

I've been coming to Lindale for the golf tournament since 2004. I really got to know Ben Shipley during the 2012 visit, 5 years ago. He told me about the church here and he told me about his father: Dan Shipley. His father had passed away the previous December. He mentioned the sermons his dad preached and the Plain Talk articles he wrote. One in particular came to mind: Tattling Priorities.

I remember when he told me about it, I immediately could see how useful a concept it is. In fact, if I recall, I went home and preached it in Baytown the next week! The principles is easy. It begins with a simple question: **What are the most important things or people in your life?!** Most of us know the right answer and probably would provide it: **God is number 1. Then my family and our faith. Then God's people and this church. Then home or work or whatever.** Well, that's awesome. God would be very pleased if that were the case for you. But, is that really the truth? The story we tell, and maybe even tell ourselves about what matters most: is it a true story?

Well, the tattle tale always reveals the truth. In this case, our priorities, our actual, day in and day out, choices, ideas, efforts, and words – well, they tell God and the world exactly what matters most. They speak more loudly than any answer we could give or emotion we might share.

Dan's 1976 Plain Talk article does a masterful job of helping us think through all of that and challenging us to look to our daily priorities to prove our true passion in life.

Matthew 7:21 – *But we must begin here. We must all be willing to acknowledge something: that daily treasures and heart's desires go together. We can't have one set of things as our treasures and then say, "yeah, but my true heart is over here on this other thing." They go together. Can we agree on that?*

Let me illustration: A man has a literal pirate treasure chest fill with gold and jewels in his storm cellar. He visits it throughout the day, counts and recounts it. Is always happy because of it. And he talks about it all the time, while not sharing any. He comes to church and I ask: "what are the most important things in your life?" He raises his hand and says: "God and family faith and my church."

Matthew 7:19-21, 24 – He is guilty of what Jesus says, but he tells a different story. He probably believes that story, but where his focus is, that's where his heart is. Tattling priorities.

By the way, this discrepancy between what we say matters and what actually does, it's not always a negative thing. But the point is, priorities tell the story. Illustration: A woman in our church prays and reads and writes and makes card and visits people daily. I ask her what matters most. She says, "well, I'd like to say God but really I think I promote myself too often." She's being too hard on herself. Her tattling priorities sing her praises & deliver her honor.

So, let's do some exploring to see what matters most to us and what our priorities have to say. I do want to put some things out there just for clarity's sake: God has taught us what should matter most!

Matthew 6:33 – His kingdom and His righteousness – His King, His Rule, His People, His Blessings.

Colossians 1:18 – Jesus is at the top, He must come to have first place in everything.

So, God and then faith in our family and then our church family and then everything else IS THE RIGHT ANSWER.

The question this morning is: IS IT THE REAL ANSWER?

I will ask you 5 questions to help. There are not designed to shame, but to help us see ourselves for who we really are and CHALLENGE US to align PRIORITIES with PROCLAMATIONS.

1. What things do you think about most throughout the day?
 - a. I started with this because it is totally private. No one can judge anyone else here. 99% of what we think isn't shared. So if this is tattling, it's just doing so to you and God.
 - b. **Phil. 4:4,8,10** – If I asked you, "do you rejoice in the Lord greatly every day?" Is that important to you? Most would say yes. Okay, what does that mean? Here it means, in large part, using mental energy dwelling on things that are of God
 - i. Things like the Greatness of God, the Power of the Bible, the Love of Jesus, the Need to be more like Him, the Value of God's People.
 - ii. Things that instantly make you want to, you know, rejoice in the great Lord!
 - c. *What if you carried around a notepad tomorrow? And every hour you pulled it out and jotted down things you are thinking about? At the end of the day, you would have a good idea of what matters most to you? Is it God, the Faith of your Family, and God's People?*
 - d. The challenge here is to infuse spirituality into moments of silence in the day.

2. How do you spend your discretionary income?
 - a. I've included this one because most priority issues in America are connected to our money – jobs, stuff. Too much love for that can diminish more important relationships.
 - b. I've included it second, because how you spend that moment is still a pretty private thing. For the most part others won't know, and maybe shouldn't.
 - c. Imaging our **Pirate Treasure guy** never sharing any of it for fear of living with less. Then he tells us how much God's people and love for others dominates his life... Umm.
 - d. **I Timothy 6:6,9-10** – If priorities could be one thing and real heart another, these verse wouldn't exist. They show how such things can dominate our hearts.
 - e. **I Timothy 6:17-19** – And also afford us great opportunities to SHOW our true love!
 - f. Where does your extra money go? Giving? Serving? Helping?
 - g. The challenge here is the Dave Ramsey budget. Contribution and Charity at the Top!
3. How do you use your discretionary time?
 - a. I know. I know. You don't have any. I've said that before. We know it isn't true. Outside of mandatory time sleeping and at work and such, we have a few hours per day to use.
 - b. There are many who argue that they put God first and love God's people and love the Word and if they had more time they would do more. But they do and they don't. *Time is Tattling on them.*
 - c. So, what do we do when we have options? How much time is captured for godly things. I'm not talking so much about worship, which is habit for most. But like the woman in the opening example, she prayed and read and wrote cards and reached out and did for others. Even though she said her priorities needed work, the way she used her time and for whom... told the story.
 - d. **Ephesians 5:15-19** - If there was no link between how we use our time and the value of our spiritual life, this verse wouldn't be here. It is linking what we DO with what we LOVE. It is linking our treasure time with our hearts desire. It challenges us to prove our hearts with our time.
 - i. Time is failing fast. That's why we must use it wisely. This verse gives us direction!
 - e. The Challenge here is the Modified Miracle Morning: 1 Hr Early – Pray, Read, Meditate, Write, Pray.
4. What do you talk about the most?
 - a. **Matthew 12:34-37** – Whoa! What matters most will find its way into our speech. We talk about what we love the most – no doubt about it. In fact, we can only cover for this for short periods.
 - b. What fills the heart is spoken. So, what we speak will be used to judge us: by others and God.
 - c. If a transcript of *your last seven days* was presented to the Lord, and he collected topics into the top 3 – what would they be? Would He be there? The church? Would it be positive things or negative?
 - i. A sad example: people who say they love God's people ... but talk badly about them.
 - d. *Now we'd be quick to say – that's just talk and conversation, you matter most! I love my church. But our speech is the tattler of all tattlers, for it gives voice to our hearts, to our minds, to our desires.*
 - e. **Ephesians 4:29** – You know who does these good things? People who love building one another up and sharing the message of grace in Christ! It's in their heart so it comes out in their words.
 - f. The challenge here is to realize words reveal hearts and every day speak of Grace and to Edify.

Conclusion: *“Remember, our priorities do tell on us. And they always tell the truth! The Lord hears what they say. The brethren hear. So does the world. The real question is, do we?”* I fear I have conditioned myself to know what to say – God comes first, and faith in my family, and the church. And I have convinced myself that is true. But my life may be telling a different story. The world can see and know more about me than I am willing to acknowledge. So one more challenge. **Ask them. This week, ask someone close to you: what would you say are the most important things in my life?** They will do so based on the 4 points we've made without you even asking them. You might say, **“well, what does that matter?”** Much. They are the ones our priorities have been tattling too, and they can help us know a truth we may have overlooked.

Think about Bible characters like Jesus, Stephen or Paul. How do you know about them? What they love most? Rarely do they say. Rarely does God just tell you. No. We read about their lives, their choices. We see how others respond to them and how others choose them or what others say about them. And we know their hearts. “where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”
 If things aren't where they need to be – obey the gospel, turn from sin, and start telling a different story. Start proving something new, something different, something better about who you are: in **thought, spending, time, and speech.**