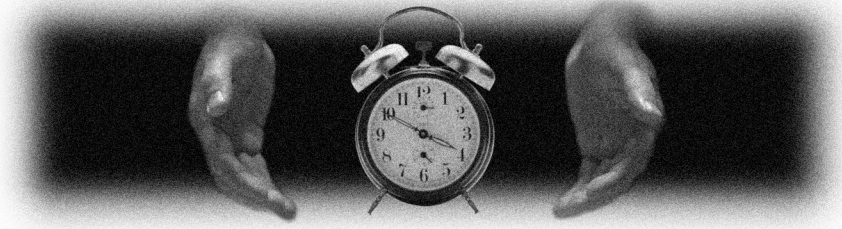


Lord of Our Priorities¹



SABBATH—JULY 2

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Exodus 19:5; Romans 3:24; Ephesians 1:7.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘But put God’s kingdom first. Do what he wants you to do. Then all of those things will also be given to you’ ” (Matthew 6:33, NIV).

IMPORTANT THOUGHT: Jesus does not ask to be first among equals in our lives. He asks to be first without equal.

JESUS' STRANGE CLAIM. Jesus asks us to give Him unequalled first place in our lives. To all people who would follow Him, Jesus says, “ ‘If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple’ ” (Luke 14:26, NIV).

Clearly, we cannot take Jesus' statement at face value. As followers of Jesus, we are to love our enemies (Matthew 5:44). Then we should certainly love people who are close to us, such as our family members. Jesus is not asking us to hate our family members. Instead, he is saying we must give Him first place in our lives. He must be first in our lives because He is our Creator and Savior. He saved us with His own blood (1 Peter 1:18, 19). We owe Him everything. So He is asking us to recognize our debt to Him by making Him first in our lives. How could we dare make anything else more important than Jesus?

Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 9.

¹priorities—things listed in order of their importance; a list of things numbered in order of their importance.

SUNDAY—JULY 3**THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S
(Exodus 19:5).**

How do the following verses help us understand the claims Jesus has over our lives?

Genesis 1:1 _____

Exodus 19:5 _____

Isaiah 45:18 _____

Psalms 24:1 _____

Psalms 50:10, 11 _____

Colossians 1:16 _____



All people who live on earth belong to God.

The idea of Jesus being first in our lives depends on who He is contrasted² to who we are. Understanding this contrast (difference) can help us understand why Jesus should be first in our lives. The leader of one nation does not have the right to make rules for another country. For example, the president of France does not have the authority³ to tell people living in Paraguay how they must live.

As our Creator, Jesus is the greatest Ruler in the universe. It does not matter if we accept Him as Ruler or not. He still has authority over us. Jesus has given us stewardship⁴ over things on earth. But whatever we “own”, we have only because God first created

²contrasted—show how things are different.

³authority—the skill to make someone obey; influence that creates respect and trust.

⁴stewardship—God gives us responsibility to manage property, money, time, and talents. This kind of management is called stewardship.

these things and gave them to us.

It is very important to remember this, because God does not force us to use the gifts He has given us. He has made us free to choose what we think is important. We can put His claims over us in words, in how we live, and in how we make choices. Or we can do what we want. If we do what we want, we “earn” the sad results of our wrong choices.

Are you a good singer? Do you own a lot of property? Are you a powerful speaker? Are you a successful farmer? No matter what you have or do, think carefully about how everything comes from God. How can understanding that everything comes from God help you to make your choices? What changes might you need to make in order to be sure Jesus is first in your life?

MONDAY—JULY 4

**SAVIOR GOD (Romans 3:24;
Isaiah 44:22).**

In yesterday’s lesson, we learned that God claims us because He is our Creator. He is our Owner. But in a fallen world, that might not be enough to make us want to serve Him or surrender our lives and choices to Him. In a way, we might be responsible to God as someone is responsible to his or her employer.⁵ But God does not want

⁵employer—the person you work for.

us to serve Him because we think we have to. He wants us to serve Him because we love Him for what He has done for us as our Creator and Savior.

Remember a time when you did something for someone because you had to. Then remember when you did something for someone because you really loved and appreciated that person. How do these two situations help you understand the way Jesus wants us to serve Him?

The Bible is clear that Jesus is both our Creator and our Savior. Many verses talk about Jesus as our Savior. He has done the work of salvation for our sake. It is impossible to understand His death on the cross separate from salvation.



Jesus is our Creator. He is also our Savior.

How do the following verses help you want to serve Jesus? Romans 3:24; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:18, 19; Galatians 3:13.

In the Old and New Testaments, the word for “redeem,” or “redemption,” comes from different words that mean “to buy back,” “to ransom,”⁶ or to “deliver.” These meanings suggest what Jesus did for us. Jesus is both our Creator and our Redeemer (Savior). He ransomed us from the power and the final result of sin (Romans 6:23). Understanding what this redemption (salvation) means for us personally helps us to make Jesus Lord of our choices.

TUESDAY—JULY 5

JESUS' EXAMPLE (John 4:34).

Doing His Father's will was the number one item on Jesus' list. His plan for life was simply this: To discover the Father's will and do it.

What is the common theme in the following verses?

John 4:34 _____

John 6:38 _____

Luke 22:42 _____

Philippians 2:8 _____

Hebrews 10:9 _____

John 17:8 _____

“Jesus gave Himself so completely that He made no plans for Himself. He accepted God's plans for Him. Day by day, God unfolded His plans to Jesus. In the same way, we should depend upon God so our lives may always reflect His will.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 208.

Jesus' life of complete surrender is a powerful example. Both His actions and His words were from God.

What does each of the verses you have just read mean to you personally? What do you need to change to follow Jesus' example?

⁶ransom—money paid for the return of a kidnapped person. Jesus' death paid the ransom for our freedom from sin and Satan.

WEDNESDAY—JULY 6
FIRST ON YOUR AGENDA⁷
(Luke 6:46).

What question does Jesus ask His hearers at the end of His Sermon on the Mount? Luke 6:46. How different would your life be if you did everything Jesus told you to do?

Obedience is the greatest proof we have accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord. His will becomes our will. His plans become our plans. We surrender ourselves completely to Him as Lord of every part of our lives because we love Him and are thankful to Him for saving us.

We must not call Jesus “Lord,” then fail to recognize His lordship over our lives as we plan our daily schedules. Too often we make plans, then ask God to bless these plans. But Ellen White suggests something different for people who have accepted Jesus as their Savior and Lord: “Surrender all your plans to Him, to be done according to His will. Day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God. In this way, your life will change more and more to be like the life of Jesus.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ [Jesus]*, p. 70.

Read the following stories about certain Bible characters. Where did God’s plans for them not agree

with their personal plans?

Exodus 2:11-15 _____

Jeremiah 1:4-10 _____

2 Timothy 4:10 _____

Matthew 19:16-22 _____



Killing someone was not God’s plan for Moses.

Who cannot see himself or herself in these stories? Some of the stories had a good ending. Some of the stories had a bad ending. What made the difference between a good ending and a bad ending?

⁷agenda—a list of things to do.

THURSDAY—JULY 7**FIRST IN YOUR DAY
(Mark 1:35; Psalm 5:1-3).**

Jesus showed how important it is to seek God first in the day. “It was very early in the morning and still dark. Jesus got up and left the house. He went to a place where he could be alone. There he prayed” (Mark 1:35, NIV).

“The early morning often found Jesus in a quiet place. He was studying the Bible or praying. From these quiet hours He would return to His home to take up His duties again, and to give an example of patient work.” —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 90.

We would do well to follow Jesus’ example. It is important always to make Jesus first in our lives (Psalm 16:8). But we also need to set aside special times of prayer. David prayed in the morning, at noon, and in the evening (Psalm 55:17). Daniel followed almost the same habit (Daniel 6:10).

Read David’s prayer in Psalm 5:1-3. Why do you think the morning is such an important time to focus our attention on Jesus?



Most Christians agree that it is important to pray first thing in the morning. But many people have a hard time doing this. Going to bed late at night or working early in the morning seem to crowd out that special time of fellowship with Jesus. As a result, our time with God often becomes reactive. Reactive means crying out to Him when things go wrong. It is not proactive. Proactive means seeking Him *before* facing the challenges of the day. Many people seriously cripple their spiritual life because they do not pray, read the Bible, or think about Jesus first thing in the morning. If you miss breakfast, you soon run out of physical fuel. If you miss morning prayer, you will soon run out of the spiritual “fuel” that helps you meet temptation (1 Peter 5:8).

What things prevent you from having daily morning prayer? Decide in your heart to begin each day with prayer.

FRIDAY—JULY 8

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Think of people in the Bible who put God first in their lives and who let Him be the Lord of their choices. For example, think about the life of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Read Luke 1:26-38. Notice her answer to God.

The idea of surrendering our lives to the authority of someone else is not very popular today. People want

to control their own lives. Christians have a different viewpoint. Jesus, who calls us to live under His lordship, is our loving Savior. He is the One who gave His life to save us. Under His lordship, we find freedom. We are His sons and daughters.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Jesus “made no plans for Himself.” He let God lead His steps. How can we let God lead our steps?
2. How can you let Jesus be Lord of your family and your finances?
3. Look up as many verses as you can find that talk about Jesus being the Sacrifice for our sins. Then write a paragraph about what these verses say. Have class members read aloud what they wrote. How do these verses encourage you to surrender to Jesus and to serve Him?