TOP PRIORITIES

INTRODUCTION:

As in 2008, so will be 2009 -- Everyone on earth will live for what they view as most important.

Everyone lives (spends time, money, energy, etc.) for what they view as most important.

Many live for _____ because that is what they view as most important in life (EX: money, fame, sex, thrills and excitement, job, career, etc.).

What is important to you?

In a world filled with multitudes of choices, you need to determine what needs to get done in and through your life (that which takes precedence, seniority, supremacy, that which is paramount).

What are your priorities?

[Have people make a list of what they view as most important]

As we study the word "first" in the Bible, we learn what our priorities should be.

If the # 1 priority is God, then it is correct to say that our # 1 priorities must involve God.

The priorities we will study today are all God-centered, since if our priorities are right vertically (to God), they will be right horizontally (to man).

***We need to realize what our top priorities are**
(according to God's Word)

I. My # 1 LOVE (Mark 12:28-33)

(Priority Devotion)

"Thou shalt Love the Lord thy God . . . This is the first commandment." (v. 30)

Cp. Rev. 2:4 - "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."

*Good substitutes cannot replace your first love!
(Ephesus was a working [v. 2a], discerning [v. 2b, 6], and enduring [v. 3] church, yet had left her first love)

Loving Christ even comes above loving our family and everyone else (Mt. 10:37 - "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."

Loving God is not merely a N.T. priority, but is an eternal priority that also applied to the Old Testament saint.

SEE - Deut. 6:4-7
Deut. 10:12

A. HOW should we love God?

"Heart . . . soul . . . mind. . . strength" = Love Him with your whole being; with everything you have.

When we love God totally (with our whole being), He is:

1. The center of my affections

"Heart" - my inner being which thinks, feels, and chooses (what I feel deeply about reflects my priorities).

2. The center of my life

"Soul" - the immaterial part of man as it relates to this life (what I live for reflects my priorities).

3. The center of my thoughts

"Mind" - my ideas, convictions, thoughts, philosophies of life should revolve around God. (what I spend my time thinking about [dwelling on, pondering] reflects my priorities).

4. The center of my activity

"Strength" - my physical ability (so translated in I Pet. 4:11), talents, etc., should be used for God (what I use my abilities on reflects my priorities)

B. WHY should we love God?

1. Loving God is the key to obedience
(the greatest stimulus [motivating factor] to obeying God is to love Him)

"On these two commandments hang all the Law and the prophets" (Mt. 22:40; cp. Gal. 4:14)

I Jn. 5:3 - "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous."

--Love makes obedience easy!

The reason "Love" is stated as the top priority attitude is because it is the motivating factor behind everything we do.

If one loves God, he will seek to please God.
If one loves God, he will be holy.
If one loves God, he will do right.
If one loves God, he will keep His commandments.

--John 14:15, 21

2. Loving God is the key to close fellowship with Christ

Jn. 14:23 - "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

I Cor. 8:3 - "But if any man love God, the same is known of Him."

Ja. 4:8 - "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you . . ."

3. Loving God is the key to blessedness.

Showers of benefits fall upon those who make it their priority to love God.

Rom. 8:28 - "...All things work together for good to them that love God..."

Ja. 1:12 - "He shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."

*SEE Psalm 91:14-16

If the greatest command is to love God, then the greatest sin is to not love Him!

"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema" (I Cor. 16:22).

God foretold that in the last days men would be "lovers of their own selves . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (II Tim. 3:2, 4).

As the End draws near, lovelessness will be a sign: "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Mt. 24:12).

II. My # 1 GOAL (Matthew 6:33)
(Priority Ambition)

"Seek ye first . . ."

"Seek" = to zealously look after or earnestly live for.

"First" = ahead of seeking for what to eat, drink, or wear (v. 31), we are to prioritize God's Kingdom. We are to view the eternal as more important than the temporal; the spiritual over the physical; the priorities of God over the priorities of the Gentiles (i.e. the world).

A. "The kingdom of God"

Seek to live for those things which will advance or benefit the cause of Christ.

1. The priority of evangelism
(priority words - what we say)
(witnessing to the lost)

Paul preached "the Kingdom of God" (Acts 28:31) and his preaching was about Christ (v. 31).

a. Sharing the simple Gospel is priority

I Cor. 15:3 - "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures."

b. Concern for our family's spiritual well-being is priority!

John 1:41 - "He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ."

2. The priority of Church
(Priority place - where we go)
(Assembling with God's people)

I Cor. 16:1-2 - "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."

Heb. 10:24-25

3. The priority of Giving
(Priority investment - what we give)
(Giving to God's work)

Prov. 3:9 - "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase."

During the days of the prophet Haggai, O.T. Israel did not consider God's work a priority, but rather were more concerned about their own interests.

Result: Frustration SEE: Haggai 1:2-9

B. "And His righteousness"

"His righteousness" - Seek to live up to true, Biblical righteousness; seek to be right as God counts rightness, not as the world does.

God's standard of righteousness is not religious formalism, or going through the motions of external ritual.

1. The priority of Bible reading

a. The Word of God was priority to Job.

Job 23:12 - "Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips: I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food."

b. The Word of God was priority to King David.

Psalm 119:72 - "The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver."
Psalm 119:97 - "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day."

c. The Word of God is priority according to Jesus Christ. (Mt. 4:4)

*If you do not read your Bible, you will never know the will of God. You will miss His plan for your life.

Ps. 119:105 - "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."
Prov. 3:5-6 - "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding; in all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."

*If you do not read your Bible, you will not have the wisdom you need (Ps. 119:98-100)

Usually, you can see whether or not Bible reading is a priority with someone by looking at the condition of their Bible. According to C.H. Spurgeon, "A Bible which is falling apart usually belongs to someone who isn't."

2. The priority of daily commitment (complete surrender - giving ourselves totally to God)

II Cor. 8:5 - "And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God."

Real righteousness is not merely giving of what you have - it is giving yourself to God and to your fellow brethren.

3. The priority of internal purity (being clean inside)

Mt. 23:26 - "Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also."

III. My # 1 JOB (I Timothy 2:1)
(Priority Dedication)

"First of all supplications, prayers . . ."

"First of all" = first in priority or importance.

"The words relate not to primacy of time but to primacy of importance" (Reinecker citing Guthrie, p. 618).

The most important practice a believer can do for another individual is to pray for them [Especially when you consider the fierce spiritual battle that encompasses us, and the many casualties resulting from lost battles - cp. I Tim. 1:18-20]

"Supplications" =Specific requests (for others)
(particular needs - "Deesis" from Dei = "it is necessary")

"Prayers" =General requests (for others)
(word is only used of asking of God) (SEE Trench, Synonyms, p. 200)

"Intercessions" =To pray on behalf of others

"Giving of thanks" =To praise God for what He has done (for others)

Prayer was a priority to Moses.
David.
Elijah.
Daniel. (ch. 2, 9)
our Savior.
Paul.
the early Church. (cp. book of Acts)
Prayer must be priority because without it:

1) We are in sin (I Sam. 12:23)

2) We don't receive (Ja. 4:2 - "Ye have not because ye ask not")

3) We lack power (Mt. 17:21 - "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting")

4) We miss fullness of joy (Jn. 16:24 - "that your joy may be full")

5) We have no revival (II Chron. 7:14)

There is a spiritual battle that is raging about us (Eph. 6:12). We cannot see the war with our eyes, but it is every bit as real as W.W. I & II.

In such a battle we need the weapon of prayer (Eph. 6:18).

CONCLUSION:

Oftentimes tragedies or crisis situations (EX: coming close to death, losing a loved one) help us to evaluate our priorities. When things go smoothly, when life is a breeze and prosperity abounds, human nature tends toward worldly distractions.

Whatever you allow to come ahead of God reveals what your priorities are. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Mt. 6:21)

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3. The center of my thoughts
4. The center of my activity

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A. "The Kingdom of God"

1. The priority of evangelism
2. The priority of Church
3. The priority of giving

B. "And His righteousness"

1. The priority of Bible reading
2. The priority of complete surrender
3. The priority of internal purity

III. My # 1 JOB (I Timothy 2:1)
(Priority Dedication)

"First of all supplications, prayers. . .be made for all men."

PRIORITY QUIZ

Place a check next to seven of the following which you think should be priorities in your life:

____Being the best employee or employer

____Spending time with your family

____Enjoying life to the fullest

____Being physically fit

____Earning a lot of money

____Loving God

____Owning your own home

____Improving society

____Giving your children more than you had when you were young

____Reading your Bible

____Improving your self-image

____Being happy

____Going to church

____Maintaining financial freedom

____Living for eternal things

____Being successful in life

____Gaining fame and fortune

____Prayer

Now go back over your list and place a star next to what you think the highest priorities should be (choose only three).