. Such people are destined to fall flat on their face.

When Alan and I lived in Austin, Texas, a man started coming to the church we attended. From the moment he entered the building everyone knew of his presence. He came scuffling through the door deliberately making noise. Using his cane for the legally blind, he roughly made his way down the center aisle of the church, banging his cane against every pew until he reached the front row. This behavior was repeated every time he came to church.

It became evident from many of his actions that he wasn’t truly blind. We found out from social services, while seeking help for him, that he was known by many organizations in Austin as a **malingering** (one who fakes illness or other incapacity in order to avoid duty or work). The Bible uses the word **slug-gard**, which is another word for similar behavior.

Proverbs 26:15 (NIV) - The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he is too lazy to bring it back to his mouth.

In the weeks he went to church, this man fed off of the kind-hearted generosity of the members. Little by little, through manipulations and demands, he managed to get many of the things he wanted. In due time, when everyone in the church learned he was only **pretending** to be blind, the giving of things tapered off.

He wasn’t there seeking to worship the Lord Jesus. He was there seeking the things he could get from the members. Because of his unwillingness to open his heart and seek God’s most precious gift, he was left with no other choice than to move on to his next victims. A person who seeks the physical things of the Kingdom of God for their own selfish interests,

is completely missing out on what the spiritual blessings of the Kingdom of God are all about.

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

Anyone who tries to take the things of the Kingdom of God by force, will never appreciate nor enjoy the spiritual benefits of His Kingdom. Instead of a heart filled with righteousness, peace, and joy; their heart would be filled with an unsatisfied hunger to attain more things! The sadness about the man who pretended to be blind, is that his heart had turned completely cold. He cared nothing about the giver of the gifts. That is what happens when someone shuts God out of their life, things become more important than their relationship with people. Unless a person's heart has changed, they will abuse every blessing God gives to them.

There is only one way to enter the Kingdom of God and that is through faith in Jesus Christ. Because Jesus is the King, an unbeliever can't come into His Kingdom through the back door, demanding the physical things of the Kingdom. That is the same as stealing! Anyone who approaches a Christian for the sole purpose of living off of them, has never received in their heart the message of salvation. The message of salvation is this; Jesus didn't die on the cross to satisfy our physical hunger, he died on the cross to satisfy our spiritual hunger!

Matthew 5:6 (NIV) - *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.*

There is an entrance fee into the Kingdom of God. That entrance fee is **righteousness**. There is a Bible truth found in *I Corinthians 6:9 (KJV)* which says, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?"

Following God begins with a desire, a craving to be righteous, as he is righteous. To follow Jesus you must deny yourself! To think you can live as you please and still enter the Kingdom of God is a deceptive lie of Satan. If you want to be a true follower of Jesus Christ, a Christian in every right, you must first set your affection on things above.

Colossians 3:1-2 (KJV) - *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*

Romans 8:32 (KJV) - *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

Jesus promises that when we seek the Kingdom of God first, (its principles, its lifestyle, its Gospel), then the tools to obtain all other necessary things in life will be given to us as well.



Questions for personal or group study:

1. What were the Gentiles seeking that Jesus warned against?
2. How do we obtain a heart filled with righteousness, peace, and joy?
3. Does God want us to avoid having or enjoying the physical things of this world? (see Deuteronomy 28:9-14)
4. What type of person abuses every blessing God gives them?
5. Why does denying self bring Spiritual Blessings from God?
6. What word does the Bible use for someone who is too lazy to work?
7. What does Jesus promise us when we seek the Kingdom of God first?
8. How does it affect our relationship with others when we put our own interests first?

