

“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you”  
(Matthew 6:33)

"When God calls you to something, He is not always calling you to succeed, He's calling you to obey. The success of the calling is up to Him, the obedience is up to you." - David Wilkerson.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Narcissism, moral relativism, materialism, spiritual fluidity, gender and sexual confusion, selfism, divisiveness, soft Marxism, and faith deconstructionism are increasingly becoming the opium and pre-occupation of our post-modern, post-Christian, and post-truth world. The consequences of these cultural trends are anomie (disintegration or disappearance of social/family norms and values), cognitive dissonance, and soul-destroying self absorption amongst a myriad of other socio-cultural and psycho-spiritual problems. We are constantly reminded almost every where we turn to love yourself, pamper yourself, forgive yourself, enjoy yourself, forget difficult family members and friends, and ensure you take care of yourself first because your first responsibility is to your lovely self. We are subtly advised not to invest too much of our time, energy and resources in other people because they might and will disappoint us because, after all, that's what people do more often than not. We are further counseled, that if you're smart you need to make sure you are secure and squared away for life first before worrying about anyone else. That's where many people are in our world today: they are in the shiny crumbling citadel of self, personal insecurity, power trip, bounded ethicality, and self aggrandizement.

By contrast our Heavenly Father commands us to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. Seeking first His Kingdom, that is, entering and the expanding His kingdom, and His righteousness in the year 2024 will entail, among other things, the following three disciplines.

1. First, the discipline of believing in Christ as our Savior and Lord, and then preaching and sharing the Gospel of Christ with our neighbors and others. Hudson Taylor once said that "The Great Commission is not an option to be considered; it is a command to be obeyed." We are commanded by the Lord of glory to preach and share the gospel of Christ with people. This is because the greatest need of our neighbors is to know Christ as Savior and obey Him as the Lord of their lives. Biblical preaching of the gospel involves pointing them to Christ and his atoning death and resurrection and calling people to repentance and faith in Christ. Jesus sets us free from the lies we believe and tell about ourselves and the sins that we commit in an effort to comfort and soothe ourselves. Good biblical preaching helps us learn the truth that outside of Christ people are wretched sinners who are lost and headed to eternal ruin. Only Christ can set us free and make us whole again. In Christ we learn that we are loved, chosen, accepted and truly welcomed and that He is all that we need. More often than not, we are clear on calling people to believe in Christ as Savior and to believe God for His blessings. It is in the area of repentance and holiness that we are reluctant to engage. But we must call people to repentance (as Jesus commanded us!). As R C Sproul reminds us "No one can enter the kingdom of God without repentance, without fleeing from sin and putting his trust in Christ alone. This is how our Lord Himself did evangelism." George Whitfield rightly noted, "True repentance will entirely change you; the bias of your souls will be changed, then you will delight in God, in Christ, in His Law, and in His people." It is partly because we no longer preach the word of God in regard to Christ-centered Gospel repentance and the necessity of living a life of personal and social holiness in Christ that we have lost our way and ended up in what Charles Spurgeon called "downgrade Christianity" – that is, Christianity marked by ungodly living, theological liberalism, self-centered religious hype, spiritual mediocrity, and unbelief in the uniqueness of Christ as the only way to salvation. Let us preach the gospel of Christ and call our hearers to repentance from sin and faith in Christ Jesus as the Savior and Master of their lives.

2. Second, the discipline of godly living. We need to be intentional in our own pursuit of holiness, righteousness, and in encouraging one another to be holy. Holiness involves separation from ungodly behavior and commitment to love. We are called to love the Lord our God with all that we are and have

and to love our neighbor as we indeed love ourselves. Dr J. I. Packer rightly noted, “In reality, holiness is the goal of our redemption. As Christ died in order that we may be justified, so we are justified in order that we may be sanctified and made holy.” Unfortunately, this goal has been more of a gaping hole in many of our own lives, our families, and our preaching and ministry in many churches in the Anglican Communion. This has enervated the life, mission, and image of the church. Alistair Begg noted that “One of the key reasons for the flabbiness of our spiritual lives is that a generation of Christians is growing up with little awareness of the necessity of dealing with sin. There are sins to be rejected. We must learn where our personal weaknesses lie – and once they are identified, we must be ruthless in dealing with them. Earlier generations called this the “mortification of the flesh” – that is, pronouncing the death sentence upon sin and putting that sentence into daily effect by killing all that sets itself against God’s purpose in our lives.” Dr Kevin DeYoung explains the reason for this: “There is a gap between our love for the gospel and our love for godliness. This must change. It’s not pietism, legalism, or fundamentalism to take holiness seriously. It’s the way of all those who have been called to a holy calling by a holy God.” So, let us stir up and encourage one another to deal with sin in our lives, in our churches, in our marriages, in our relationships with one another, and in the way we do ministry this year.

3. Finally, the discipline of resting and trusting the Lord. We need to put our trust in the Lord. We cannot be sure what the future holds for each of us. But we do know – and can be veritably sure – that our sovereign God is in control of all things; that our Lord Jesus Christ reigns, rules, and saves. We know that he is with us no matter what happens to us, our churches, our families, and in our world. So, we can trust Him to provide for us, defend us, sustain us, and to use us to expand His Kingdom. He is the miracle-working God and he has not changed one bit! As the Bible says, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8). He worked miracles in the past, and He can do them again in us, for us, and through us for His glory and His fame! Let us then prayerfully trust Him to help us in our times of personal and corporate need. As the Bible tells us, “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you.” (Deuteronomy 31:6). God has not given up on us and he will never. So, don’t give up on God or on yourself because of your situation or failures. The Lord loves you and has demonstrated the depth of His love by sending our Lord Jesus Christ to give His life as a ransom for us. There is no love greater than that. We must hold on to the Him no matter what our circumstances are because He is in the business of restoring and renewing broken lives. Our Heavenly Father never abandons His children. He will never forsake you. He is in the business of giving hopeless people and helpless sinners new beginnings. He changes lives and uses people like you and me to help others come to receive life and hope in Christ. In your desperation and despair turn to Him and He will surprise you with His amazing grace – favor that you do not deserve. The Lord is sovereignly in control of all things so be at peace and full of hope!

In the year 2024, we encourage you to engage in the disciplines of loving others, preaching the gospel of grace, living a holy life, and trusting the Lord! Are you willing to commit yourself to these disciplines? Pat Riley once said that, “There are only two options regarding commitment. You’re either in or out. There’s no such thing as life in-between.” May God bless you and yours in 2024 as you seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, knowing that He will supply everything you need.

We wish you a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

In Christ,

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