

DETERMINING PRIORITIES IN OUR LIVES (For individual or small group use)

To the Leader: If you are using this exercise for a small group, the following are some points that can be brought up and possibly discuss before going through the actual exercise. You can take and expand upon each thought as your time will allow.

- Except for placing God first in our lives, the Bible does not dictate exact priorities (except for the implication of some such as parenting, giving etc). Why?
 1. Our individual lives are all different.
 2. We each have different gifts/abilities that God gave.
 3. God has different ways for us to serve Him.
 4. What one does, does not mean we all do the same. God did not create clones.

- We need to be able to determine what God has for each of us by learning to distinguish what is important from what is urgent or trivial.

- Jesus told us to take His yoke upon us and learn from Him. He is the one that will lead. We need to strip of any self made yokes.

(DIRECTIONS:)

1. Read through the Scriptures below.
2. Pass out the sheets which the members of your group will fill out.
3. In the first chart which has the categories across the top (God, Family, Work etc.), have them spend a few minutes filling out basic duties or requirements that they feel they must do under these categories. For instance: under family: fix meals, laundry, etc. Also: Answer the two questions following.
4. Only as time allows, you can have them do some sharing regarding what they fill out and the demands upon their time that they are feeling.
5. In the next box that lists the urgent, not urgent etc., have them take the various duties/demands from the first chart and place these in the categories that they feel would be appropriate. Often we find that what we feel is urgent is really not so urgent or important and sometimes what we feel is unimportant God may show is important. However, this chart will begin to help in the discernment process.
6. After filling these out, as a group go through the rest of the topics as to how to prioritize, areas to prioritize, evaluating etc. As they bring up areas that may be a struggle or to determine in their lives, others may have suggestions or Scriptures from God's Word that will give wisdom in making decisions as to God's priorities for them.
7. In closing, pray as a group or have a time of prayer for individuals struggling with re-arranging priorities. Another suggestion would be to have a follow-up time or accountability time as people work this out in their lives.

DETERMINING THE PRIORITIES IN MY LIFE

Ephesians 5:16

Galatians 6:10

Luke 12:15: what is not on God's list: spending our efforts to just gain possessions for ourselves

GOD	FAMILY	WORK	MINISTRY/SERVING	OTHER

What order do you have these in at the present?

What order do you feel they should be in?

In the box below, we have 4 different categories. Based upon the items you listed in the categories above, where would you place these in the boxes below?

URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	UNIMPORTANT

If you have trouble determining what box to place some of these things in, let's look at the following:

1. What are the Biblical guidelines that must govern my priorities?
 - a. Should be determined by what will bring the most glory and honor to Christ.
 - b. Seriously consider what has eternal value and what is simply temporal.
2. Am I willing to give God control of my priorities and put necessary disciplines into my life?
 - a. We should not hand God a pre-planned agenda and ask Him to bless it.
 - b. Setting biblical priorities means we may have to cross some good things off our list for things that are better.
 - c. When we have a good understanding of what's important to God, then we'll be able to make the right choices as to our priorities.

HOW TO PRIORITIZE

Say NO to unimportant tasks.

1. Don't give yourself to those who don't absolutely need you at the expense of those who do.
2. Distinguish opportunity from distraction. Many times distractions come disguised as opportunities. Unless we have thought through whom we are, what our lives are all about, and what's important to us, we will not have the focus to choose the best.
3. Recognize the difference between a good idea and a God idea.

AREAS TO PRIORITIZE:

1. Relationship with God
2. Relationship with your husband
3. Relationship with your children
4. Health, leisure, and rest
5. Job (if working)
6. Ministry/serving in the church

EVALUATING

1. What is the real motivation for what I am doing? Am I doing this to meet some need in myself? To prove something? To gain something? To avoid something?
2. Who am I trying to please – myself? Others? God?
3. Why do I feel compelled to do this? Do I feel as though something is at stake? What would happen if I waited or didn't do it at all?

4. Is there anything on your schedule that adds stress to your life? If so, make a list of what does or doesn't. Then consider the stressful things in light of the above three questions. What conclusions did you reach?

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

The emptiest lives are those stuffed with motion from morning to night. It is only when we have elbow room built into our days and into our lives that we become still enough for God to speak to us.

It is not a coincidence that the phrases "wait on the Lord" and "be still" are found so often in the Scriptures. Regular time to quiet your spirit before God and ask what God seems to be saying, how He seems to be moving, and where He seems to be leading is crucial. Intentional prayer about the demands of the day, moments of quiet between appointments, and monthly retreats to break from your normal routine – all of these are pauses that put us within reach of God's voice. We should see them as nonnegotiable ways of wetting our finger and holding it up in the air to see which way the wind of God's Spirit is moving around us. How else will we be able to discern which activities are a waste of time and to identify areas not yet considered that should be at the top of our list?

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LOOK AT THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

Jesus made decisions based on His priorities. One morning after a tiring night, Jesus went to have some time to Himself. It was not to be...

At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people came to where he was and tried to keep him from leaving them. But he said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent." (Luke 4:24-44)

Notice three things. **First**, people tried to keep Jesus from leaving. Perhaps they appealed to his compassion. The better job you do, the more people will ask you to do. Without intending to, people will ask you to do things that meet their needs, but don't necessarily match your priorities.

Second, Jesus knew his purpose. He said, "I must preach the good news....because that is why I was sent." His purpose determined his priorities. He did not let the emotion of the moment cloud his judgment. Since he decided in advance what he should do, he was not distracted.

Third, Jesus did what he was called to do. The pressure to do that which is good but not best has put many wagons in the ditch. There is one great rule for priority living we glean from the example of Jesus: Make decisions on the basis of your priorities, not your pressures.