

Emerging Priorities
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Introduction: What is the real direction of our lives?

- A. Our God knows how to open and expose hearts! (Lk 2:34-35)
 - 1. Through pain and opposition “the thoughts of many hearts” were revealed.
 - 2. Even the righteous will at times have a sword “pierce through your own soul.”
- B. Jesus knew what was in the hearts of men. He wanted them to see it too.
 - 1. He would not commit to those who just looked like supporters. (Jn 2:24-25)
 - 2. Most men will hate and oppose those who show them their hearts.
(Jn 3:19-20; 15:18-23)
 - 3. What truths about ourselves and our real priorities are we learning?

I. What is a priority?

- A. Jesus taught how the heart reveals priorities. (Lk 16:13)
Priority – 1. The fact or condition of being regarded or treated as more important. 2. The right to take precedence or to proceed before others.
 - 1. We can conceal our hearts to others and to ourselves! Times of pain and isolation can reveal our hearts to all.
 - 2. Jesus was a master in exposing the hearts of others. (Lk 10:25, 28-29, 36-37)
 - 3. When Jesus addressed the churches of Asia, He let them see their hearts.
(Rev 2:4, 2:9-10; 3:1, 15-16)
- B. How can we know what our real priorities are? Is Jesus in us? (2 Cor 13:5; James 2:18)
 - 1. Our actions speak to what we really important to us!
 - 2. What do we like to think about? ... to talk about?
 - 3. How do we spend our time?
 - 4. What do our relationships say about us?
- C. What has been taken away from us during this pandemic? What have we missed?
 - 1. There are some things that cannot be taken away. (Rom 8:35-37)
 - 2. These times have actually opened opportunities to those who love God’s word!
 - 3. When God opens our hearts to see shortcomings, blessings will follow!

II. A clear commitment to God’s priorities brings purpose with zeal

- A. When we do not have God’s priorities, we are miserable. (Mal 1:13)
 - 1. There are things that others are zealous about that I strongly dislike. (Ex. Running)
 - 2. The heart of the hypocrite pretends to love God when they really love self! (Mt 6:2, 5)
 - 3. Hypocrites often have a religious zeal but it is poisonous and treats people as discardable. (Lk 13:14-16; Mt 23:14-15)
- B. Great power and peace is found in true zeal! (Titus 2:11-14)
 - 1. At times when I am troubled, I can go outside and see God’s creation! My mind is renewed and redirected! Joy and strength come in knowing what really matters!
 - 2. God’s grace and care are at the center of this zeal. It takes us out of self and into looking after and serving others.

3. True zeal *loves teaching and evangelism!* (Lk 15:7)
- C. How does this purpose with zeal *respond to threats and suffering?* (Lk 6:22-23)
 1. When our thoughts are where they should be, *we will not be sidelined by bitterness!*
 2. Jesus went to the cross and stayed on the cross because *he stayed within God's purpose!* (Lk 9:51-53, Jn 11:16; Lk 23:34)
 3. How long are we sidelined *by things that do not matter?* We need to have new priorities emerge!

III. Starting over and ordering our lives with God's priorities

- A. If we have drifted then we must rebuild God's thoughts in our lives. It is in this sense that priorities must "emerge." (Heb 2:1)
 1. *How do we* "give more earnest heed to the things we have heard"?
 2. What do we do *when we get serious?* (Ex. Diet – "flattening the curve!")
- B. Consider the example of Zacchaeus. (Luke 19:1-4)
 1. Zacchaeus was shocked *that Jesus was even interested in him.* A true understanding of God's grace can open the heart and crush our pride! (Luke 19:5-6)
 2. What did the Pharisees say about sinners? What *did Jesus say?* (Luke 19:7)
 3. God's way to start over *always involves repentance.* (Luke 19:8)
 4. When God offers you a chance to start over, you can do it! *What is holding us back?*
 5. What will happen when *Jesus thoughts become our own?* (Luke 19:9-10)
- C. Since I cannot do everything – *What gets left out?*
 1. Ephesus had a great start but *they lost something essential.* (Rev 2:4)
 2. *Begin with thanksgiving and service!* When these things become a priority (that which we love!) then our choices will change.
 3. In many ways this kind of "starting over" can *be more difficult than becoming a Christian.* (Ex. How many fallen Christians in this area?)
 4. You must renew your conscience, overcome pride, and *have the courage to change* if you are to begin again.
- D. It takes a great faith *to leave the familiar!*
 1. Israel left Egypt, but most of them *had no faith.* (Heb 4:1-2)
 2. Look at *the trivial things they complained about!* (Num 11:4-6)
 3. Why do Christians *let things like this defeat them?*
- E. Where are we right now? *What is holding us back* from fully serving the Lord?
 1. As with the rich young ruler, Jesus sees our hearts and knows the things we must let go of. *Will we?* (Mk 10:21-22)
 2. We can do without many things *that have become habits.* (Lk 8:14)
 3. Ultimately, *we must be converted again.* This happened to Peter: "when once you have turned again" (NASV) (Lk 22:31-32)
 4. This change is so great that Jesus describes Himself *as being on the outside looking in.* He wants that zealous purpose to return! (Rev 3:19-21)
 5. What a joy to have Jesus return *for fellowship in our hearts and in our lives!*

Conclusion: How do we spell first? (Mt 6:33)