

## Setting Spiritual Priorities

Text : **I Cor. 15: 1-11**

### **INTRODUCTION :**

#### **A. What is the top priority in your life ?**

1. Success in business ?
2. Is it the relationships with your spouse ?
3. Is it your children or grandchildren ?

#### **B. Everyone has a top priority in his life.**

1. Some have never consciously set a priority.
  - a. They haven't even thought about their priority.
  - b. They just live and let life happen, but they develop a priority.
2. Some think about priorities and consciously set them.
  - a. Successful people prioritize their time, their resources, their life.
  - b. They periodically evaluate and adjust their priorities.
3. Which are you ? A planner or a one who "lives in the moment." ( Lets life unfold. )

#### **C. The setting of priorities is beneficial on many levels.**

1. Prioritizing helps one to manage his limitations.
  - a. Time
  - b. Money
  - c. Ability
2. Setting priorities prevents others from controlling one's destiny.
  - a. Prioritizing keeps one focused on the truly important, not on the clutter of life.
  - b. Those without clear priorities are easily carried away by the excitement of events.  
\* **Excited by a great salesman, a young man spent his college fund on a new car.**
  - c. It's normal to value the things valued by those we love and respect.
3. MANY things in life compete for one's attention, prioritizing enables wise choices
  - a. "The squeaky wheel gets the grease."
  - b. So many small things bombard one's life he can become overwhelmed.
  - c. This competition extends to the battle between the spiritual and the physical.

### **TRANSITION :**

**Our lesson will show that the setting of priorities is not only fundamental to success in this world, but also in the world to come.**

## I. Visual Demonstration of the importance of priorities.

### A. Fill a large jar.

1. Fill the jar with large objects. ( Ask the audience if full. ) ( **apple, orange, pear** )
2. Fill empty spaces with smaller objects. ( Ask the audience if full. ) ( **peas** )
3. Fill remaining empty spaces with granular material. ( Ask the audience if full. )

### B. Fill a second large jar.

1. Use exactly the same materials in exactly the same amounts.
2. Reverse the order in which the materials are added. ( smallest to largest )
3. All larger items will not fit, but exaggerate the futile effort to get the items in.

### C. Apply :

1. The jar is one's life.
2. The objects are things that vie for time, attention and resources. ( **largest = important** )
3. If the most important ( largest ) items are not put first in one's life, they will be crowded out by lesser important ( smaller ) things.

## II. It's very important to set and maintain priorities in our lives .. spiritual & physical.

### A. Jesus emphasized the importance of setting the proper values in life.

1. **Matt. 6:33** - **But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.**
  - a. Set the kingdom of God as your very highest priority.
  - b. The church is the kingdom. ( **now & eternally** )
  - c. The Christian must put God and God's kingdom above anything on this earth.
2. This priority **sets the Christian apart** and distinguishes him from the world.
  - a. **Read Context ... Matt. 6: 19-35**
  - b. The people of the world concern themselves with a future that has no future; it ends.
  - c. Like Abraham, Christians seek the eternal city, a future without end.
    - 1) **Heb. 11: 9-10, 16**
    - 2) **Heb. 13: 14**
3. Jesus set one command to be most highly prioritized. **"Love God" Matt. 22:38**

### B. The Apostles set priorities.

1. Remember our text :
  - a. **I Cor. 5: 3** - **For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received ...**
  - b. Like Paul, we must declare the whole counsel of God ( **Ax 20** ), but some teachings must be prioritized.

2. The Apostle Paul was ready to go to be with the Lord, but did not because of priorities.
  - a. **Phil. 1: 23- But I am hard-pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for *that is very much better*;  
24- yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.**
  - b. Like Paul, the Christian must surrender his personal priorities to those of God.

**C. The world will never stop pressuring Christians to adapt their priorities.**

1. We are in the minority.
2. Social pressure is difficult to resist.
3. Satan offers MANY sweet things to occupy our lives.
  - a. Relationships ( **They require time.** )
  - b. Business and professional opportunities or responsibilities
  - c. Entertainment ( **video games, movies, sports** )

**III. The priorities one sets determines his eternal destiny.**

**A. Salvation and eternal life are only found in Jesus.**

1. Jesus claimed to be the only way to get to Heaven.
 

**John 14:6- Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.**
2. The Apostles taught Jesus was the only source of salvation.
 

**Acts 4:12 - And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under Heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.**

**B. Jesus refuses to occupy any position other than first place in one’s life.**

1. **Matt. 10: 37-39**

**“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.  
38 - And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.  
39 - He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.**
2. If there is anything or anyone prioritized above the Christ, one is **“not worthy”** of Him.
3. What does it mean to be **“not worthy”** of Him?
  - a. The parallel passage in Luke says “cannot be my disciple.” ( **Luke 14: 26-27** )
  - b. One who is unwilling to put Jesus first in His life CANNOT BE SAVED.

**\* THEREFORE :**

**the setting and maintaining of priorities is a matter of being lost or saved.**

**IV. How does one know he has made Christ and His kingdom their top priority.****A. Everyone has a multitude of priorities in his life?**

1. We live on this earth and must survive, but that cannot be a top priority.
2. We have those for whom we are responsible. but they cannot be our top priority.
3. We all have loved ones, but they cannot be a Christian's top priority. ( **grand kids** )

**B. Priorities tend to be fluid.**

1. It's always easier to set priorities than to maintain them.
2. Unforeseen events occur creating needs.
3. Self-discipline often fails.
  - 1) **It's hard to deny the demands of the hear and the now.**
  - 2) We get distracted by good things until we loose sight of the best things.

**C. Stated priorities are not always our true priorities.**

1. **Acts 5: 1-11** ... Ananias and his wife Sapphira stated one goal, but had another.
2. God knows what we truly value above all else.
  - a. **Heb. 4: 12**
  - b. **I Cor. 14: 24-25**
  - c. **John 12: 48**

**D. Our actions reveal what we truly value more than does our mouth.**

1. What we spend our time doing reveals what we value.
  - a. Few people are honest with themselves about their true priorities.
  - b. Most of us would say we put God and His kingdom first,
    - 1) **BUT** our actions prove otherwise.
    - 2) One who only attends services and then spends his time watching TV
    - 3) Those who make many of bills and have to work to pay them prove they value things.
  - c. We spend the largest portion of our time on the things we value most.
2. What we spend our money one reveals our true values.
  - a. How can I say God and His church is my greatest priority when I only pay my tithe?
  - b. When I spend more for my car payment than I give to God, what do I value more ?
  - c. When I buy presents for my family but none for God, who have I prioritized highest?
3. What we use our abilities to accomplish reflect our values.
  - a. All of us have vastly more abilities than we ever develop.
  - b. We train and learn how to do the things we value. ( **vocational , recreational** )
  - c. One feels a sense of accomplishment when he accomplishes what he values.

**CONCLUSION :****A. Setting priorities is one of the keys to success in any endeavor.**

1. Those who failure to set priorities and stick to them :
  - a. Often stay busy with good things, but fail to do the best thing.
  - b. May end up doing what other people value.
  - c. Usually do not accomplish as much as those who do prioritize their life.
2. Those who are self-disciplined enough to live by priorities :
  - a. Will stand out from the crowd ... **Matt. 5: 16** ... **Lights in the darkness**
  - b. True priorities always manifest themselves in actions. ... **VERY DIFFERENT LIVES**
  - c. Differences bring social pressure, sometimes even ridicule.

**B. Priorities are set to bring success in the realm they target.**

1. Worldly priorities bring success in this earthly realm.
  - a. Easy ... Instant gratification.
  - b. Temporary
  - c. Eventually, eternal torment away from God.
2. Godly priorities bring eternal rewards. **HEAVEN**
  - a. Others will appear to be more successful, but it is an illusion.
  - b. God rewards faithful servants generously.
  - c. The rewards will never be consumed.

**C. Choose wisely :**

1. Good or bad, eternity never ends.
2. Priorities can be changed now, but not after judgment.
3. Now is the time to store up treasure for eternity.

**INVITATION :**

1. Will you not get your priorities straight so you can be with God in eternity ?
  2. God patiently pleads for you to choose eternity with Him.
  3. He loves you and if you reject Him it will break His heart to have to cast you away.
- \* He died redeem you, will you not commit to live for Him ?**

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