

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Order matters. The first thing must be settled.

BIG IDEA

When Jesus has His rightful place, everything else can begin to find its proper place.

MESSAGE SUMMARY

A math equation can contain all the right numbers and still produce the wrong answer when the order is wrong. Life can work the same way. Family, work, success, relationships and even church are good gifts, but none can occupy God's place. God rescued His people before giving the commands, then established the first thing: nothing else gets His place. Baptism declares, not "I have mastered life," but "Jesus is Master of my life."

READ TOGETHER

Exodus 20:1-3
Grace before command.

Matthew 6:33
Seek first His kingdom.

Matthew 16:13-16
Who do you say Jesus is?

ICEBREAKER — CHOOSE ONE

Option 1: What everyday task did you learn to do in a particular order—and what happens when you skip a step? (Making coffee; following a recipe; socks before shoes.)
Option 2: What do you try to do first when you begin your day—and what usually gets in the way? (Prayer; exercise; making coffee; checking your phone.)

TALK IT THROUGH

- Did everyone get to see Billy's story and baptism? What stood out to you, and where do you relate to his decision to put Jesus first—even when life is still hard?
(If needed: his surrender; faith in a hard season; priorities changing before circumstances do.)
- The PEMDAS illustration showed that the right pieces in the wrong order can produce the wrong result. Where can you see that principle operating in real life?
(If needed: work crowding out family; comfort replacing calling; success becoming identity; screens getting our first attention.)
- God rescued Israel before giving the commandments. How does grace before command change the way you understand obedience?
(If needed: we obey from gratitude, not fear; obedience responds to rescue rather than trying to earn it.)
- What is the difference between treating God as the first item on a list and recognizing Him as Lord over the entire list?
(If needed: Jesus shapes our work, money, relationships and decisions—not just one devotional time slot.)
- A good thing becomes a God thing when we ask it to give what only God can give. What warning signs reveal that something good may be taking God's place?
(If needed: fearing its loss; letting it control our mood; needing it to feel valuable; giving it our first and best.)
- Jesus asked, "Who do you say I am?" If the order of our lives answers that question, what might your current priorities be saying?
(If needed: "Jesus is important when convenient," or "Jesus is Lord, so He gets the final word.")

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

Do a First Things First audit. Choose one question:

- What do I fear losing most?
- What controls my mood?
- Where do I look for my worth?
- What gets my first and best?

Identify one good thing that may be moving into God's place. Choose one concrete action this week that puts it back in its proper place—and share that step with someone in the group.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Create space for honesty, grace and one practical next step.

A SIMPLE 60-MINUTE RHYTHM

1 Connect 10 MIN

Welcome everyone and use the icebreaker.

2 Read 10 MIN

Recap the big idea and read the passages aloud.

3 Discuss 30 MIN

Use the questions; do not force all six.

4 Respond 10 MIN

Name a next step and pray for one another.

LEAD THE CONVERSATION

1. Begin with grace. God rescued Israel before giving commands. Keep the conversation rooted in response to grace, not guilt.
2. Let silence work. The diagnostic questions are personal. Count to five before rescuing the room.
3. Move from general to personal. If answers stay abstract, gently ask, "What might that look like in your life?"
4. Do not rush to fix. Listen, thank people for honesty and ask before offering advice.
5. Protect confidentiality. Stories shared in the group stay in the group unless someone is in danger.

HELPFUL FOLLOW-UPS

When someone gives a short or general answer, try:

Tell us more about that.

Why do you think that matters?

Where do you feel that tension most?

What would one small act of surrender look like?

How can this group pray for or support you?

KEEP THE MAIN THING CLEAR

God is not one priority among many. He is Lord over every priority.
This is not anti-family, anti-work or anti-success. These are good gifts, but terrible gods.
Putting Jesus first does not promise an easy life. It settles who holds our life when it is hard.
Baptism is not a declaration of perfection. It is a public declaration of allegiance: "Jesus has my life."

CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus, thank You that grace came first. Show us anything that has moved into the place that belongs only to You. Give us courage to surrender it and wisdom to put it back in its proper place. Be Lord over our relationships, work, time, money, hopes and fears. Help our lives answer clearly: You are our Savior, You are our Lord, and we belong to You. Amen.

BEFORE GROUP

- Read the three passages.
- Choose 3-4 questions.
- Prepare your own honest answer.
- Leave time for the challenge.
- Ask who needs follow-up this week.