

A changed life requires New Priorities
1 Tim. 6:17-19

1 Tim. 6:18 - *As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.*

1) *A woman was sitting next to an empty seat at the Super Bowl stadium. A man asked the woman about it. The woman explained, "it was my husband's...but he died." The man said to her, "I'm surprised that another relative or friend didn't jump at the chance to take his seat. She answered, "I don't understand it either. But they all decided on going to his funeral instead."*

2) *A farmer ran this classified ad in the Quay County Sun: "A farmer with 160 irrigated acres wants marriage-minded woman with a tractor. When replying, please send picture of the tractor." (June 1978, Tucumcari, New Mexico)*

3) *We all have priorities!*

Whether we think about it or not, we all live according to priorities. *A priority is something that has first importance in our life.* It is those things that we place higher value on than other things. The Bible is a book of priorities...God's and man's.

A group of friends went deer hunting and paired off in twos for the day. That night one of the hunters returned alone, staggering under the weight of a 200-pound deer. The other hunters asked, "Where's Bob?" The lone man said, "oh, he had a stroke of some kind, he's a couple of miles back up the trail." The other hunters were socked and asked why he left Bob laying there to carry the deer instead. "It was a tough call," the hunter said, "but I figured no one was going to steal Bob."

Some people don't stop and ask directions when they are lost, they just speed up... *The Bible encourages us to check the map of God's Word to see if we are still on the right road.*

It is wise to examine where we are in our life, to see where are we headed? It is also good to note if there are any differences between God's plan for our life and our own life-goals? Will the road we are on lead us to heaven or somewhere else?

There is a big difference between temporary and eternal priorities.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 - *he has put eternity into man's heart,*

God has put a spiritual thirst in us that nobody and nothing short of God can satisfy. That emptiness makes us search for what is missing.

Paul's letters in the New Testament encourage us to examine the priorities of our life.

Is our main goal in life to please ourselves? Or to please God?

In **1 Tim. 6:11-12** Paul says, *“¹¹But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. ¹²Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”*

He tells us this because there is going to be a testing in the Day of Judgment. **1 Cor. 3:13-14** *“¹²Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— ¹³each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.”*

Making a living and making a life are two different goals. The Bible tells us to lay up treasures in heaven. God’s priorities and ours are often in a struggle. Which one will win? (*The one we feed!*)

Having wrong priorities in our life is like buttoning our coat incorrectly. If we get the first button wrong, all the others line up according to that misplaced first one. In the same way if we get the first button right, all the others will line up where they are designed to be.

This is why Paul suggests in **2 Cor. 4:17-19** that we look to the unseen things of the Spiritual world: *“¹⁷For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”*

What we do for God has eternal rewards – what we do for ourselves is rewarded here on earth.

There are choices that may lead to short-term happiness.

God warns us to take a good look at our priorities. Making ourselves #1 doesn’t bring contentment. He directs this warning to people who live only for themselves. **Haggai 1:5-9** *“⁵Now, therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways. ⁶You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes. ⁷“Thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways. ⁸Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the Lord. ⁹You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? declares the Lord of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house.*

The Bible suggests that there are at least three measurable priorities during our lifetime:

1) **Our schedule** – What do we spend most of our time doing? And for whom?

2) **Our spending** - Our checkbook is a record of what our priorities are in life. Jesus counsels us in **Mt. 6:19-21** on money. ¹⁹*“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

²²*“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, ²³but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! ²⁴“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.”*

We need to invest in the Kingdom of God. He deserves the first and best from every paycheck.

3) **Our speech** – we will be judge by our words. Do spiritual things excite us or do they bore us? To test the condition of our heart Jesus says in **Luke 6:43-45** ⁴³*“For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, ⁴⁴for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. ⁴⁵The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”*

Our words show what condition our heart is in.

So, What choices lead to Long-term Joy?

People say, “I want to be happy.” But did you know, happiness depends upon chance happenings? It comes from the word “hap” which means luck. Happiness is based on circumstances and on chance. Happiness is external.

Joy is internal. God is the source of deep, satisfying joy. One of the names or descriptions of God in the O.T. and found in **Psalms 43** is “I am the God of exceeding joy.” A deep satisfying joy comes from a good relationship with God.

II) **There are three ways people can deal with life.**

1) They can take the road most traveled. - Most people are content to lead a “normal life.” They fit in with what the majority considers to be the good-life. The Bible refers to this as “the broad road...the easy road.”

Paul tells us in **Romans 12:2** ²*“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”*

God wants to change us into the person He wants us to be. He wants to change the things we prioritize in life. He wants to be the focus of our love and attention.

Here is how Jesus put it: **(Mt. 6:32-34)** ³²*For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.* ³³*But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.* ³⁴*Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.*

2) *We can pursue the things that we think will make us happy.* I would like to read a scripture out of "**the Message,**" **Rom. 8:7-8,** ⁷*Focusing on the self is the opposite of focusing on God. Anyone completely absorbed in self ignores God, ends up thinking more about self than God. That person ignores who God is and what he is doing.* ⁸*And God isn't pleased at being ignored.*

God let Solomon experiment with the pursuit of pleasure (to save us the trouble of wondering if happiness is found there.) Here is how he summed it up in **Eccl. 2: 9-11** *So I became greater than all who had lived in Jerusalem before me, and my wisdom never failed me.* ¹⁰*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.* ¹¹*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.*

Your possessions end up owning you not vice versa. You are mere slaves to the things you own. There might be happiness, but no joy. No salvation, no savior.

3) *Or third we can seek God's purpose for our life.*

The payoff of investing in the things of God are out of this world!

To be on track, our priorities should parallel Jesus' priorities:
First, Jesus prioritized spending time alone with God in prayer.

Second, He spent His life teaching others about God.

Third, He protected His time from others people's agendas.

Fourth, Jesus made it a priority to save people.

Fifth, in all things Jesus put the will of God first in His life.

These are the priorities that we should have as well. If you have been a part of bringing someone to Jesus, it will impact your life. It is why God created you – to help save others.

In this New Year I would like to challenge you to get your priorities straight, otherwise it could have eternal consequences. If you would like to start getting your priorities straight then I would like to ask you to come this morning let us pray together and strive together and walk together in 2021.