

LIVING
IT OUT



**DAILY
BIBLE
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

Who's On First? – Blessed

January 11, 2021

“Is God first?”

That is the question Lead Pastor Ben Snyder asked during his weekend message. The question struck me harder than I expected. I am a faithful follower of Christ. I make time for prayer and Scripture every morning (well, almost). At work, I get to see the way God is using my gifts to make a difference, and outside of work, I have authentic, life-giving relationships where I can feel God working in my life and in the lives of my friends. I joyfully give God a lot of my time and energy.

But lately, I haven't been giving *my first* to God—and that makes a difference. I've been giving the first of my thoughts, the focus of my attention, to the things that are wrong in my life and how I can fix them. (Spoiler alert: I can't.)

Ben talked about the *Principle of First*: what you do first matters. We all know this is true—ever start something off on the wrong foot, and the rest of it seems to go downhill from there? The bottom line for the week is that we experience God's best when we give him our first.

God is, by nature, first. He is preeminent: existing before anything else, more knowledgeable and powerful than everything else. It only makes sense to put him first—when you do, you're submitting to the natural order of the world, as he designed it, and it's going to help the rest of your life fall into order.

However, if you're not trusting God by putting him first, the alternative is resisting his order and doing things your own way. Speaking as someone who's tried to do things my own way many times, it doesn't work out well. I've been giving God my time, thoughts, and energy—but only after I've used them to try to fix things I'm not able to fix. I'm giving to him, but I've only been giving him my seconds.

God loves you. He wants the best for you—*his* best for you, which doesn't always look the way we expect it to. However, if we want to receive *his* best, we must start by giving God our first and putting him first in our lives. For me, that means focusing on him and giving my problems to him *before* I try to solve them.

Over the next few days we are going to look at ways we can put God first in our lives and live out this principle.

Questions:

What does giving God your first and putting him first in your life look like right now? Are you putting him first?

Next Steps:

Look at where you invest your resources: your time, money, energy, thoughts, etc., to help determine what you're putting first. Then, consider what it would mean to put God first in those areas, and start living that out. It's OK if you don't do it perfectly at first—reordering our lives according to what God wants for us can be challenging. Be patient, but don't give up.

[21 Days of Prayer:](#)

Day 8 Focus - Broken Before Him ([Psalms 51:17](#))

Dear God, I have missed the mark of righteousness many times. Yet while I was still separated from you, you loved me and sent your Son to die for me. Thank you, Lord. Today, I offer my broken spirit to you, for you alone make it whole. I come to you in repentance, knowing I need you. Heal me, God, and teach my heart to break for what breaks yours. In your Son's name, I pray.

[Today's Parent Prayer](#)

This post was written by Payton Lechner, a regular contributor and editor of the LivingItOut.

Give God the First of Your Day - Blessed

January 12, 2021

As a mother of five children ranging in age from 9 down to 2, I never get enough sleep. Lately, my charming 2-year-old has taken to visiting me at 3:30 in the morning. If I'm lucky, she goes right to sleep, and I transport her to another sleeping surface. If I'm not lucky, she kicks me for an hour or (this is a new special thing she does) pinches my nose and pulls on my ear until I lose it.

Sleep is a precious commodity, but so is my quiet time each morning before said 2-year-old and the rest of the gang tumble out of their rooms to loudly greet the day. When I had tiny babies, every moment of sleep was absolutely necessary, but now that my children are a little older, my relationship with God needs to come first for me to even hope to love my family the way I should.

The gospel of Mark recounts an example of how important Jesus, the Son of God, viewed his time with his Father. Let me set the stage: In the two months leading up to this event, Jesus had been baptized, fasted for 40 days, been tempted by Satan, watched his cousin John be thrown in prison, and had begun his ministry through teaching and healing.

Mark 1:35

Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to an isolated place to pray.

Jesus was probably exhausted. He was probably hungry. After his busy day of preaching and healing, he probably would have loved to wake up and been served breakfast in bed by his hostess, Peter's mother-in-law whom he had miraculously healed the previous day. However, he didn't wake up and groggily "pray" between dreams while laying in bed. He got up while it was dark and left the house. He went to an "isolated place." In the Greek language, that's the same word used to describe [the wilderness he entered to be tempted](#). He physically removed himself from all distraction to give God the first and best part of his day. If God's Son needs this time, how much more do we need it?

So what could this look like in your day? Personally, on a perfect day, I'll have a good 60 minutes before I have to engage with the rest of the world. I begin by reading Scripture (currently, I'm working through a Bible study on the book of John), and then I like to journal a little and pray. I have a couple other books I engage with, and when I'm finished with that, I'll send a short message to a dear

friend or scroll through Facebook for a few minutes before getting everyone breakfast.

What does it actually look like? Sometimes I do get my hour, but often it looks like reading a Psalm or Proverb and praying before I open my computer. Sometimes, my toddler is sitting on my lap trying to steal my pens while I'm writing. Sometimes, my 4-year-old is trying to dazzle me with her newly acquired balancing skills. Usually, it's not pretty or peaceful, but the act of offering my first to God helps me frame my perspective on the day.

By humbly inviting God into my chaos, I find that I can draw on his strength when I find the girls giving their toys a bath in the toilet. You don't need to have an elaborate Bible study that takes you through the original Greek version with a massive concordance out on the table—there is a place for that—but God will meet you right where you are if you invite him.

Questions:

What is the first thing you do when you wake up in the morning? How can you change that habit to allow God to have the first and best of your day?

Next Steps:

Ask God for the strength and discipline to offer your first moments to him and to help you see how time spent with him is never wasted and always blesses.

This week, make it a point to get out of bed, engage with the Bible, and say a short prayer before turning on your phone or computer to see what the world has to offer, you. Start small by giving God five minutes. As this becomes a habit, you will want more.

[21 Days of Prayer:](#)

Day 9 Focus - To Surrender to Him ([Romans 12:1](#))

Heavenly Father, thank you for all you have given me: all the time, resources, relationships, and abilities. I now give them back to you. I surrender it all. I am only a steward—it all belongs to you. God, guide my actions. Teach me to use what you have given me according to your will. Help me to listen for and obey your directions. May your will be done in me and through me.

[Today's Parent Prayer](#)

This post was written by Julie Mabus, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.

Closed on Sundays - Blessed

January 13, 2021

I am sure many of you can relate to this scenario. You're out and about getting errands done on a Sunday when your stomach reminds you that it's lunchtime and you need to eat. You say, "Let's go to Chick-fil-A. It's just around the corner, and their salads are fantastic." So, you make the drive over, pull into the parking lot, and suddenly remember, they're not open on Sundays! [Waaah, waaah, waaah, waaaaaaha.](#)

What's up with that? Well, Chick-fil-A is living out the principle of firsts. Since day one, founder Truett Cathy and his brother, Ben, decided to close their restaurants on Sundays.

Closing business on one of the biggest sales days of the week doesn't seem like a wise decision. This is supported by business experts who estimate Chick-fil-A loses close to \$1 billion per year by not opening on Sundays. That's a lot of money! However, even though the franchise closes its doors for one day, it makes just as much money as its competitors do in seven full days.

How is this possible? Truett Cathy wrote in his book [Eat Mor Chikin: Inspire More People](#), "I believe God honors our decision and sets before us unexpected opportunities to do greater work for Him because of our loyalty."

They experience GOD'S BEST because they give him their FIRST. In this example, Cathy set aside the first day of his week for God. I don't know about you but taking a day of rest is hard to do. We all have so much to accomplish and, seemingly, so little time, but God invites us to trust him and honor him by giving him our first day.

Exodus 20:8-11a

⁸ "Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ You have six days each week for your ordinary work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God.

Cathy also experienced God's best because he trusted that God would provide financially. Undoubtedly, he was aware of the money he was giving up by closing on Sundays, but he chose to honor God anyway.

We are also invited to trust God with our finances. Not just by giving up potential income but also by how we manage the money we do have. The basic truth is we can do six things with our money.

1. Spend it
2. Save/Invest it
3. Pay down debt
4. Pay taxes
5. Give it away
6. Return it to God

The only thing that determines the order of that list is what's most important to you. For many, the order reflects a "me first" attitude and places God somewhere down the list. God doesn't want to be last on our list, though—or even second. He desires to be first in our lives, and first is right where he should be.

Proverbs 3:9-10 (NIV)

⁹ Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; ¹⁰ then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.

Leviticus 27:30

"One-tenth of the produce of the land, whether grain from the fields or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord and must be set apart to him as holy."

Putting God first in our lives is not the road to our rewards—it is the reward. And the blessings we receive in turn are immeasurable.

Questions:

Do you find it hard to find a day of rest in your week? Why?

If you give your firsts, do you believe that God will bless the rest? Why or why not?

Next Steps:

Over a three-day period this week, keep a journal of how you spend your time,

hour by hour. Afterwards, evaluate what the use of your time tells you about your priorities? How should you reorder your days to place God first?

Use of our time and money is evidence of our true priorities, regardless of the words we say. In your estimation, over a single pay period, what percentage of your income do you spend, save, use to repay debts, use to pay taxes, give away, and return to God? This week, break down your spending from your past paycheck. How did your estimates line up with reality? What changes do you need to make in your budget to place God first?

[21 Days of Prayer:](#)

Day 10 Focus - Dependence on Him (Psalms 121:1-2)

Dear Lord, when things become difficult, I know you walk beside me. You will cross the desert with me and weather any storm with me. When things become unbearable, I know you will carry me to the other side. Today, I declare my dependence on you. Amen.

[Today's Parent Prayer](#)

This post was written by Ben Bockert, a regular contributor and editor of the LivingItOut.

First Thing First – Blessed

January 14, 2021

Shortly after I became a Christian, I jumped into the deep end! While going through Christianity 101 (a previous form of GrowthTrack), I learned that one of my spiritual gifts was intercession—praying for others. What?!? In my previous church experience, prayer was something the minister did for us on Sunday, so I was a little hesitant.

I signed up to attend a prayer seminar with a friend, and wow, were my eyes opened! We did an activity that sticks with me to this day because it was so painful. We were given a piece of paper. On one side of the page, we were instructed to write down all the things we did in a day in the order of their importance. On the other side, we were instructed to write down how much time we spent on each item during the day. Ouch!

While I said that God was the most important thing to me, I was not giving him the first part of my day in prayer. That time went to exercise! Whatever time I had after exercising was what I gave to God—he was getting leftovers! I decided to reverse that. I learned to schedule God into my calendar so that the time slot I devoted to him appeared busy, just in case another opportunity for that hour came up. I began to wake up three hours before I had to be anywhere so that I could spend time with God first, exercise second, and then prepare for the rest of my day.

I thank God almost every day that I am a morning person! I've even come to thank him that my husband is **not**, because I can guarantee 3+ hours by myself to sit with God and then allow his word to soak into me during my walking or biking exercise. This means that almost every night, I am in bed by 10 p.m. I love the morning time I spend with Jesus more than the (predictable) end of a movie!

I know—not everyone is a morning person. (Sorry!) But I thank God for this discipline in my life. He has blessed me over and over as I have put him first. As Gateway Church Pastor Robert Morris says, “When I give God the first part of my day, there is a notable difference in the rest of my day.” God gave his best, *Jesus*, for us before we had done anything to deserve it (as if we ever could). Never forget that!

Romans 5:8

But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

It takes faith to give our first: Faith that God will give you the energy to make it through your day with less sleep. Faith that when you offer your money as a tithe, he will bless the rest. Faith that when you put God first in your work, he will bless your efforts. Faith that his blessings will come in his way and in his time. As Lead Pastor Ben Snyder said, “The first gift we can give him in return (for what he has given us) is our trust.”

Questions:

What would it cost you to start your days with Jesus, to put him first? Will you commit to waking up with Jesus by setting your alarm five minutes earlier than normal and gradually increase your time over the next month or year? Or could you end your day five minutes earlier with the same purpose?

Is your trust in God or something else?

Next Steps:

On one side of a sheet of paper, create a column and order your daily activities from the most to the least important. On the other side, write down how much time you spend on each. Figure out how you can adjust your schedule to make the most important things a priority. Remember, what you do first matters.

[Join Ben every morning at 7:30](#) for prayer as we continue our 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting..

Read the LivingItOut every weekday.

[21 Days of Prayer:](#)

Day 11 Focus - To Love Fearlessly ([1 John 4:18-19](#))

Dear God, thank you for being a God of perfect love. Thank you for loving me first—before I accepted your salvation, before I even knew you, while I was still living in sin. Teach me to love as you love, without fear, without condemnation. Help me to offer grace to those around me, just as you first offered grace to me.

[Today's Parent Prayer](#)

This post was written by Lauri White, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.

Pray First - Blessed

January 15, 2021

In his weekend message, Lead Pastor Ben Snyder mentioned that another way we can give God our first is by praying first in all circumstances. For many, prayer is not a go-to throughout their day.

Unfortunately, we often make it out to be more complicated than it is. I most often do this when I have to pray in front of other people. But newer Christians often don't know where to begin. Should I prepare? Should I know specifically what I am praying about? Will people like what I am praying for? Will they be impressed by my prayers? Am I doing it right? Is God listening?

I'm not sure if these are questions that you ask when thinking about praying, but in this week's message, Ben makes the point that in all things, we should pray first. *Give it to God.*

How?

Prayers don't have to be long. They do not have to be fancy. There is no need to try to impress God or others with them. Simply put, prayer is you talking to God. It is a chance to connect with him and tell him what is going on in your life and how you feel about it.

By praying first, we are acknowledging our need for God and giving him his rightful place in our lives.

Philippians 4:6-7

⁶ Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.⁷ Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

We saw in Tuesday's LivingItOut that Jesus gave us a great example of praying first to start our days.

Mark 1:35

Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to an isolated place to pray.

Jesus would get up in the morning to get away from the crowd, from all the demands and productivity he had to get done for the day. He took time to first be present with God before he was present with anyone else. He didn't get up early to impress God but to connect with him.

The next time you have a difficult decision to make, when you get bad news, or when a difficult circumstance arises—pray first. When things are going well in your life, when something's worth celebrating, makes you joyful or excited, or is praise worthy—pray first. Before you step into a meeting, make a phone call, etc.—pray first. As you make prayer the first thing you do instead of your last resort, you will experience blessings from connecting with God more often.

Questions:

What keeps you from giving God trust, by praying first?

What doubtful question(s) do you have about praying first?

What does your prayer life look like and how can you give God your first?

Next Steps:

Take five minutes in the morning in silence and simply pray for God's will for the day and listen.

Checkout CedarCreek's [Personal Prayer Guide](#):

Join us in [21 Days of Prayer](#).

[21 Days of Prayer](#):

Day 12 Focus -To Live Confidently ([1 John 4:16-17](#))

Father in Heaven, thank you for loving me. I know I can trust you with all I am, and I am confident in the salvation you have given me. Help me to abide in you, to become more like your Son every day. Show me how to live like him, according to your will, working for your Kingdom in all I do. May my love for you and others be perfected through your love for me.

[Friday's Parent Prayer](#)

Day 13 Focus - To Live Obediently ([Philippians 2:12-13](#))

Heavenly Father, thank you for working in me. I am in awe of the changes you make possible in my heart and how you continue to grow me to love you and others more. I praise you for saving me, for making salvation possible through your Son. Help me to share this gift with others. Teach me to desire what you desire. I trust you to give me the power to do all you ask of me.

[Saturday's Parent Prayer](#)

Day 14 Focus - To Worship Him ([John 4:23](#))

Dear Father, I worship you with all my heart and soul. I want to sing your praises from early in the morning when the sun rises until late at night when the day has passed. I am so grateful to be allowed to be your child as your love washes over me again today.

[Sunday's Parent Prayer](#)

This post was written by Becca Roberts, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.