

Who's Number One?

Joe Slater

“I have to look out for Number One!” That’s another way of saying I must concern myself first and foremost with my own interests. After all, if I don’t, nobody else will – right?

Far too many Christians have yielded to that worldly philosophy. Paul lamented, *“For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ”* (Philippians 2:21).

What does it mean to seek the things of Christ? The prior two verses tell of Timothy’s genuine care for the welfare of the brethren at Philippi, in sharp contrast to the self-seeking attitude of virtually everyone else. To act in the best interests of Christ’s people is to seek the things of Christ.

Earlier in his letter Paul had exhorted the Philippians, *“Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others”* (2:4). That’s the very thing Jesus did, as shown in 2:5-8. Leaving heaven in order to give Himself to die on the cross as the supreme atonement offering required extreme humility and the endurance of unspeakable pain. Jesus did it because it was in our best interest.

In Matthew 6:33 Jesus didn’t tell His disciples to “seek first your own interests” (i.e. look out for Number One). Instead, He said to *“seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.”* How seriously do we take Him when making decisions? Do we think first of what benefits the cause of Christ? Do we consider what impact (for good or for ill) our decision has on other people?

The title of this article asks, “Who’s Number One?” As the statement “I have to look out for Number One” is commonly used, Number One is you. Let’s switch that around and make Jesus “Number One.” Let’s seek the things which are of Christ!

Every Member Is Needed

In Mark 2:3-12 we read about a paralytic. Not being able to come to Jesus by himself, he required assistance from others. Fortunately, he had some able-bodied friends who helped him.

The Bible attests to this man’s faith and his determination to see Jesus. His friends picked up the bed (mat) on which he was lying and carried him to the house where Jesus was. Not just one or two men could have brought him to Jesus; it took all four friends carrying their respective corners to get the job done.

But wait! The story becomes even more intriguing as we find that there were so many people in the house that the four men couldn’t get their stricken friend inside. Mark 2:24 tells us that his friends lifted the paralytic, bed and all, to the top of the roof of the house, then lowered him into the room where Jesus was preaching. Jesus was impressed with the paralytic’s faith and said to him, *“Son, your sins are forgiven you”* (Mark 2:5).

What a great story of faith and persistence! This man immediately took up his bed as Jesus directed him and went out from the presence of them all. Then they glorified God saying, *“We never saw anything like this before!”* (2:11-12).

Friend, do you realize that many in any community will never find the truth or hear the words of Jesus about salvation without our help? If any of those four friends had dropped his corner, the paralyzed man couldn’t have reached Jesus. As a Christian, have you dropped your corner, or are you carrying it as best you can? Every member is needed to carry their part for the Lord’s work to progress. We need Bible class teachers; we need parents to set the right example for their children. We need men who aspire to serve as elders and deacons, and wives who graciously support them. Let us all do our best to carry our corner!

--Richard Dent (adapted) via *Old Paths*

“And The Stars”

Although light came into existence on the first day (Gen. 1:3-5), it was not until the fourth day that God made the sun, moon, and stars (vss. 14-15). Moses summarizes the event, saying, “God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars” (Genesis 1:16, ESV). The last phrase is strikingly simple and worthy of closer attention.

God’s creative design for the celestial lights, as revealed in the context, includes “signs . . . seasons . . . days and years” (vs. 14). But one is left with the impression that the greater emphasis centers around the “two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night . . .” (vs. 16). Perhaps, they are given greater focus because they are more directly connected to human affairs.

Simply put, stars are “celestial bodies visible at night from Earth as stationary, usually twinkling points of light” (American Heritage Dictionary). Aside from the Sun, our nearest star is nearly 25 trillion miles away. If we could travel at the speed of light, it would take over four years to reach the nearest star.

How long did Adam have to wait to see the stars? All indications point to the fact that the stars were already visible in the night skies over the Garden of Eden even before Adam made his appearance. This speaks powerfully for the apparent age of the universe at the time of creation. Adam was created fully grown as was Eve. So also, in the world around them, trees were producing fruit and plants yielding seed after their kind (vss. 11-13). Air, land, and sea-creatures of all kinds were thriving on our planet by the sixth day of creation (vss. 20-25). If the earth was fully grown, why not the universe? This explains why we can see the light of stars trillions of miles away. Thus, in a moment of time and in a single spoken word, God created the stars and all the light transmitted from each star so that we might be immediately benefitted by its creation.

Far from being an afterthought, “and the stars” pushes our thoughts in a heavenly direction. With David, we humbly inquire, “When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained; What is man that You take thought of Him And the son of man that You care for him?” (Ps. 8:4). We are truly blessed.

--Glen Elliott (Greenbriar, AR)