

Putting God First – NCF – 01/07/18

- How do these Scriptures encourage me to put God first?
- Why is it sometimes tricky to put God first?
- What practical steps can I take this week to put God first?
- How much of this is a work of God and much is an attitude I need to work on myself and with others?

I'm a mystery to myself, for I want to do what is right, but end up doing what my moral instincts condemn. And if my behaviour is not in line with my desire, my conscience still confirms the excellence of the law. And now I realize that it is no longer my true self doing it, but the unwelcome intruder of sin in my humanity. For I know that nothing good lives within the flesh of my fallen humanity. The longings to do what is right are within me, but will-power is not enough to accomplish it. My lofty desires to do what is good are dashed when I do the things I want to avoid. So, if my behaviour contradicts my desires to do good, I must conclude that it's not my true identity doing it, but the unwelcome intruder of sin *hindering me from being who I really am*.

Through my experience of this principle, I discover that even when I want to do good, evil is ready to sabotage me. Truly, deep within my true identity, I love to do what pleases God. But I discern another power operating in my humanity, waging a war against the moral principles of my conscience and bringing me into captivity as a prisoner to the “law” of sin—this unwelcome intruder in my humanity. What an agonizing situation I am in! So, who has the power to rescue this miserable man from the unwelcome intruder of sin and death? I give all my thanks to God, for his mighty power has finally provided a way out through our Lord Jesus, the Anointed One! So, if left to myself, the flesh is aligned with the law of sin, but now my renewed mind is fixed on and submitted to God's righteous principles.

Romans 7:15-25 [*The Passion Translation*]

He must increase, but I must decrease. [He must grow more prominent; I must grow less so.]

John 3:30 [*Amplified*]

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“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

Matthew 11:28-30 [*The Message*]

“Listen, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today.

Deuteronomy 6: 4-6 [*NLT*]

As a deer pants for flowing streams,
so pants my soul for you, O God.
My soul thirsts for God,
for the living God.

When shall I come and appear before God?

Psalms 42:1,2 [*ESV*]

I am the vine itself, you are the branches. It is the man who shares my life and whose life I share who proves fruitful. For the plain fact is that apart from me you can do nothing at all.

John 15:5 [*Phillips NT*]

So, since we stand surrounded by *all those who have gone before*, an enormous cloud of witnesses, let us drop every extra weight, every sin that clings to us *and slackens our pace*, and let us run with endurance the long race set before us.

Now stay focused on Jesus, who designed and perfected our faith. He endured the cross and ignored the shame *of that death* because He focused on the joy that was set before Him; and now He is seated beside God on the throne, *a place of honour*.

Consider *the life* of the One who endured such *personal attacks and* hostility from sinners so that you will not grow weary or lose heart.

Hebrews 12:1-3 [*The Voice*]

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