

“Let Me First . . .”

On one occasion Christ heard these words, “I will follow thee, but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house” (Luke 9:61). Some say, when confronted with the passionate pleas of the Gospel, “Let me first get my education, a better job, a home, a new automobile, and the other necessary things of life.”

These folks have a place for Christ in their lives – second place! They seem convinced that material security will somehow prepare them to follow Christ. Such a perception fails to grasp the meaning of Christ’s words: “A man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15).

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33). Many have actually reversed the saying of Christ and are seeking first the wealth of the world thinking the kingdom of God will be added unto them. To gain the entire world and to lose Christ is to lose all (Mark 8:36,37)

There is nothing wrong with having a good education, a better job, a home, a new or better car. The harm is in allowing these things to take precedence over the things of God’s kingdom. What is first in your life? Is it money, pleasure, education, or is it Christ Jesus?

- by Michael W. McLemore

Improve Your Life

1. *Turn off the TV and read your Bible.* The Psalmist said of the blessed man, “His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night” (Ps. 1:2).
2. *Put down the phone and pray.* I never cease to be amazed at how much time some people spend on their cell phones. Is all that talking, texting, browsing really necessary or profitable? “Pray without ceasing” (1 Th. 5:17). “The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much” (Jas. 5:16).
3. *Get up out of bed an hour earlier and come to Bible study on Sunday morning.* “As the door turns on its hinges, so does the sluggard on his bed” (Prov. 26:14).
4. *Cut down your credit card purchases and give.* Give to the poor. Increase your contribution at church. “One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the Lord, and He will repay him for his good deed” (Prov. 19:17). “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).
5. *Change the conversation from sports, weather, and politics to spiritual things.* Do that at home. “These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up” (Deut. 6:6-7). Do that at work, too. “He who wins souls is wise” (Prov. 11:30).

- via Manslick Road Speaker

Toward Better Communication

“This you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger, for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.” (James 1:19-20)

Can you imagine better advice for getting along with others? How often we hear it said that the problem in a family, a plant, an office, a school, or even a church is a breakdown of communication. Obedience to this verse would change all of that.

“Be quick to hear.” Listen! Try to understand where the one who is talking “is coming from” and what he or she really means. See if you can repeat what was said so accurately that the one who said it will agree that you have stated the position accurately.

Now, make sure a reply is needed. We do not have to correct every mistake we hear. Some are not serious enough to require attention. Others, though serious, may have to wait for a more suitable time to be corrected.

Even if a reply is needed, take your time. “Be slow to speak.” Think of what you are saying. Think how it will sound to the one hearing it and how it will sound if it is repeated to someone else. Ask yourself if what you are about to say will do good or do harm. Ask God to help you to say only what needs to be said. Nehemiah was asked a question by the king and managed a

prayer before he answered (Neh. 2:4-5). Remember that once you have spoken, you cannot recall your words.

Above all, “be slow to anger.” Anger almost always breaks down communication; shouting matches seldom end in a better understanding of each other. And, besides jeopardizing human relationships, they endanger our relation with God. We may fancy that our anger is “righteous indignation,” but the Holy Spirit says: “The anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.”

Are you thinking, “That’s not much of a way to win an argument”? RIGHT! But it is a pretty good way to stop one. How would you like to by to argue with someone who is “quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger”?

- by Sewell Hall

Jesus & Jonah

“The story of Jonah and the whale? — that’s a hard one to ‘swallow’”. So says the skeptic. And, as Bible believers, we have been forced to go on the defensive.

Some have labored long and hard to prove that a whale really could swallow a man. You may have seen articles which cited historical accounts of men who have experienced similar things. One such report is found in the April 4, 1896, edition of Literary Digest. It tells of one, James Bartley, who was swallowed by a whale and lived for a day and a half before being rescued.

While accounts such as this may be interesting, they really are unnecessary. We don’t need them in order to believe what the Bible says about Jonah. What happened there was a miracle. The Scripture says that “the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah” (Jonah 1:17). Whether or not an ordinary whale could accomplish such a feat, and whether or not a man under normal circumstances could survive as Jonah did, does not matter. In this case, God was involved. And, if we believe in an all-powerful God, this should be no harder to accept than any other miracle taught in the Bible.

But, there’s yet another way to look at this subject. Jesus provides more evidence for the case. In Matthew 12:40, He said,

“As Jonah was three days and three nights in the the whale’s belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

Jesus staked His credibility to the accuracy of the story about Jonah. That being so, then all the evidence concerning Jesus — His miracles, His resurrection, etc. —can also be used to support the account of Jonah and the whale. It really happened. Jesus said so, and that settles it!

- by Greg Gwin