



Eternal Priorities

Adapted from "Demands of Discipleship" series by Dennis Marquardt.

It is not hard to detect what someone's priorities are in life, just look at how they spend their money and time. For the most part, our commitments are reflections of what we consider our priorities to be. Many men never stop to think about their priorities. They are so consumed with life "at the moment" that they never stop to think about what is really important.

The following story describes someone who does not have an understanding of their priorities.

It was a 99-degree September day in San Antonio, when a 10-month-old baby girl was accidentally locked inside a parked car by her aunt. Frantically, the mother and aunt ran around the auto in near hysteria, while a neighbor attempted to unlock the car with a clothes hanger. Soon the infant was turning purple and had foam on her mouth.

It had become a life-or-death situation when Fred Arriola, a wrecker driver, arrived on the scene. He grabbed a hammer and smashed the back window of the car to set her free. Was he heralded a hero? He said, "The lady was mad at me because I broke the window. I just thought, what's more important--the baby or the window?" Sometimes priorities get out of order.¹

No one develops a strong relationship with God without a strong sense of eternal priorities. Jesus teaches that the only way to experience real satisfaction is to commit oneself to eternal priorities. The way to discover your priorities is to answer the question, "what is first in your life?"

¹ Ray Tiemann, "A Reminder of What's Really Important," *Leadership Journal* 11, no. 3 (1990).

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COURAGE

C1: Read and answer or discuss the following.

Matthew 19:16–30 (ESV) And behold, a man came up to him, saying, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.” He said to him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The young man said to him, “All these I have kept. What do I still lack?” Jesus said to him, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. And Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?” But Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” Then Peter said in reply, “See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?” Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

- What do you think the possessions represented to the rich young ruler?
- Why do you think it was so hard for the rich young man to follow Jesus’ instructions of selling all his possessions and giving the money to the poor?
- Put yourself in the same situation. Could you sell all you have and give it to the poor?

- The rich young man was not an evil man, not even a bad man, but he did not think in terms of the eternal. On a scale of 1-4 with 1 being very often and 4 being not very often, rate yourself on how well you think in terms of the eternal when you make decisions? Write out a plan to improve.

C2: Read and answer or discuss the following.

Matthew 6:24–32 (ESV) “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.”

- Keeping in mind to make the eternal our top priority, discuss Matthew 6:33 in terms of how you live life?
- If someone was to look at your checkbook and life choices, what would they think are your priorities for living?
- What does the phrase “eternal priorities” mean to you?



- On a scale of 1-4 with 1 being very often and 4 not very often, rate yourself on how often the first choice you make is eternal things. Write out a plan to improve. Over the course of the next two weeks, when making decisions, try to put the eternal first and see if God changes your priorities.

STRENGTH

S1: Read and answer or discuss the following.

Matthew 19:16–30 (ESV)

- When dealing with the rich young man, Jesus tells him to first keep the commandments then to sell all he has and give to the poor. Why was it so difficult for him to do this, and would you have the same reaction as him?
- Take a few moments and honestly rank your priorities regarding ministry, family, work, and God? How can you improve your priority ranking?
- When it comes to finding strength to keep the eternal priority number one in your life, you may find it easy to say but harder to do. Why?

S2: Read and answer or discuss the following.

Matthew 6:24–32 (ESV)

- Have you ever found yourself worrying about temporal things? In these verses, Jesus shares how God will take care of you. Write down why you worry?
- Jesus makes it quite clear in these verses that you are to seek His Kingdom first. On a scale of 1-4 with 1 being not very much and 4 being very much, rate yourself on how much you worry. Write out a plan to improve. How can you correlate these scriptures into your daily life?



- Making the choice to choose the eternal rather than the temporal can be difficult. How would this look in your day to day life right now? In the next few weeks, begin to look at the decisions and purchases you make. See if they line up with God's Eternal Priorities for your life.

ENDURANCE

E1: Read and answer or discuss the following.

Matthew 19:16–30 (ESV)

Matthew 6:24–32 (ESV)

Write down or discuss the following situations regarding Eternal Verses Temporal.

- Having walked with Christ for some time, have your eternal priorities fallen by the wayside? How can you bring them back to the eternal perspective?
- If Jesus were to ask you to give all that you had to the poor, how hard would that be? Why?
- What would you share with a new believer about the importance of eternal thinking?
- What are some of the ways you have made the eternal a priority in your own life?
- If someone was to look at your checkbook and how you spent your time, would they know that you have eternal priorities over temporal ones? Take an hour and write down the past month's vendors from your bank account. What do these reveal about your priorities?
- How can we share with our children the principle of eternal rewards verses temporal rewards as a priority for living for Christ?

E2: Rate yourself using the following rate schedule:

- 1- Very eternal minded
 - 2- Moderately eternal minded
 - 3- Slightly eternal minded
 - 4- Moderately temporal minded
 - 5- Highly temporal minded
- Tithing
 - Using our gifts and talents in your church community
 - Your check book and expenses
 - Your idle time
 - Sharing Christ with others
 - Time spent leading a Bible study
 - Discipling other young men
 - Volunteering in the Church
 - Being baptized in the Holy Spirit

Write out a sixty-day improvement plan for each of these areas.