



## DISCUSSION GUIDE

Words That Will Change Your Life – “First”

Pastor Stephen Hayes

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**Main Idea** – According to the Bible, being first does not involve finishing ahead of – or beating – someone else in a competition. Jesus has already won the race of life, and He has a unique role for you. You are the first person He has thought of to do that job.

### The problem that competitive people have with “firstness”

- Many people place great importance on being first. They want to “win the race” and finish ahead of everyone else. The problem with that outlook is that only one person will win; everybody else will be a loser.
- The Bible story about the competition between Jacob and Esau at their birth is an example of a competitive, works righteousness, desire to please God and be number one. **Genesis 25: 24-26 – So when her days were fulfilled for her to give birth, indeed there were twins in her womb. And the first came out red. He was like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau. Afterward his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau’s heel; so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them. (NKJV)**
- However, when God talks about “firstness” He is usually not thinking about having you compete with other people. Rather, He is thinking about having you as the primary person He will use to do something. **Hebrews 12: 1-2 – Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (NKJV)**
- Martin Luther King once elaborated on **Mark 10: 35-40**, where the disciples James and John had asked Jesus if they could be seated at His side in Heaven. MLK said, “And so Jesus gave us a new norm of greatness. If you want to be important -wonderful. If you want to be recognized -wonderful. If you want to be great -wonderful. But recognize that he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. That’s a new definition of greatness.”
- God’s idea of “firstness” involves fresh opportunities and success for each of His followers. **Matthew 20:16 – “So those who are last now will be first then, and those who are first will be last.” (NLT)**

- God is writing your story. You are the only one who can live it.

## FOUR THINGS TO RUN YOUR LIFE'S RACE

### 1. Give first

- From the very beginning, God gave. **John 3:16 – For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (NKJV)**
- What you willingly give to others in life – without having your own personal agenda – God will give back to you in dividends. **Luke 6: 37-38 – “Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn others, or it will all come back against you. Forgive others, and you will be forgiven. Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full – pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.” (NLT)**
- The amount you give will determine the amount you are given back. **Malachi 3:10 – “Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this,” says the Lord of hosts, “if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.” (NKJV)**
- God will give you back more so you will again give the excess to others. The cycle keeps on going and growing.
- Don't concern yourself so much with where the gift is going, but rather with where it originally came from.

### 2. Forgive first

- Martin Luther King said, “Forgiveness is not an occasional act, it is a constant attitude.”
- **Matthew 5: 23-24 – Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. (NKJV)**
- Satan will try to use unforgiveness to drive you away from God and from other people.
- If you hold onto unforgiveness, you will likely find yourself surrounded by other unforgiving people. If you are a person who has learned to forgive, you will likely find yourself surrounded by other forgiving people.

- During His crucifixion Jesus had forgiveness on His mind. **Luke 23:34 – Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” (NKJV)**

### 3. Serve first

- Martin Luther King said, “Everybody can be great...because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.”
- **Matthew 20: 26-28 – Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. (NKJV)**
- It has been said that to serve is to invest in the vision of someone else.

### 4. Seek first

- God put an innate desire in you to seek God, and to seek a better way in life.
- The Bible tells you to follow your instincts and to seek God, even when He may be making it difficult to find Him. **Matthew 6: 33 – But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.**
- When you find God, you will begin to learn about Him and His Kingdom. God's Kingdom – like any kingdom – has four main elements: a king, territory, citizens, and laws.
- As you continue to learn about God, He will begin to show you a specific territory – or role – He has set aside from the beginning of time for you.
- Keep searching. Don't stop. If you haven't found God, then you haven't looked in the right place. He is available. You can be a citizen of His Kingdom.
- Pray, hang around the right kind of people, study the Bible, learn to hear the Holy Spirit, give to others, forgive others, serve others, and keep seeking more understanding.

## Reflective Questions for Words That Will Change Your Life – “First”

1. Pastor Stephen said that - in the Bible - the concepts of “first” and “priority” are basically synonymous. What priorities did this sermon message say you should focus on?
2. Why, then, would it be unchristian to be overly competitive; to be continually trying to beat other people at things? Use some of the Bible verses in this lesson to answer that question.
3. The Bible tells you to seek God, with the implication He will not automatically reveal to you everything about Himself, or His plan for your own meaningfulness. Why is it actually a good thing that God requires you to continually seek Him, even after you are saved?