



## Who's Number One?

by Rev. Luther Brunette

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**Introduction:** This time of the year many sports teams are claiming to be number one. Yet, in time, only one team can and will win the championship. Only one can come in **FIRST!** In a similar way, God reminds us that He will not only lead all season, He will be first in the end. Long ago, the Lord spoke to Moses and the children of Israel reminding them who was to be **first** in their lives. (See **Exodus 20:3**.)

Jesus says in **Matthew 22:37-38**, “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the **first** and greatest commandment.*” Jesus says in **Matthew 6:33**, “*Seek **first** the kingdom of God and his righteousness...*”

Our Lord would have us consider...

- Who or what is number one in my life?
- Who or what is first in my family?
- Who is number one in our church?

**Prayer:** Our heavenly Father, You placed us **first** when You made us and then re-made us through Your only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. As we turn to You and Your Word today, empower us to respond to Your grace by making You number one in our lives. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

## GOD IS A GOD OF FIRSTS

The Greek word for first is *protos* and is used often in the New Testament. In the Greek New Testament as well as in Greek literature of the First Century, the word *first* often describes what is most important. Look at these passages to determine who is first.

See **Colossians 1:15–16**. *He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God, the **firstborn** [prototokos] overall creation. For by him all things were created.*

See **Colossians 1:18**. Referring to Jesus, the apostle Paul writes, *He is the beginning and the **firstborn** from among the dead so that in everything he may have supremacy.*

**Romans 8:29** – Jesus is called the **firstborn** among many brothers.

**Revelation 1:8,17** – Jesus says, *I am the Alpha [the first] and the Omega, who is and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty... Do not be afraid, I am the First and the Last...*

God's Word leads us to confess the supreme nature of Christ Jesus as the one and only Son of God and Savior of the world. In Christ, we see God's divine glory and power. Indeed, Jesus is #1!

Amazingly, Jesus shares His grace and glory with all who place their trust in Him. God clearly placed us as His **first** priority when He made us and then when He sent His only Son to die for us to redeem us from our sins and then to rise for us to give us eternal life. In fact, the plural form of **firstborn** [*prototokoi*] is used in reference to the church. In **Hebrews 12:23** believers are called *the church of the firstborn*. We are honored to be God's top priority in the universe through Jesus Christ, the One and Only Son of the Father, the **First** and the Last.

## FIRST THINGS FIRST

Our love is always a response to God's love for us. **1 John 4:19** says, *We love, because He **first** loved us.* When we know and experience the love of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who died and rose for us, His love is glowing first in our lives. His love is our love. His life is our life. His grace and power set us on fire once again so that He can live with us as the number one priority in our lives!

In response to God's first love for us in Christ Jesus, we are compelled to honor and love Him and place Him **first** in our lives. (See **Matthew 6:33** and **1 John 4:19**.) God's grace empowers us to place Jesus Christ **first** in our priorities, our attitudes, our schedules, and in our actions. But let's get real!

**Let's Talk:** Is this easy for you to do? In what areas of your life do you find it challenging to have Jesus Christ as your top priority?

The apostle Paul needed to remind the young pastor Timothy in **2 Timothy 1:6** to *fan into flame the gift of God which is in you.* The love of Christ Jesus is burning brightly in you when His grace is number one in your life. The gift of your faith, given to you in your baptism, must be re-kindled daily through God's Word and Sacrament.

**Let's Talk:** Do you ever sense that your faith is in a rut? Do you ever just go through the motions during your worship and prayer life? Does it ever seem like the ministries at church have lost their luster?

## REKINDLE THE LOVE

In **Revelation 2**, the Lord Jesus is speaking to the church at Ephesus. While He commends their perseverance of faith in the midst of hardships, He says in v. 4. *Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.*

In marriage, it is far too common for the spark of romantic love to break down. Married couples start taking each other for granted. They get into ruts and routines. Life within the marriage relationship can get dull and boring and become unfulfilling. In a similar way, like the Christians at Ephesus, we can fall away from Jesus as our first love. Other priorities slip in ahead of our love for our Savior.

Couples who desire to keep the spark of emotional and romantic love burning in their marriage need to work at it. They have date nights. They plan getaways. They listen to and encourage each other. They speak tenderly and “keep in touch.”

One way we put God first in our lives is by putting others ahead of ourselves. Read **Mark 9:33-37**. When we humbly welcome the least of God's children with open arms, Jesus himself is welcomed and elevated among us. Then we are first because the One who is first is at work in us!

**Let's Talk:** What needs to happen for your faith to be set ablaze? In what area of your faith life does there need to be a re-kindling so that your first love for Jesus Christ is enflamed? Where do you need to set others ahead of yourself? Is there an area of ministry at your church in which God can use you to re-ignite the passion and love for sharing Christ and His love?

**Closing Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank You for making us number one by dying on the cross and rising again. You defeated Satan and sin and death itself to give us life today and for eternity. Now work in us to respond to Your love by putting You **first** in all of our words, our actions, and our attitudes and by putting others ahead of ourselves. In Your Name we pray. Amen.



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