

Are You Really Pursuing What Matters Most?

The things we pursue in life have everything to do with our joy and fulfillment. While it's certainly not wrong to desire success, a better-paying job or a higher standard of living, the Bible tells us that seeking after "things" and making them our priority will only make us miserable in the end.

Seek is a strong word. It means "to crave, pursue, to make sacrifices to get, to go after with all of your strength and all of your heart."

I encourage you to take a moment and ask yourself, "What am I seeking? What am I spending most of my time talking about? Where do I invest the majority of my energy?"

Romans 14:17 (NIV) says, "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

In other words, the kingdom of God is not about us simply trying to get what we want. Instead, it's about seeking a relationship with God and experiencing true kingdom benefits. It's about having a greater understanding of His righteousness (our right standing with Him through Jesus Christ), His peace and His joy in our lives. Only then will we find what we are truly looking for.

In the beginning of our relationship with God, it's all about us—and for a while, this is fine. I believe this is where we all start. We come to Him with our list of needs and desires. We bring Him our problems and want Him to fix everything. But eventually, the time comes for us to grow and mature.

I remember coming to a point in my life when I had a lot of "things" but realized I simply wasn't happy. After praying and

asking the Lord what was wrong, He spoke to my heart and said, "Joyce, you are too shallow—it's time to go out into the deep."

That was difficult to hear, but I knew exactly what He meant. It was time for me to start living the "deeper life"—to begin seeking God for who He is and not just what He could do for me.

You see, shallow Christians want the fruit, but they are not concerned about the roots. I love Isaiah 37:31b. It says, "take root below and bear fruit above."

Just look at nature. Large trees with thick, full branches have a massive underground root system that spreads both deep and wide. Without this support system, the tree could never weather a storm.

In the same way, we must develop deep spiritual roots before we can truly enjoy the big, full life God has intended for us. This includes cultivating a relationship with the Lord, finding out what He says about us in His Word and becoming rooted and grounded in His love.

A lot of times, we come at it the wrong way. We want to have all of the benefits—more privileges, a bigger career, more money—before we ever establish our roots. But without a strong foundation in God, these things can actually hurt us more than they can help. And without deep roots, we'll never endure the storms of life.

Friends, the Lord is more concerned about your inner life than your outer life. Why? Because He knows that when you are spiritually strong on the inside, then you are able to handle any situation that arises in your life on the outside.

I think sometimes we're afraid that if we stop chasing after all the "things," we'll never get what we want in life. But the exact opposite is true.

Psalm 37:4 (AMPC) says, "Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He will give you the desires and secret petitions of your heart."

As we place our focus on God, He causes our desires to be in line with His plan and what's best for our lives.

Years ago, while I was praying (probably for something I wanted), the Lord spoke a life-changing truth to my heart. He said, "Joyce, seek My face and not My hand. If you seek My face, My hand will always be open."

Matthew 6:33 (NIV) says it this way: "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

I can tell you from personal experience that when you make God your No. 1 priority, He not only fills your life with His amazing peace, joy and satisfaction, but He also gives you the desires of your heart.

I encourage you to make a decision today to pursue the one who matters most. Seek God for who He is and make your relationship with Him a priority.

As you do, I believe you'll discover what you've been looking for all along. {eo}

Joyce Meyer is a New York Times' bestselling author and founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries Inc. She has written more than 100 books, including *Battlefield of the Mind*. She hosts the *Enjoying Everyday Life* radio and TV programs. For more information, visit .

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