

Setting Spiritual Priorities

Text : **Matthew 6: 19-35**

S#1.

INTRODUCTION :

A. What is the top priority in your life ?

S#2.

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

B. Everyone has a top priority in his /her life.

1. Some have never consciously set a priority, but they have one.
 - a. These people haven't even thought about their priority.
 - b. They just live and let life happen, but everyone has a priority.
2. On the other hand, there are some who 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. (*especially in business*)
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. (*winners –vs– wieners*)

S#3.

1. Prioritizing helps one to manage both assets and his limitations.
 - a. Time
 - b. Money
 - c. Abilities (*Abilities change with time.*)
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.**
3. **Adopted priorities:** It's normal to value the things valued by those we love.
4. MANY things in life compete for one's attention, prioritizing enables wise choices.
 - a. "*The squeaky wheel gets the grease.*" *If not on a fixed course, will be led by squeaks.*
 - 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.

S#4.

I. Visual Demonstration of the importance of priorities.**S#5.****A. Use a large jar with a capacity more than 1 gallon. (*The jar is life.*)**

1. Fill the jar more than half way with small round objects. (*e.g. gum balls*)
2. Try to fit three large objects in the jar.
3. Only one will fit all the ways in.

Apply : *The small things in life can crowd out the more important things.*

B. In a second identical large jar.

1. Put the large balls in first and then add the smaller items.
2. The small items will fill in around the balls and ALL will fit in.

Apply : *If we prioritize the most important things, other things will also fit.*

S#6.**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.****S#7.**

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. Remember ... **Matt. 6: 19-34** ... Earthbound thinking sets earthbound priorities.
 - 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** – By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; **10** for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.
 - 2) **Heb. 13: 14** – For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come.
3. Jesus set one command to be most highly prioritized. “Love God” **Matt. 22:38**

S#8.**B. The Apostles set priorities.**

1. The Apostle and Christians today must preach the whole counsel of God.

Acts 20: 20 – how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, **21** solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

S#9.

Vs 27 ... I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.

2. The Apostle Paul set priorities with his teaching

I Cor. 5: 3 – For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received

3. 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 **S#10.** 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. **S#11**

1. We are in the minority.
2. Social pressure is difficult to resist. (*Paddling your canoe against the current*)
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. **S#12.**

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; **S#13.** 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. **S#14.**

1. **Matt. 10: 37** – He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; **S#15.** 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 someone prioritizes anything or anyone above the Christ, that person is “**not worthy**” of Him.
3. What does it mean to be “**not worthy**” of Him?
 - a. Pg. 4

- a. The parallel passage in Luke says “cannot be my disciple.”

Luke 14: 26— If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father **S#16.**
and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes,
and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. 27 Whoever does
not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

- 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. **S#17.**

IV. How does one know he has made Christ and His kingdom his top priority. S#18.

A. Every Christian intends to put God first in all things, BUT then life happens and everyone develops 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 unanticipated needs.
3. Self-discipline often fails.
 - 1) **It’s hard to deny the demands of the here and the now.** (*when the wheel squeaks*)
 - 2) We get so distracted by **good** things that we loose sight of the **best** thing.

C. Our 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** – For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any **S#19.**
two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul
and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the
thoughts and intentions of the heart.
 - c. **John 12: 48** – He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one
who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.

D. Our actions reveal what we truly value more than does our words. S#20.

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** for many of us, our actions prove otherwise.
- 2) **Priority ??** One who only attends services and then spends his time watching TV
- 3) Those who make many of bills for things they don't really need and then have to spend their time working to pay them off, 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** on 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**)
4. One feels a sense of accomplishment when he accomplishes what he values.
What gives you that sense of accomplishment ?

CONCLUSION :

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

S#21.

1. Those who fail 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 fixed 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. Any earthly success is temporary because this life is temporary.
 - b. Earthbound priorities eventually result in eternal torment away from God.
2. Godly priorities result in eternal rewards in **HEAVEN**
 - a. Others will appear to be more successful, but it is an illusion.
 - b. God rewards faithful servants generously ... **eternally**.

C. Choose wisely :

S#22

1. Good priorities or bad, eternity never ends.
2. Priorities can be changed now, but NOT at 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, **but** if you reject Him, He will cast you away from His presence.

*** Jesus died redeem you,
will you not commit to live for Him ?**

S#23

S#34. ... Communion slide

Lesson Text ;**Matthew 6: 19-34**

19 Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. **20** "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; **21** for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

22 The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. **23** "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

24 No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth

25 For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? **26** " Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? **27** "And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? **28** "And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, **29** yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. **30** "But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! **31** "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' **32** "For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. **33** "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

34 So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.