

session 5 study guide

getting your priorities straight

starter

PUTTING GOD FIRST: Read the following conversation aloud with a friend, and then discuss the questions that follow:

Tyler: I'm really confused about my faith. I can't seem to get my priorities straight.

Krista: You're not alone. We all feel that way at times.

Tyler: I just wish there was an easy answer—some kind of handwritten message from God telling me what to do.

Krista: We do have the Bible, ya' know.

Tyler: I know, but it's confusing, and I've heard it's even controversial.

Krista: Have you ever read it?

Tyler: Not really. I really do want to put God first in my life, though.

Krista: Well, if you want to do that, a good place to start is by looking at what Jesus said about putting God first.

Tyler: Okay. Where do I start?

Krista: Read Matthew 6:25-34.

1. What was Tyler's problem?

2. What could he do to find answers to his questions?

3. Were Krista's responses helpful? Why or why not?

message

We all need a standard that helps us to make choices about our priorities. God provides this standard in His Word, and when we examine it, we find that putting God first should be our first and foremost priority. In Matthew 6:25-34, Jesus describes the mindset of someone who is living sold-out for God:

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

1. What things in this passage does Jesus say we are not to worry about?

2. Instead of worrying, what are we told to do?

3. What commands in this passage does Jesus give us to follow (see verses 33-34)?

4. What do these commands tell us about how to get our priorities straight?

5. What does Jesus say about handling troubles (see verse 34)?

6. Read Colossians 3:17 and 1 Corinthians 10:31. What should be our motivation in everything we do—especially as we serve others and share our faith?

7. What does it mean to serve “in the name of the Lord” and “do it all for the glory of God”?

dig

A healthy, daily relationship with God is the foundation for keeping our priorities right. Knowing how God wants us to live and relying on Him to give us the strength to follow through in obedience are keys to putting God first.

1. How can worrying about things interfere with keeping your priorities straight?

2. What can excessive worrying tell you about God's place in your life? What does God's Word say will help you?

3. Are "don't worry about it" and "don't think about it" the same thing? Why or why not?

4. How can putting God first help you handle problems that come up each day?

5. How can putting God first affect the people you meet that don't know Christ (see Colossians 3:17 and 1 Corinthians 10:31)?

6. How does putting God first remove distractions and open up opportunities to serve and share Jesus with others?

apply

Having our priorities right affects our relationships with God and others and how we handle the ups and downs in life. When our priorities are aligned with God's will, we become a living example of Jesus in our world.

1. Rank each of the following 15 priorities in order, with 1 being the highest priority you think God wants you to have and 15 being the lowest priority:

- ___ Having a wonderful family life without any hassles
- ___ Walking closely with God
- ___ Being physically attractive
- ___ Knowing God's will
- ___ Being a great athlete
- ___ Having all the money I need to be happy
- ___ Serving others
- ___ Reading the Bible and praying daily
- ___ Making my room look perfect
- ___ Participating in non-church-related activities
- ___ Never having pimples
- ___ Reaching out to those who don't know Jesus
- ___ Having close friendships
- ___ Getting good grades
- ___ Having a real hunger to live for God

2. Look at the top three priorities you marked. How could you develop these priorities to help you put God first?

3. How does putting God first strengthen your relationship with Him?

4. How does having God's priorities in your life help you share your faith and serve others?

5. Why do you think it is difficult at times to put your priorities in order?

6. If you were to really put God first, how much of your day would be spent sharing your faith and serving others?

7. How would putting God first transform the way you go about your daily activities?

reflect

How we spend our time is a good indicator of where our priorities are. Based on 24 hours a day, the average person who lives to the age of 70 will spend:

- 20 years sleeping
- 16 years working
- 7 years playing
- 6 years eating
- 5 years dressing and grooming
- 3 years waiting for somebody
- 1½ years in church
- 1 year on the telephone
- 5 months tying shoes

1. So, what are your time commitments? In the following list, calculate or guesstimate how many hours you spend doing that activity each week and record this number on the corresponding line.

- ___ Attending school
- ___ Doing homework
- ___ Spending time with immediate family
- ___ Spending time with friends
- ___ Using the phone (talking, texting)
- ___ Internet
- ___ Watching TV, playing on a gaming system
- ___ Serving others, volunteering
- ___ Reading the Bible and praying
- ___ Attending church and church activities
- ___ Household chores
- ___ Hobbies, sports, practices, clubs
- ___ Getting ready (bathroom, mirror, choosing outfit)
- ___ Working at a paid job

2. After breaking down how you spend your time, are you surprised by the results? Why or why not?

3. How do your time commitments reflect your priorities?

4. Do you see a correlation between how you spend your time and the quality of your relationship with God? If so, what is the correlation?

5. What can you do with your time today that will make a positive difference in your life as a follower of Christ?

6. Which of your time commitments can be changed? What can you spend considerably less time doing or cut out completely in order to help you line up your time commitments with your priorities? (No, you cannot answer “school” or “homework” for this question!)

7. For those time commitments you can't change, how can you incorporate your priorities to put God first into those activities?

8. Who are other Christians you can ask to help you put your priorities in order?

9. If you spent more time pursuing the things of God's kingdom, how do you think that might affect your attitude toward yourself and how you interact with others?

meditation



Therefore tell the people: This is what the Lord Almighty says: "Return to me," declares the Lord Almighty, "and I will return to you," says the Lord Almighty.

ZECHARIAH 1:3