



A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT APRIL 2007 “FIRST”

There is One who declares Himself the First. In Revelation 1:11 KJV He says “I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.” In Revelation 4:17 NIV the Lord said to John, “Do not be afraid, I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One, I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades...” What wonderful, powerful Scriptures of life!

I believe that the measure of success, blessing, power and significance of our lives as women of God is directly related to who and what is first in our lives. Together we will examine the Scriptures to see what the Lord reveals, what He desires, and what His crown of blessing will be upon. Notice the use of the word FIRST.

In Matthew 22:37, 38 NIV, Jesus said “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: love your neighbor as yourself.” So we see what is of great importance to the Lord. All that we do and are comes out of a love that is (before anyone else) for Him. We love Him because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19 NIV) You would not be who you are and what you are and where you are if He had not in His great love sought you out, revealed Himself to you, and saved you. Glory to God! Interesting to note in 1 John 4:21 LB, this Scripture “And God himself has said that one must love not only God, but his brother too.”

In Matthew 10:37-39 JB Phillips NT in Modern English, the Word declares “Anyone who puts his love for father or mother above his love for me does not desire to be mine, and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me, and neither is the man who refuses to take up his cross and follow my way. The man who has found his own life will lose it, but the man who has lost it for my sake will find it.” The same scripture in the Message Paraphrase says “If your first concern is to look after yourself, you’ll never find yourself. But if you forget about yourself and look to me, you’ll find both yourself and me.” God is not asking us to not love our families but simply to put Him first. Loving Him first will affect every part of our walk with Him.

In Matthew 6:31, 32, 33 Jesus spoke of the meeting of our everyday needs (what we eat, drink and wear) and declared that the Father knows our needs. “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” The same scripture in the Living Bible says “and He will give them to you if you give Him first place in your life and live as He wants you to.”

If we follow God’s pattern (“God so loved that He gave...”) the Lord will be first in our giving. Proverbs 3:9, 10 Message Paraphrase says “Honor God with everything you own; give him the first and the best.” The Living Bible declares “Honor the Lord by giving Him the first part of all your income and He will fill your barns with wheat and barley, and overflow your vats with the finest wines.” Simple put- He will honor you because you have chosen to honor Him, putting Him first in your giving. This is not just about finances, but about heart and giving not only of your substance but yourself.

In declaring the Supremacy of Christ, the Word says He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created; things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.” (Colossians 1:15-18 NIV) “He is the Head of the body made up of His people, that is, His church, which he began, and he is the Leader of all those who arise from the dead, so that he is first in everything, for God wanted all of himself to be in his Son.” (Colossians 1:18-19 LB)

Speaking of us and our relationship to Christ, the Word declares “From the very beginning God decided that those who came to him- and all along he knew who would- should become like his Son, so that his Son would be the First, with many brothers. And having chosen us, he called us to come to him, and when we came, he declared us “not guilty”, filled us with Christ’s goodness, gave us right standing with himself, and promised us his glory.” (Romans 8:29-30 LB) James 1:18 NIV says “He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of all he created.” The same scripture in the Living Bible says “And it was a happy day for him when he gave us our new lives, through the truth of his Word, and we became, as it were, the first children in his new family.”

There are many “first things” in your walk with the Lord. We can think on Him and give Him praise and express our love to Him first thing in the morning. Your daily private time with Him is your choosing- but I think our first thoughts and words spoken to Him rejoice His dear heart. Proverbs 3:6 NIV says “In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight.” In the Living Bible the same verse says “In everything you do, put God first, and he will direct you and crown your efforts with success.” And so we know God delights in directing our way if we ask first.

God wants to be first in our relationships and relationship-building. Our God is relational (Him to us, us to Him, us to each other) and He is willing to teach and help us if we but ask. We can be first in so many ways, according to scripture, and He will be glorified. We can be first to love, to bless, and to reach out to others. We can be first to believe the best of everyone (1 Corinthians 13:7). We can be first in forgiving- even to the point of saying “I was wrong”. We can follow the pattern of Jesus on the cross who said “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.” Luke 23:34 NIV

We can be first in letting others have their way, and first in putting others before ourselves. (Philippians 2:3-5)

In every situation, the first thing to do is pray! Jesus said “Men ought always to pray and not faint.” (Luke 18:1) First Timothy 2:1-4 says “I urge then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone- for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved, and come to a knowledge of the truth.

There are several places in the Gospels where Jesus said “The last shall be first and the first last.” (Matthew 19:16-30, Matthew 20:1-6, Mark 10:7-31, and Luke 13:22-20) In each of these God goes beyond what appears outwardly- and looks upon the heart. (1 Samuel 16:7) He, who tries, tests and sifts us and our ways, knows us through and through. Speaking of heaven and who will be there, Jesus said “Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last.” (Luke 13:30 NIV) The same scripture in the Living Bible says “And note this, some who are despised now will be greatly honored then, and some who are highly thought of now will be least important then.”

Jesus in humility became a servant- a great example for us. “I came not to be served but to serve.” (Matthew 20:28 NIV) His whole life was a life of service. When the disciples were having a discussion about who was the greatest, Jesus said “If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.” (Mark 9:35 NIV)

You can be first to “show and tell” His love. In 1 Corinthians 15:3-6 NIV Paul says “For what I received, I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures...” We have a message and a Savior who longs to be shared and revealed for who He is and what He did!

In these days of activity, schedules and busyness (He wants us to be fruitful, not just busy!) we must remember that it is possible to lose our first love (Revelation 2:4, 5). Let Him be first in all things. You will be blessed beyond measure!

Blessings from the One who loved you first!

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For His Glory Women’s Ministry