

FIRST THINGS FIRST //

WEEK 1: FIRST THINGS FIRST

JASON BRINKER - 11/17/24

GROWING TOGETHER *(ANSWER ALL OR JUST SOME OF THE ICE-BREAKERS)*

- What are your plans for this Holiday season? What are you looking forward to the most?
- Remember when you were a kid and you'd spend all day trying to climb the highest tree or jump the farthest ramp? What's the wildest dare or challenge you took on as a kid?
- If someone looked at how you spend your time, energy, or money, what's one thing they'd say matters most to you? Do you think they'd be right?

GROWING WITH GOD *(ANSWER ALL OR JUST SOME OF THE QUESTIONS)*

THIS WEEK'S BIG IDEA: When we truly understand God's generosity toward us, it changes everything—we give Him our first and best as a response to His love.

Read, [1 John 4:19](#), [Romans 12:1](#), [2 Corinthians 8:1-9](#), [John 3:16](#), & [Matthew 6:21;33](#) aloud and go over your sermon notes with one another. (Answer all or some of the questions)

Pastor Jason pointed out how easy it is to compartmentalize our lives, treating our relationship with Jesus as just another app on the screen instead of the operating system behind it all. But God went first in loving, serving, and giving, and our lives should be a grateful response to His grace

- **1 John 4:19 says, "We love because He first loved us." How has experiencing God's love challenged or changed the way you love and serve others?**
- **If you're being honest with yourself (and everyone else), are you satisfied with the effort you've put into changing how you serve others?**

Paul gives us a powerful example in the Macedonian church—a group of believers who, despite facing extreme poverty and trials, never let their circumstances affect the way they expressed gratitude with joy and generosity.

- **Pastor Jason said, "Grateful people are generous people." What's one area of your life where gratitude has led you to give, serve, or bless others?**
- **The Macedonians gave themselves first to the Lord, and everything else followed. What does it look like for you to "give yourself first to the Lord" in your everyday life?**

Pastor Jason reminded us that generosity isn't about how much you have but about the condition of your heart. He emphasized that generosity flows out of gratitude for God's first and best gift to us—Jesus. We each have a choice: will we give God our first and best, or just our leftovers? Let's dive into what it looks like to truly put God first in every area of our lives.

- **Pastor Jason mentioned C.S. Lewis's quote about putting first things first. What are some "second things" that have distracted you from giving God your best?**
- **How might refocusing on God's priorities change your perspective on those things?**
- **Do you remember a time when God was truly first in your life and if He's not there now, what changed?**

We've spent the last nine weeks digging deep into James' instructions on how we are to live. For many of us, certain areas of our lives have been brought to light—areas where God is calling us to make adjustments. Maybe those moments were eye-opening, even uncomfortable, as we realized how much we've been holding on to control or living out of our own understanding. But that's the beauty of God's Word—it doesn't just challenge us; it invites us to change and grow.

If we have some time and you'd like to, feel free to share any thoughts or reflections on everything we've explored in the book of James.

What week resonated with you the most and why?

1. Faithful in Temptation, Bait and Hook
2. Anger and the Transforming Power of the Word
3. Faith Without Favoritism
4. Really Faith Really Works
5. Taming the Tongue
6. Wisdom and the Fool
7. What Are You Fighting For
8. Don't Waste Your Life
9. Developing Patience

Have you made any changes in your life after reading through the book of James? For example, maybe you've started approaching humility and depending more on God in a different way. Feel free to share how God has been working in you!

James reminds us of the importance of prayer in all circumstances. How has your prayer life been affected by what we've learned? What is one thing you can do this week to make prayer a more integral part of your life?

GROWING IN SCRIPTURE

Here is how Pastor Jason simplified what Paul tells us about the Macedonians:

1. The primary response to grace is gratitude (reference, 2 Corinthians 8:1-5)

Also, Pastor Jason references C.S. Lewis' First Things First essay with this quote: "Put first things first and we get second things thrown in; put second things first and we lose both first and second things." Here's a [link](#) to an excerpt from that essay.

And then these words from Pastor Mark Driscoll: "*The primary purpose of giving is not to get the money out of our pockets, but that He would get the idols out of our hearts.*"

GROWING IN OBEDIENCE

Put God First (Matthew 6:33)

This week, take some time to evaluate your priorities—your time, finances, and relationships. Pray, "God, show me where I'm putting other things ahead of You, and help me to make You my first and best."

Life Group Leader: Ask your Life Group to share one area where they feel they might be putting God second. Encourage them to choose one small step they can take this week to refocus on Him, like adjusting their schedule for prayer or time in the Word. Follow up next week to hear what they discovered.

Respond to God's Generosity (2 Corinthians 8:5)

This week, look for one opportunity to give—your time, energy, or resources—to bless someone else. Pray, "Lord, help me to give joyfully and generously, just as You've given to me."

Life Group Leader: Challenge your Life Group to come up with practical ways to live generously this week, whether it's through acts of kindness, serving, or giving. Share examples of generosity in your own life to inspire them. Check in next week to celebrate how they experienced joy through giving.

Choose Gratitude Over Idolatry (Matthew 6:21)

Spend a few moments each day thanking God for His blessings and surrendering anything you might be holding onto too tightly. Pray, "God, help me to trust You more than my possessions, plans, or comfort."

Life Group Leader: Encourage your Life Group to write down three things they're grateful for this week and share them next time you meet. Remind them to pray daily, asking God to reveal anything competing for their heart.

GROWING IN PRAISE AND WORSHIP

This week's song list if you'd like to worship with your group.

[I Thank God](#)

[Graves Into Gardens](#)

[Worthy Of It All](#)

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