

Prioritizing

Lesson 01 in the series "First Things First"

A. Many of us are searching for true meaning and success in our lives.

"I also tried to find meaning by building huge homes for myself and by planting beautiful vineyards. I made gardens and parks, filling them with all kinds of fruit trees.... I also owned large herds and flocks, more than any of the kings who had lived in Jerusalem before me. I collected great sums of silver and gold, the treasure of many kings and provinces. I hired wonderful singers, both men and women, and had many beautiful concubines. I had everything a man could desire! So I became greater than all who had lived in Jerusalem before me, and my wisdom never failed me. Anything I wanted, I would take. I denied myself no pleasure. I even found great pleasure in hard work, a reward for all my labors. But as I looked at everything I had worked so hard to accomplish, it was all so meaningless—like chasing the wind. There was nothing really worthwhile anywhere." Ecclesiastes 2:4-11 (NLT)

"Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless." Ecclesiastes 5:10 (NIV)

"You have made my life no longer than the width of my hand. My entire lifetime is just a moment to you; at best, each of us is but a breath." We are merely moving shadows, and all our busy rushing ends in nothing. We heap up wealth, not knowing who will spend it." Psalm 39:5-6 (NLT)

B. True meaning and success come when our relationship with God comes first.

Then he said, "Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own." Then he told them a story: "A rich man had a fertile farm that produced fine crops. He said to himself, 'What should I do? I don't have room for all my crops.' Then he said, 'I know! I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I'll have room enough to store all my wheat and other goods. And I'll sit back and say to myself, "My friend, you have enough stored away for years to come. Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!"' "But God said to him, 'You fool! You will die this very night. Then who will get everything you worked for?' "Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God." Luke 12:15-21 (NLT)

"Jesus replied, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment." Matthew 22:37-38 (NLT)

1. God is the source of all that is good.

"The people will declare, 'The Lord is the source of all my righteousness and strength.' And all who were angry with him will come to him and be ashamed." Isaiah 45:24 (NLT)

"There I will go to the altar of God, to God—the source of all my joy. I will praise you with my harp, O God, my God! Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again— my Savior and my God!" Psalm 43:4-5 (NLT)

"In that day he will be your sure foundation, providing a rich store of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge. The fear of the Lord will be your treasure." Isaiah 33:6 (NLT)

2. If we fear God, we don't have to fear anything else.

"Make the Lord of Heaven's Armies holy in your life. He is the one you should fear. He is the one who should make you tremble." Isaiah 8:13 (NLT)

"How joyful are those who fear the Lord—all who follow his ways! You will enjoy the fruit of your labor. How joyful and prosperous you will be!" Psalms 128:1-2 (NLT)

3. If we put God first, He promises to take care of everything else we need.

"These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers all over the world, but your Father already knows your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and he will give you everything you need." Luke 12:30-31 (NLT)

C. Our relationships with our spouses must come second.

"The man who finds a wife finds a treasure, and he receives favor from the Lord." Proverbs 18:22 (NLT)

"Haven't you read the Scriptures?" Jesus replied. "They record that from the beginning 'God made them male and female.' And he said, 'This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his

wife, and the two are united into one.’ Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together.’ “Then why did Moses say in the law that a man could give his wife a written notice of divorce and send her away?” they asked. Jesus replied, “Moses permitted divorce only as a concession to your hard hearts, but it was not what God had originally intended. Matthew 19:4-8 (NLT)

D. Our relationship with our kids comes third.

“Children are a gift from the Lord; they are a reward from him. Children born to a young man are like arrows in a warrior’s hands. How joyful is the man whose quiver is full of them! Psalms 127:3-5 (NLT)

“If anyone wants to provide leadership in the church, good! But there are preconditions: A leader must be well-thought-of, committed to his wife, cool and collected, accessible, and hospitable. He must know what he’s talking about, not be overfond of wine, not pushy but gentle, not thin-skinned, not money-hungry. He must handle his own affairs well, attentive to his own children and having their respect.

1 Timothy 3:2-4 (MSG)

E. Work is important, but we must never value it more than our relationships with God or our families.

“Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ.” Colossians 3:23-24 (NLT)

“...It’s useless to rise early and go to bed late, and work your worried fingers to the bone. Don’t you know he enjoys giving rest to those he loves?” Psalms 127:2 (MSG)

“How joyful are those who fear the Lord— all who follow his ways! You will enjoy the fruit of your labor. How joyful and prosperous you will be! Your wife will be like a fruitful grapevine, flourishing within your home. Your children will be like vigorous young olive trees as they sit around your table. That is the Lord’s blessing for those who fear him. Psalms 128:1-4 (NLT)

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