

Resurrection Life Priorities

Philippians 4:6-7; Matthew 6:25-34

1. Resurrection priority.

- *Colossians 3:2; Exodus 20:3*

2. Resurrection principality.

- *Ephesians 2:19; Matthew 6:10; Luke 17:20-21*

3. Resurrection piet^y.

- *Leviticus 19:2, 20:7, 26, 21:8; Exodus 19:6; 1 Peter 1:15-16;*
Romans 6:22; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Ezekiel 36:26-27

4. Resurrection provision.

- *Philippians 4:19; Ephesians 1:18, 3:16-20*

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Americans are among the most anxious people on earth, according to the New York Times. One in five of us suffer from a diagnosed anxiety disorder. One study found that Americans were significantly more anxious than residents of nations like Nigeria, Lebanon, and Ukraine. We spend billions of dollars every year on antianxiety medications and additional millions to fund research into the causes and cures for anxiety disorders.¹

A few years ago, Time magazine devoted its cover story to the anxiety levels of teens and young adults. The article claimed that today's adolescents "are the post-9/11 generation, raised in an era of economic and national insecurity. They've never known a time when terrorism and school shootings weren't the norm. They grew up watching their parents weather a severe recession, and, perhaps most importantly, they hit puberty at a time when technology and social media were transforming society."

One young adult explained, "We're the first generation that cannot escape our problems at all. We're all like little volcanoes. We're getting this constant pressure, from our phones, from our relationships, from the way things are today."² And we packed all of *that* into a year of global pandemic and lockdowns, masks and vaccines and race riots and poisonous politics and media, making for an even bigger increase in anxiety levels. There *must* be something more for us than that...

We started a new series on Easter Sunday called "Resurrection Life." We are exploring what resurrection life is and what it looks like and how we can have it and live in it. And whatever it is, it *must* be different than this life of anxiety that we are all living under, because if it's not, then what's the point? Jesus didn't die on the cross and rise from the dead for us to simply live with anxiety. Resurrection life had better be something more than this restlessness all around us. Yet even if we look around us at some of the lives of people who profess to be Christians, we don't see abundant life as much as anxiety life. I'm telling you today – we were not meant to live lives of anxiousness. Christ's resurrection means that we can live far, far better than that.

In *Worry Less, Live More: God's Prescriptions for a Better Life*, Robert J. Morgan wrote the fact that many in society are very conscious of anxiety: "Did you know that Amazon keeps track of your highlights? When e-book owners mark sentences, the online retailer knows and notes it. Recently Amazon released a list of the most popular passages in some of its bestselling books, such as *The Hunger Games*, the

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/19/opinion/sunday/the-anxious-americans.html>

² <https://time.com/magazine/us/4547305/november-7th-2016-vol-188-no-19-u-s/>

Harry Potter series, and *Pride and Prejudice*. Also released, the most highlighted passage in the Holy Bible. I expected America's favorite biblical portion to be John 3:16, Psalm 23, or the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13. But, no, it was a less prominent text, one that's striking a deep chord in today's worried world.³ It was Philippians 4:6-7:

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6-7, niv)

The fact that *that* passage is the most highlighted of all Amazon e-readers of Scripture tells me that we are definitely looking for the antidote to this life of anxiety and worry; that we know living life differently must be possible. And the answer is, “Yes! We can live Resurrection Life today!” We don’t have to wait until heaven for it. This kind of life is oriented completely differently than the world around us.

Jesus gave us a description of the focus of this kind of life in a nutshell during his Sermon on the Mount. Would you stand with me as I read this passage:

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” (Matthew 6:25-34, niv)

Thank you for standing – before you are seated, let me repeat verse 33, because that’s the answer we are looking for:

“Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” (Matthew 6:33)

To live an anxiety-less Resurrection Life, there are four keys that you will see in verse 33, starting with...

³ Robert J. Morgan, *Worry Less, Live More* (Thomas Nelson, 2017), page xiii

1. Resurrection *priority*.

Jesus starts off telling us what our priority needs to be – notice that he says, “seek *first...*” Jesus is about to give us the first priority of Resurrection life; what he is about to tell us is the primary focus that we are to orient our life around, live for, and live out. The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus’ description of the life of *every* Christian; it gives us a blueprint of resurrection life for every believer, and in the center of the sermon, in Matthew 6:33, is the sermon in a nutshell: instead of focusing on the things of this world, which only lead to anxiety, we are to focus first and only on “the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to us.” That is what we are seeking, pursuing, striving after, and achieving.

Nearly 200 years ago there were two Scottish brothers named John and David Livingstone. John had set his mind on making money and becoming wealthy, and he did. But under his name in an old edition of the "Encyclopedia Britannica" John Livingstone is listed simply as "the brother of David Livingstone."

And who was David Livingstone? While John had dedicated himself to making money, David had knelt and prayed. Surrendering himself to Christ, he resolved, "I will place no value on anything I have or possess unless it is in relationship to the Kingdom of God." The inscription over his burial place in Westminster Abbey reads, "For thirty years his life was spent in an unwearied effort to evangelize."

On his 59th birthday David Livingstone wrote, "My Jesus, my King, my Life, my All; I again dedicate my whole self to Thee."⁴

Jesus is everything or he is nothing.

The Bible tells us to:

“Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.” (Colossians 3:2, niv)

That means that our mindset, our focus, our frame of reference, what we think about and live for – our priority – does not come from this world.

When God established his expectations in the Ten Commandments through Moses in the Old Testament, there is a good reason that the very first one is *this*:

“You shall have no other gods before me.” (Exodus 20:3, niv)

We need to ask ourselves what our priority is...is it ourselves and what we want, or is it God and what he wants?

Prayer

So Jesus establishes what the first and only thing is that we should seek; he tells us that we must prioritize and commit to...

2. Resurrection *principality*.

⁴ Billy Graham in *Breakfast with Billy Graham*. Christianity Today, Vol. 41, no. 6.

You understand what a principality is, right? It is a city or a state; a place that is governed by a certain expectation or law. What Jesus is saying here is that the resurrection life is one that is lived out *in the Kingdom of God*, even though we currently live in this world.

Jesus uses the phrase, “Kingdom of God” many times, and every time he does, it refers to the reign of God. The Kingdom of God is synonymous with God’s “shalom.” Shalom means, “wholeness” or “completeness;” meaning that it is the place where God’s desires for us rule completely or totally. That’s why the word is often associated with “peace.” In fact, Jerusalem, the capital city of God’s people, means “the city of God’s shalom.” So when Jesus is referring to the Kingdom of God, he means that “place,” or that “state” of living out God’s completeness; living out everything that God wants from us and has for us. Before Christ, we were not citizens of Shalom; we were citizens of Sheol. “Sheol” is the place of darkness, the place of death. Because of our sin, we were citizens of death. That’s where we were headed and that was the quality of our lives.

But because Jesus has bought us out of Sheol – he paid the penalty for our sins by dying on the cross in our place – we can be forgiven by God of that sin and we can become citizens of God’s Kingdom. The Bible says that when you became a Christian that:

“You are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household...” (Ephesians 2:19, niv)

Jesus’ disciples were confused and thought that Jesus was talking about setting up a political government of God, but that’s not what Jesus meant. What Jesus was talking about was the establishment of God’s rule in the hearts and lives of his people, so that by our lives we would overcome all the forces of evil in this world and live lives of love.

With the rule of God in your life and mine, we will help remove from this world and from peoples’ lives the consequences of sin, which is death and all that diminishes resurrection life. We introduce people to Jesus, that we would help bring about righteousness, love, and peace into this world. That’s why Jesus told us to pray for it – to pray that:

“Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.”
(Matthew 6:10, niv)

The Kingdom of God is central to Jesus’ teaching and is mentioned 50 times in the Gospel of Matthew alone.

The Jewish religious leaders were questioning Jesus about this very thing – they didn’t understand what he was saying and they thought, too, that he was talking about a political kingdom. But where the disciples were excited to think Jesus would bring a political kingdom (because they thought they would hold all the power), the religious leaders were threatened to think Jesus would bring a political kingdom (because they thought they would lose all their power). So Jesus clarified for both groups what he meant when he told them:

“The Kingdom of God isn’t ushered in with visible signs. You won’t be able to say, ‘It has begun here in this place or there in that part of the country.’ For the Kingdom of God is within you.” (Luke 17:20-21, tlb)

The power doesn’t belong to us at all; it belongs to God *in us*.

So we need to ask ourselves, “is the Kingdom of God within me?” Have you accepted the death that Christ died for you on the cross? Have you asked God to forgive you of the sin, the “sheol” that rules in your life, and are you allowing God to rule your life? It’s the only way that you will have resurrection life today and for the rest of your life and forever.

Prayer

Jesus said that our priority should be the principality of God and God’s Kingdom, and that we should seek His righteousness. That’s interesting, because it sounds like we should be looking at how righteous God is, doesn’t it? But that’s not what he meant. Jesus is saying that it should be *our* priority and principality; that if the Kingdom of God rules in our hearts, then we must live like it – to live like Jesus – righteously. So now Jesus is telling us to live...

3. Resurrection *piety*.

If God is going to use us in bringing his Kingdom to people’s lives here on earth, then we have to be living proof that it’s real – by living it out in our own lives. We must have this personal piety. “Piety” means “a life of devotion to religious acts or practices.” It means that we love God so much that we will live our lives the way he intends for us to live. That’s what it means to live righteous, or holy lives. It is sometimes called “sanctification,” which is a five-dollar word for being set-apart for God’s priority purposes in order to live like Jesus. It is and always has been God’s desire for us, which is why he tells us:

“Be holy, for I am holy.” (Leviticus 19:2; 20:7, 26; 21:8; Exodus 19:6)

In the New Testament, we are told:

“But be holy now in everything you do, just as the Lord is holy, who invited you to be his child. He himself has said, ‘You must be holy, for I am holy.’”
(1 Peter 1:15-16, tlb)

Listen: we no longer need to live controlled by sin – we can now live controlled by the HOLY Spirit. That’s why the Bible says:

“But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life.”
(Romans 6:22, nlt)

In fact, when the Bible refers to Christians, it calls us:

“Those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy” (1 Corinthians 1:2, niv)

There is no other life for the Christian than this. In fact, that's why God gives you the Holy Spirit. The whole plan from the beginning was that Jesus would pay the penalty for your sins, so that you could be forgiven and cleansed of sin, so that *then* the presence of God could dwell within you – the HOLY Spirit. That's because God knows we are not capable of living a righteous and holy life in our own strength, so the Spirit within us actually changes us and empowers us to live a holy life. God not only tells you to live a holy life, he gives you the power you need to do so by giving you His Spirit to live in you! Listen to His promise:

“I will give you a new heart—I will give you new and right desires—and put a new spirit within you. I will take out your stony hearts of sin and give you new hearts of love. And I will put my Spirit within you so that you will obey my laws and do whatever I command.” (Ezekiel 36:26-27, tlb)

In other words, his own Spirit within us will move us to be able to obey him, to live lives of love like Kingdom of God citizens. Isn't it amazing?! That's the power of God's Spirit within you if you will simply submit to him, give up your will to him and ask him to give you His Holy Spirit and ask him to take control. Principality and Piety are Resurrection life priorities.

Prayer

This isn't as easy as it sounds, though – not for us in this society, anyway. Our lives are consumed with all kinds of things. It's difficult not to prioritize the things that are constantly demanding our attention – things like food, money, shelter, clothes. But Jesus said that these things are not to be our priority, even though they are the priority of the entire world around us. Instead, we are to prioritize God's principality and our personal piety. And when we do so, guess what? God takes care of us! God gives us...

4. Resurrection *provision*.

Isn't that cool!? God takes care of all those things for us so that we don't have to worry about them. That's why the Bible says:

“And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19, niv)

When you live your life for Christ and his priorities, he will give you all that you need: the Bible reminds us:

“...how rich are the wonderful blessings he promises his people...”
(Ephesians 1:18, gnt)

Did you know that Lake Tahoe is the eighth deepest lake in the world? On July 4, 1875, two men discovered the deepest point in the lake to be 1645 feet by lowering a weighted champagne bottle on fishing line from the side of their boat. After the invention of sonar, soundings by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration confirmed that depth. Lake Tahoe is so large that if the lake were tipped over, its contents would cover the entire state of California in 14.5 inches of

water. Tahoe could provide every person in the United States with 50 gallons of water per day for five years. Just the evaporation alone from Tahoe over the course of one year could supply a city the size of Los Angeles for five years. And Lake Tahoe is a small lake compared to Lake Superior (120 times as large) and the world's largest lake, the Caspian Sea (576 times as large).

Your use of water could never personally exhaust the limits of Lake Tahoe. Still, as rich with water Tahoe is, it would one day run out. But God has no limits. Whatever your need, you can *never* exhaust God's supply.⁵

It's very interesting that when God asks us to live his resurrection life, he also reassures us that he will take care of the things we need. Listen to the connection between living for him and his Kingdom, and his ability to provide for us:

“I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God’s love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God’s people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.”
(Ephesians 3:16-20, nlt)

So why, when we have all this available to us, do we become anxious, and worry, and seek after everything *but* the Kingdom of God and his righteousness? Why do we continue to seek after what the world has to offer, and all the material things it falsely promises?

Some of you will remember who Richard Pryor was. He was a black comedian in the 1960s and 70s who broke color barriers and used humor to call attention to the racism around us and even within us. He overcame a horrible and abusive upbringing to find great success. But he got caught up in the fame and all the wealth and squandered his life with drugs and alcohol. At one particular low point, while on a free-basing cocaine binge, he doused himself in 151-proof rum and set himself on fire. He burned 80% of his body and only had a 30% chance of surviving. Still, he survived. Appearing later on the "Johnny Carson Show," he said that when you are about to die, you realize money isn't important. He said, "All that I could think of was to call on God. I didn't call the Bank of America once."⁶

Let's call on God: *Prayer*

Why wait until we face death to start resurrection life? Why wait until the end to begin eternal, resurrection life? Put God first: prioritize him, live in his principality,

⁵ David Finch, "A Picture of Praise," sermon on PreachingToday.com

⁶ Peter Graystone, *Ready Salted* (Scripture Union, 1998), p. 114

which means you will live for him with piety, and he will provide everything you need.

Stand with me please....

“I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God’s love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God’s people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

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