



Running Rabid

Balancing the *passion to pursue* with the *pressure to produce*.

Re-prioritizing our Priorities

Major in the majors and minor in the minors

I think it is safe to say that priorities pretty much dictate what we do. I have also learned (at least about myself) that priorities are not nearly as much related to *what I say* as they are related to *what I do*. One of the best examples of priorities involves money. A person might tell me they value giving and the importance of placing God first with their finances, but the real “proof in the pudding” is when they show me their checkbook.

The story below provides a wonderful example of what it means to have priorities.

The Titanic sailed from England on May 5, 1911 and sunk five days later after striking an iceberg. Fully loaded, the ship could carry 3,547 people including passengers and crew. In today's currency the cost to build the Titanic was \$400 million and the cost for a First Class (parlor suite) ticket was \$83,200. The ship had a total lifeboat capacity for 1,178 people, which was one of the reasons that 1,516 of the 2,229 passengers aboard the Titanic died the night it sunk.

The wealthy women and children were allowed to get on the lifeboats first. A story was told about one woman who, after she had gotten into a lifeboat, realized she had forgotten something very important. She told the crewmember she had to go back to her room; he warned her that if she was not back in several minutes she would be left. As you can imagine there was utter pandemonium on the ship as it started to tilt. Most people were scrambling to get to the upper decks and as she headed towards her room she passed through the empty dining rooms and gambling room that had thousands of dollars in money scattered over many tables. She finally got to her room, grabbed what she was seeking, and ran back to the lifeboat.

She arrived just in time as they had started lowering the lifeboat to which she had been assigned. As she scrambled into the boat and found a place to sit, the woman next to her asked what in the world could have been so important to her that she would have risked her life. From beneath her coat, she produced a picture frame that contained a photograph of a family. Somewhat astonished, the woman still could not believe she had risked her life for a mere photograph. The lady proceeded to tell her that the photograph was of her family that included her husband and three children. It was the only article she had of her previous family as they had all been killed tragically in a fire the year before. To her the connection with her family was more important than anything in the world; she was willing to risk her life to hold onto those cherished memories.

I really like this story for several reasons. First, it helps me appreciate what I have because it might be gone tomorrow. This includes family members. Secondly, our priorities are *OUR priorities*. What is important to you might not be important to someone else; and in all actuality, what you value might be worthless to anyone but you. The real danger in this is that when our priorities are not aligned with God's priorities we are in trouble.

In Matthew 13:44-46 we read about Jesus' parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl.

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

In both of these parables, we see men who found something of great value and were willing to give up everything in order obtain something of higher value. Notice in both parables it says he sold "everything he had." When I read a statement like that, I wonder what would be valuable enough that I would be willing to sell everything?

As we prepare to enter a new year, it is an excellent time to consider what has happened in 2015 and what plans the Lord has for us in 2016. Consider some of the items below. How might your priorities need to be adjusted relative to each topic?

- How much time are you spending on a daily basis with the Lord in His Word and in prayer? Is your Bible knowledge increasing and are you applying it in your daily life?
- Are you spending too much (or possibly too little) time in leisure-related activities?
- Where does family fall in your list of priorities?
- Are you consistently giving financially to the work of the Lord?
- In terms of financial stewardship, are you spending everything you are making, or are you wisely saving and investing?
- Are you working hard enough, or possibly working too hard?
- If you are married, do you love your wife as Christ loves the Church? What would your wife say?
- If you have children, are you a Godly-role model? Would your children say that they feel your unconditional love and that you exhort them to love on honor Christ?
- Are you a man who has friends? Do you have men in your life to whom you can turn when things "hit the fan"?
- Are you actively sharing your faith? When was the last time you shared your faith with someone?
- Are you serving in your church? Great opportunities exist in the children's and youth ministries.
- In terms of physical health, are you taking care of yourself? Although our bodies are not to be worshiped, it is important to take care of ourselves. If you are not eating healthy food and exercising regularly, consider making some changes in your life.

There is no doubt that God wants to be first in our lives. When He is not, it shows in how we live our lives. When we live for Him, our lives have purpose and meaning. As you consider the contents of this lesson, I encourage you to "dig deep" and evaluate how your priorities are aligned with His plan for your life.

Questions for the Week

1. Read Mark 8:36. What does this verse ask us in relation to our priorities?
2. Make a list of the top five (5) priorities in your life. How do you spend your time and resources relative to these priorities?
3. Has there been a time in your life when a particular incident forced you to reevaluate your priorities? If yes, what was the event and what changes were made in your life?
4. Consider Matthew 6:33 regarding seeking the Kingdom of God. Are there areas in your life where you need to re-establish your priorities? If yes, list the changes that need to be made below.