

Priorities

Priorities - each day we live with the priorities we have actively made or passively accepted. Often our priorities end up being a combination of both. We all make choices about what we consider important. Or maybe something becomes a priority without any intention on our part - like an emergency. Whether by a well thought intention or a laid back - "I'll take what life gives me" - every day reveals what gets the priority in our lives. Some of the questions that Tom & I ask ourselves and continue to evaluate are: "Is my life going the direction God wants?" "Am I experiencing joy and peace with my present choices?" "Does my family experience real happiness?" "What is the first of my daily priorities - is it temporal advantage only, or preparing for eternity?" Stop and read these questions again. You may have different questions or word these another way, but really think about them and answer them honestly in your own heart.

Some time ago we received a newsletter in the mail with a short article titled, "Isn't It Funny." The title caught my attention and I read the following:

Isn't It Funny

Isn't it funny how big \$20 looks when you take it to church, but how small when you take it to the supermarket!

Isn't it funny how much effort it takes to read a chapter from the Bible every day, but how easy it is to read the paper!

Isn't it funny how much sacrifice it seems to spend an hour worshipping God, but so easy to spend an hour

watching TV!

Isn't it funny how easy it is to talk to your friend about your views on politics, but how hard it is to speak about your faith in Christ!

Isn't it funny how difficult it is to work a special meeting at church into your schedule, but how easy it is to work in a social function!

Isn't it funny how easy it is to teach your children how to play football, or your grand-children to knit, but how difficult to teach them to pray, grow spiritually and obey the gospel!

Isn't it funny how easy it is to talk on the phone for hours, but how difficult it is to have anything to say after two minutes with God!

So, how does that strike you? Does it portray the reality of your Christian experience? Think about it for a moment. You may not read the paper or watch TV, discuss politics or play football, but you know if the Spirit of God is speaking to your heart. You see, this author has some real insight into what is really happening in the lives of professing Christians today. And what is so accurately described becomes funny because it vividly illustrates the weakness of human nature. So it becomes easy to laugh at it and miss the simple message to our hearts.

As I read through it I thought, "this writer is right on target, but isn't it sad!" **You see, we have lost the most important priorities in life as Christians.** Our vision has become narrow, our focus temporal. It isn't funny, it's sad! It is a reality, and it's tragic!

I know the experience that the

writer depicts above. My life was controlled by the urgency of the moment. Oh yes, I had priorities, but what one desires and how one lives are all to often opposite. I had time every week for hours and hours on the telephone. I had time to study to advance my professional career, to run to the store, or go to my husband's ball games. I had time to pick up some extra shifts at work, or read magazines, but I didn't have time (or should I say, I didn't take time) to develop a personal relationship with God, study to know His will for my life or talk with Him. You see He was out there somewhere and even though I said my priority was to prepare for His return, my day to day life was being consumed by the circumstances of the moment without a thought of it's impact on my spiritual well-being, much less of the realities of eternity.

But praise God, that has **changed for me**, and it **can change for you too!** Not next year, not next week, not when there is time, or a more convenient season, but now - right at this very moment. He calls out to us, "Today, if ye will hear My (His) voice, harden not your hearts." Hebrews 4:7. If this is your desire, then read on as I share with you how He has made, and continues to make, the most important difference in my life.

First, God helped me to see that I needed to start thinking in terms of eternity and not the temporal. If I said I desired to be in heaven with Him for an eternity, why did I find it so hard to spend time with Him here? I realized that I needed to re-evaluate my life not for the temporal advantages, but for eternal advantages. When I began to

do this, what a difference it made in my priorities. My focus was no longer just getting through each day and meeting each obligation, but rather evaluating whether or not my plans had any value at all. I started putting Him into the first part of my day, rather than trying to fit Him in somewhere, because you and I both know from experience that we just never seem to get the time. He entreats, **"Seek ye first My kingdom** (the kingdom of God), and **My (His) righteousness**; and **all** these things shall be added unto you." Matthew 6:33. That's it! Do you see it? Seek Him and His righteousness, that we can be like Him. I had been seeking to be a Christian, but had not understood that I needed to seek for His righteousness, not a man-made replica.

I started spending a half an hour a day, not just reading through a chapter in the Bible or a daily devotional while my mind was busy racing through the "have to's" of the day, but reading slowly with my **mind fully applied** to the words written. Wow! What a difference that made. I found a growing desire to have Jesus become my Lord and Companion. I sensed that His presence was with me and began to recognize His "still small voice" in my thoughts. These are just a few of the many promptings He gave me, "You don't need to spend so much time talking to your friend, spend time with your children." "The extra shift at work isn't worth the time you will miss out from your children." "You don't really need to spend so much time running around, hurrying the children and becoming intense, you need to stay home and get yourself and your children on a schedule and slow down your life."

As I gave time to God, He multiplied the blessings in my life. I started to spend an hour each morning. That meant that I had to get up earlier. It was easy to squeeze a half an hour in without much change in my rising time, but to make it an hour required me to choose to get out of bed earlier because I **chose Him first**. I began to spend more time with Him in prayer, seeing my real condition and need of help, asking Him to call often to my heart in the day. His promptings became more frequent and specific. "Don't say that to your husband, it isn't necessary." "Your child is not obeying your request, you need to

follow through with her." "The more carefully you manage your money, the less your husband has to work to provide a living."

All my priorities began to change just from the influence of this one priority changing, motivating me to spend more time every morning, getting direction, encouragement, and energy for the needs in the day ahead. My time grew to two plus hours every morning. I saw principles I had never seen before. I understood things I had never understood before. I was falling in love with Jesus, and allowing Him to be a real personal Saviour to me, to keep me from my natural selfish desires, attitudes, and ways. His impressions upon my heart became even more prevalent. "Don't allow your headache to make you impatient with your children." "Fold the sheet neatly, doing your best in all you do, even if it isn't seen by anyone else." "Learn to be truly submissive to your husband."

In every phase Christ was digging deeper in my heart, knowing my greatest weaknesses and desiring to **change me from the inside out**, making my walk with Him one of joy and not drudgery. Everything in my life was affected by fellowship with Him. He challenges, "And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart."

As we choose to make Christ first in our life, **making Him our first priority**, we will desire more and more of Him, and less and less of the things that for so long have consumed our lives. He will get to the very root of our self-nature, revealing our greatest weaknesses. They are ugly, and our natural heart doesn't want to see them. The devil comes trying to convince us that we are not really that bad, it really isn't our problem, or others are just being too critical towards us. It is the love of self that causes us to be self-defensive and unwilling to choose to allow God to change us. Thus self-love leaves us with unrest and misery that looks for someone else to blame. If we don't have peace, but are agitated by our thoughts, our feelings, or our emotions; any or all of these are a call to our heart to come to Christ that we can be made whole, and experience the only real peace and true rest we so desperately want. It is only through choosing to take Christ at His word, surrendering our hearts to His keeping, and allowing Him to order our life, that we will find perfect peace and quietude. The way we respond to the circumstances we face in the common occurrences of life is simply a barometer of our true heart condition and a call to examine our real priorities.

At the beginning of this new year, I again recommit myself to seek after the

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Jeremiah 29:13. Friends, this is the greatest priority of all. If we are struggling with reading a chapter from the Bible instead of the newspaper we will never have the victory trying in our own strength to read the Bible. It will become a dry formality, gaining nothing, and become discouraging. We must choose to give our heart to Him first. If we are willing He will put a desire in us for Him, and then He will make the reading of His Word a meaningful communion with Him. He will make it come alive to us and show us how it applies personally and practically in our life today.

only thing that really matters - a new life in Christ. He is the desire of my heart, and I will continue to make Him the One and first priority of my life. **When He is in that rightful first place, all other needs and wants will be prioritized in Him.** Today - just today - we have the opportunity to choose Him, to put Him first, for we have no guarantee of tomorrow. What will you choose? Where are your priorities? Will your life with Christ become your priority? The choice is mine, the choice is yours!

A Voice from the Wilderness.