

CHURCH OF THE HIGHLANDS

Study Guide

Divine Order

Mark Pettus
January 4, 2026

Major Points

- 1** The new year brings both excitement for change and the stress of past failure, but Jesus offers a different path than resolutions and self-effort.
Matthew 6:33
- 2** Matthew 6:33 is the key to the abundant life — real change comes not from trying harder but from living a reordered life with God as the controlling priority.
Matthew 6:33
- 3** 'Seek' is a present active imperative — pursuing God is an ongoing, never-ending action across all three tenses of salvation (past, present, future).
Philippians 2:12
- 4** Seeking His kingdom means surrendering governance of every area of life to God — He is not a guest but the governor who sets policy over relationships, finances, identity, and desires.
Psalms 24:1
- 5** We cannot achieve righteousness by our own effort; through the death and resurrection of Jesus and the indwelling Holy Spirit, we receive the power to be transformed into God's standard.
Romans 8:11

Key Quotes

- “the revival sparked that 2025 was is going to turn into a raging fire in 2026*
at 1:11
- “The kingdom must be sought first, not as an added concern, like not as something else on our list, but as the controlling priority that orders all of our life.*
at 13:58
- “It's easy in my life for God to be more of a guest than a governor.*
at 24:02
- “He's either Lord of all or not Lord at all.*
at 22:04
- “put first things first, and we get second things thrown in. Put second things first, and we lose both first and second things.*
at 29:41

Discussion Questions

1. Pastor Pettus says 'it's easy in my life for God to be more of a guest than a governor.' In what specific area of your life might you be enjoying God's benefits without actually letting Him set the policy?
.....
.....
2. The word 'priority' originally had no plural form — it simply meant the most important thing. If you honestly evaluated your daily schedule and attention, what currently functions as your real priority, and how does it compare to where God ranks?
.....
.....
3. Pastor Pettus shared that 80% of New Year's resolutions fail by February. What past patterns of self-effort or willpower have you relied on for change, and how might seeking God first produce a different result this year?
.....
.....
4. The sermon describes seeking God as a 'present active imperative' — an ongoing, never-ending action. What practical rhythms or habits could you establish to make seeking God a continuous pursuit rather than a seasonal event?
.....
.....
5. Pastor Pettus testified that a crippling spirit of fear was broken when he simply asked the Holy Spirit for freedom. Is there an area of bondage in your life where you have been trying harder instead of asking the Holy Spirit to transform you?
.....
.....

Word Studies

ζητεῖτε

zēteite

Greek

Present active imperative of ζητεῖν, meaning to seek, desire, endeavor to find. The present tense indicates continuous, habitual action — not a one-time search but an ongoing pursuit. The imperative mood makes it a command, not a suggestion. Jesus is issuing a standing order to keep seeking as the default posture of life.

Usage: 117 times in the NT

βασιλείαν

basileian

Greek

Kingdom, reign, rule, royal dominion. From basileus (king). In the Gospels, basileia theou (kingdom of God) refers not primarily to a geographic territory but to God's active sovereign rule — His governance, authority, and reign over lives that submit to Him. Pastor Pettus emphasizes this distinction: kingdom as governance, not geography.

Usage: 162 times in the NT

δικαιοσύνην

dikaioσynēn

Greek

Righteousness, justice, the state of being right before God. In Matthew 6:33 it refers specifically to God's righteousness — not moral self-improvement but the righteous standing and transformed character that God grants through the Holy Spirit. Paul's letters develop this as an imputed (given) righteousness received through faith, not earned through law-keeping.

Usage: 92 times in the NT

Cross References

Colossians 3:1-2

Paul commands believers to set their hearts and minds on things above where Christ is seated — a direct parallel to Jesus' command to seek first His kingdom, establishing heavenly priorities over earthly anxieties.

Jeremiah 29:13

God promises 'You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart,' reinforcing the sermon's emphasis that seeking God is an ongoing, wholehearted pursuit that always yields results.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding — mirrors the sermon's call to stop striving in human effort and surrender governance of every area to God.

Galatians 2:20

Paul declares he has been crucified with Christ and no longer lives but Christ lives in him — illustrating the sermon's point that righteousness is received through the indwelling Spirit, not achieved through personal willpower.

1 Peter 5:7

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you — connects directly to Pastor Pettus's closing prayer of releasing worry and anxiety into God's hands.

Further Reading

- **Renovation of the Heart: Putting On the Character of Christ**
by Dallas Willard
- **The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God**
by Dallas Willard
- **Mere Christianity**
by C.S. Lewis

Scripture References

REFERENCE	TYPE	TIME	CONTEXT
Matthew 6:33	Read Aloud	15:20	<i>But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, ...</i>
Psalms 92:12	Read Aloud	6:10	<i>The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they...</i>
Psalms 24:1	Read Aloud	28:20	<i>The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the...</i>
Romans 3:10	Read Aloud	30:30	<i>There is no one righteous, not even one.</i>
Romans 3:23	Read Aloud	30:40	<i>For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of...</i>
Romans 6:23	Read Aloud	30:50	<i>For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God...</i>
2 Corinthians 5:21	Read Aloud	31:10	<i>God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so t...</i>
Romans 8:4	Read Aloud	31:40	<i>In order that the righteous requirement of the law...</i>
Romans 8:11	Read Aloud	32:00	<i>And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the...</i>
Philippians 2:12	Referenced	26:00	<i>Continue to work out your salvation with fear and ...</i>
Romans 13:11	Referenced	26:40	<i>Our salvation is nearer now than when we first bel...</i>
Psalms 20:7	Read Aloud	36:20	<i>Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we ...</i>
Isaiah 49:23	Read Aloud	36:30	<i>Then you will know that I am the Lord; those who h...</i>