**Learn in Community**



Small Group Study

**Volume Overview**

**How do I live for God?**

“Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.” ([Matthew 6:33](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt6.33))

*Parents are constantly bombarded with information from their kids. One child might be describing something that happened to her at school, and another could be going on and on about a favorite video he just watched or created. Or they might just be demanding more snacks. Then, at times, those same kids simultaneously try to explain why they were fighting with each other and whose fault it was. In those moments, freshly armed with details, a parent can be left wondering,* “What do I do with all this information?”

*You may be feeling the same way. In society, we’re constantly bombarded with information and competing agendas. What should you do with all these facts and opinions? If you’re feeling that tension, this volume is for you! We’ll be looking at Scripture for answers as to how to assimilate this information as we ask the all-important question: How do I live for God?*

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| First time leading *Learn* for Adults? Check out the [Facilitator Guide](https://0b769b0ed3569ef9d18b-f88d8272f61086866d50d048b43ef630.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/sites/biblengagementproject/Listen_Facilitator_Guide.pdf). |

To access session content and videos from a computer, visit: [BibleEngagementProject.com/downloads](https://bibleengagementproject.com/downloads)

**Engage**

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| **QUESTION**  If you could only keep three possessions from your house (not including family members and pets), which would you choose and why? |

Today we’re talking about priorities of the heart. In *The Road to Character*, David Brooks writes about “résumé virtues” versus “eulogy virtues.” Résumé virtues are often professional, like your education level, skills, career, or wealth. Eulogy virtues are the things people will say about you at your funeral, like your kindness, friendship, or generosity. Brooks suggests there is a “perversity in our nature” that causes us to prioritize the wrong things. We know family matters more than our career, but we don’t always live like we know it. We know honesty matters more than winning, but people still cheat.

The Bible has a name for that perversity: sin. More specifically it’s loving and trusting in anything more than God and His values. So today we’re going to learn that living for God means we put God first.

**Watch**

As we watch this video, think about your answer to this question: What can get in the way of putting God first in your life?



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| **QUESTION**  What can get in the way of putting God first in your life? |

**Consider What the Bible Says**

There is a battle in each of us for who or what will sit on the throne of our heart. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve wrongly and tragically acted as though they knew better than God. They thought they could accomplish more on their own than what God had offered.

From that moment on, the story of humankind has been filled with our attempts to sit on the throne of our own heart. History has shown us it doesn’t work. When we trust ourself more than God, we make foolish and even devastating decisions. If we love power more than God, we hurt others. If we allow wealth to rule our heart, we’ll be slaves to money and material possessions. Only in putting God first can we live right and live free.

**Putting God First Is More Than Being Good**

Read [Mark 10:17–22](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mk10.17-22).

This man had it all. He was rich, young, and some kind of ruler (as compiled from the Matthew, Mark, and Luke versions of this story). He had the advantages that came from wealth, the hope that came from youthful strength, and the influence that came with an important title. But he knew he was missing out on something.

Remarkably, the young ruler was also trying to be a good person! He knew the commandments and lived by them. The disciples must have thought this man was the complete package—outwardly successful and inwardly righteous. But Jesus knew he still lacked something. Putting God first is more than being successful in life. It’s even more than keeping the rules to the best of your ability.

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| **QUESTION**  How have you seen wealth, youthfulness, and power become a distraction or even a danger to people? |

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| **QUESTION**  Why do you think Mark included the comment in [Mark 10:21](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mk10.21) about Jesus’ genuine love for the man? |

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| **QUESTION**  How would you describe the difference between human goodness and the goodness God requires (and provides in Jesus!)? |

**Putting God First Is More Costly Than You Think**

Read [Matthew 6:24](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt6.24), [33](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt6.33).

The rich young ruler did not expect the answer Jesus gave him. He probably expected to be applauded and celebrated for his goodness. But in His deep love for this man, Jesus challenged him to a radical act: sell everything and give the money away. These words revealed the man’s true master. He loved and trusted in the security and significance that wealth seemed to give him more than he trusted in God. Jesus knew the young man was seeking the kingdom of wealth more than he was seeking the kingdom of God. [Matthew 6:24](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt6.24) shows us the dangers of a divided heart while [Matthew 6:33](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt6.33) shows us the possibilities for a heart that puts God first.

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| **QUESTION**  What other “kingdoms” do people often seek instead of the kingdom of God? |

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| **QUESTION**  Share an example of someone who puts God first at home or at work. |

**Putting God First Is Even More Rewarding Than You Hope**

Read [Matthew 6:19–21](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt6.19-21).

The young man walked away sad and unwilling to put God first in every area of his life. The Bible says he had many possessions, but the truth is his many possessions had him. In his effort to hold onto earthly treasure, the young ruler may have forfeited real treasure: the reward of a deeper relationship of knowing and belonging to Jesus!

When you think of treasures in heaven, you might envision mansions, gold streets, or perfect weather. While everything about heaven will be wonderful beyond our imagination, the best thing about heaven is that Jesus will be there. Jesus is the treasure that cannot be taken from you. He is a reward beyond anything for which we could hope.

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| **QUESTION**  Share an example of how you or someone else has learned that the treasures of this earth are not forever, not secure, or not enough. |

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| **QUESTION**  What do you think it will be like to be in Jesus’ presence forever and ever? |

**Reflect**

**I Put God First**

If you try to put God first in your own strength, you’re the same as the rich young ruler. Even religious good works can be about building our kingdom of status, influence, power, and more. Putting God first starts with believing Jesus put us first when He came to earth. He lived the life we should have lived and died the death we should have died. He said He didn’t come to be served, but to serve and give His life as payment for our sin ([Mark 10:45](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mk10.45)).

So how do we put God first? We live in the light of the gospel—the good news about Jesus—and we look forward to the hope of heaven. In between what has been done for us and what awaits us, we gratefully acknowledge His grace and strength for us. We also allow the Holy Spirit to rearrange the priorities of our heart.

**Listen to God**

Let’s pause and listen to what God might want to say to us about what we have read and shared. Be silent for a few moments and reflect on the following questions. Respond to the one that most resonates with what God is saying to you now. Then complete the others during Day 1 of your devotion time this week.

**Personal Reflection Questions**

*Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal.*

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| **QUESTION**  How have you seen your own heart attracted to temporary things just as the rich, young ruler did? |

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| **QUESTION**  What’s the danger of trying to be good rather than trying to be obedient to whatever God asks? |

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| **QUESTION**  How does Jesus’ servant life and sacrificial death shift your heart from *having* to put God first to *wanting* to put God first? |

**Activate**

Think about these questions: Where do your daydreams take you? How would you finish the statement, “If only I had …”? What is your greatest nightmare? How about the one person or thing you can’t imagine life without? What is your vision of the good life? When do you most easily lose control emotionally?

All these questions can help you identify other “masters,” those areas in your life that dominate your mind’s attention and your heart’s affection. We need to watch out for these masters (or *idols* as the Bible calls them) or they will enslave us.

**Challenge**

Look at your calendar and your checking account. Those items are often obvious and painful clues to what we love most and who our true master is.

Make one change to your weekly calendar and one change to your monthly spending habits that better reflect seeking the kingdom of God first. Be sure to share this change with a family member or friend!

**Prayer Requests**

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| Note any requests from the group and remember to pray for them during the week. |

Before next time, continue to spend time in God’s Word with the personal devotions.

**Did You Know?**

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| *In both ancient and modern Judaism, small collection boxes in the synagogues were designated to take collections for the poor and needy. On each box is written the Hebrew word*tzedakah*, which is modernly understood to mean* charity*. However, in the ancient world of the Bible, this word literally meant* righteousness*. From this, we can see the development of the idea that financial generosity played a large role in one’s daily spiritual life and perceived relationship with God.* |

**Learn on Your Own**

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| *Before you begin each devotion, pray and ask God to speak to you through His Word. Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal.* |

**Day 1: I Put God First**

Read [Mark 10:17–22](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mk10.17-22); [Matthew 6:19–34](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt6.19-34).

Look back over Learn in Community and complete your responses to the Personal Reflection Questions. Plan how to complete the Activate component if you haven’t already done so. If time permits, reread the Scripture too.

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| **QUESTION**  What is God saying to you about how you need to put Him first? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 2: Sacrifice Is Provided**

Read [Genesis 22:1–14](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ge22.1-14).

God had promised Abraham many descendants and a blessing on those descendants. Yet Abraham had to wait until the age of one hundred to have a son with his wife, Sarah. Isaac was that son—the son of promise. So, God’s instruction to sacrifice Isaac must have made no sense to Abraham. Yet he obeyed and trusted God during the three-day journey to the place of sacrifice. And in a moment of beautiful foreshadowing, God provided a ram to take Isaac’s place. Abraham demonstrated he would trust and obey God at all times and with all things—even his own son.

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| **QUESTION**  Why do you think God asked Abraham to carry out this terrible task? |

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| **QUESTION**  How does it change your perspective to know that everything we’ve been asked to sacrifice was first provided for us by God? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 3: Sacrifice Is Costly**

Read [2 Samuel 24:18–25](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.2Sa24.18-25).

King David committed a sin against God and the people. As a consequence, a plague was killing tens of thousands of Israelites in the land. At the advice of the prophet Gad, David decided to build an altar to offer peace offerings to God. Araunah was more than willing to give his land to the king, but David refused the offer. He insisted on paying because he was unwilling to offer to God something that cost him nothing. In this story, we learn something very important about our sacrifice—it should always be costly to us.

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| **QUESTION**  Why do you think Araunah offered the land for free? Do you think David made the right choice to reject that offer? |

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| **QUESTION**  What costly sacrifice have you made recently in your worship of Jesus? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 4: His Sacrifice Is Received by Faith**

Read [Romans 3:21–31](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ro3.21-31).

In Romans, Paul presented the gospel in all its power and beauty. Up until this passage, Paul had made a compelling case for why we can’t make ourself right with God through just following rules. Instead, we all need the righteousness of God through Jesus. Read verses [23–26](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ro3.23-26) again. This is a beautiful summary of the gospel: We have sinned and fallen short of God’s standard, but God provided Jesus as the sacrifice for our sins. We can be made right by placing our faith in Jesus. His sacrifice is our salvation.

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| **QUESTION**  Which phrase in this passage means the most to you and why? |

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| **QUESTION**  What does it mean to put our faith in Jesus? |

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| **QUESTION**  What evidence can you point to that shows you’ve placed your faith in Jesus more than in other things? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 5: His Sacrifice Was Motivated by Joy**

Read [Hebrews 12:1–3](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Heb12.1-3).

In this passage, the author of Hebrews is motivating believers to run the race and to endure well. The motivation for doing this is found in verse [2](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Heb12.2): Keep your eyes on Jesus! The answer isn’t to keep your eyes on the goal, keep your eyes on yourself, or keep your eyes on the others running with you. None of those things is our hope, and they can fail us. But look at Jesus and all He endured. And look at why He endured it! It was for the joy set before Him—the joy of doing His Father’s will and saving you and me.

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| **QUESTION**  What is something in your life that may not help you run your race? |

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| **QUESTION**  What role should joy have in the sacrifices we make to serve and follow Jesus? |