



Applied Faith Men's Bible Study

South Hills Baptist Church

7350 Granbury Rd.

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Priorities

Lesson #1

Overall Lesson #40

Many young Christian men and even some older Christian men struggle with knowing what things in life should be important to them. What should your priorities as a Christian man be? Even if you think you know what God says your priorities should be – how do order your priorities as a Christian man?

What is a Priority?

A priority is something that is important to us, something that we care about. If something is important to us, then we will show that by our deeds. For instance, the Bible tells us that if our faith is truly important to us, we will demonstrate that in our works.

“If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?

Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

Yea, a man may say, thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.”
– James 2:15-18 (KJV)

The Five Biblical Priorities of a Christian Man

Thankfully God has not left us to fend for ourselves as men, but he has given us his Word as a guide for our lives.

Unless a man is called to a life of celibacy in full time service to God, the Scriptures show us that every man has been given five areas of priority by God.

The five priorities that God gives to Christian men are God, Family, Church, Country and Work.

In this article we will discuss what these five priorities look like from a Biblical perspective. In my next article we will discuss Biblical principles that can help Christian men know how to juggle or order these five priorities that God has given them.

Priority # 1 – God

The Scriptures tell us plainly that serving God and his plan and design for our life should be our first priority.

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” – Matthew 6:33 (KJV)

“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.” – Matthew 10:35 (KJV)

“Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, we ought to obey God rather than men.” – Acts 5:29 (KJV)

Serving God comes before every other consideration in our life including ourselves, our family, our church, our employer or our country. But part of what it means to serve God is taking care of the needs our country, our employer, our church, our family and even ourselves.

Priority # 2 – Family

If God has not granted a man the gift of celibacy for full time service to his Kingdom as he did the Apostle Paul and other men and women then a husband’s second priority after God becomes his family.

But what if a man does not want a family?

Many have asked “What if a man is not called to full time Christian service, can’t he just opt to not get married and pursue a single life?”

Well first and foremost let’s define “full time Christian service”. Often, we think of full time Christian service as someone being a Pastor, a Missionary or a Christian school teacher. But there are many single people and I know personally from my church and other churches that work in secular jobs during the week, but they are constantly working

at the Church and volunteering for anything that needs to be done. They dedicate the vast majority of their free time to God's service since they don't have families to attend to.

But where I believe that men go against God's design is when they choose not to marry and have a family in order to purposefully avoid the responsibilities of having a family. They want to live for themselves.

God's command to man and woman after he created them was to "Be fruitful, and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). God designed us as men for marriage and family. We were not designed to live for ourselves, but rather for his purpose and design.

Shouldn't our time and resources go to Church first and then family second?

Some Christians have taught what I believe to be a false doctrine that the Church, and specifically the giving of our time and financial resources to our local church must come before we give our time and financial resources to our family.

This false belief comes from the idea that service to God ALWAYS means service to his church. But the truth is that while one of the ways we serve God is by serving his church it certainly is not the only way we serve God. We also serve God by serving the needs of our family. In fact, God shows us in his Word that our service to our family comes before our service to our local church.

Christians who believe service to their local church always comes before the needs of their family point to this incident which is recorded in Matthew and Luke:

“And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.” – Luke 9:57-60 (KJV)

While Christ’s words may seem harsh here, it makes more sense when we understand that Jewish burial processes had become overly complex by this time. It is most likely that his father had already been placed in his tomb or burial site, but the mourning process could take up to a year. Some Jews even practiced a “second burial” where a year after their loved one’s body had decomposed they would gather the remains into a box and do a final burial. This could also be what Christ was referring to as something that was not necessary for him to do.

But these same proponents of putting the Church before family miss another incident where Christ spoke on the family and Church priorities:

“Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.

And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death:

But ye say, if a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother;

Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.” – Mark 7:7-13 (KJV)

A man has the responsibility to care for his parents in their old age and our responsibility to give our time and financial resources to our family comes before our responsibility to give these things to our local churches. But in a broader context Christ was saying that our second priority after God, is our family. The Apostle Paul reiterates this same concept that Christ spoke on:

“But if any widow has children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.

But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth. And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless.

But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” – I Timothy 5:4-8 (KJV)

Paul reiterates what Christ said that we have a solemn obligation to care for our relatives and family, but then he adds to this by telling us the first place we show “piety” (our faith, our religion) is in how we care for the needs of our family.

Paul tells us that if a man does not know how to manage his family, he is in no position to be a Pastor or Deacon in the Church:

“A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;

(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)” – I Timothy 3:2-5 (KJV)

This is clear from the Scriptures – while God is our always our first priority, God himself tells us that family is our second priority before all other considerations – even the Church.

I remember about 20 years ago when I was a young newly married man I had a friend of mine who was in his 30's who had a wife and children. He was usually at almost every Church service and activity. But at certain times of the year especially around Christmas and some other times I would not see him as much.

I asked him one time about this. He told me that at certain points of the year he had to work a lot more hours for the shipping company he was at and did not have as much time to spend with his family. So, his involvement in Church services would lessen so he could spend his limited free time with his family. He told me a very important truth that is supported by the Scriptures. “God created the family, before he created the Church. The needs of my family come before my Church attendance and involvement.” I never forgot what he said there, and later I would discover that what he was saying was a Biblical concept.

But what about when Christ said we should not love family more than him?

Some might say “What about Matthew 10:35 and other passages where Christ tells us if we love our family more than him we are not worthy of him?”

When we take all of Christ’s words into account only then can we understand what he was saying. Christ was not telling us to neglect the needs of our family for service to our local churches. What he was saying is “if your family is asking you not to worship me, to deny me or to deny my Church or go against my laws then you must be willing to deviate from them on this.” Following God always comes first. But following God is not equivalent to doing everything at Church first, and then your family gets the left overs.

So, the Scriptures are clear – God first, family second and everything else including service to our local Church comes after those two things.

But who comes first in our family?

As Christian husbands we have our wives, our children, our siblings, our parents and our wives’ parents and siblings. These are all family members for us.

So yes, family comes second only to God, but which family members come before whom?

Our wives come second only to God

“Therefore, shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” – Genesis 2:24 (KJV)

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it...So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:” – Ephesians 5:25 & 28-29 (KJV)

The Bible shows us by the “leave and cleave” concept of marriage that as husbands once we are married our parents now come second to our wife. We as Christian husbands are to feed and care for the physical needs of our wives just as we feed and care for our own bodies.

So, when all things are equal, while our wife comes second to God – she is to be our first priority amongst our family members and anyone but God himself. But I want you to notice a key phrase I use here “when all things are equal”. I will come back to what I mean by that in our next article on “What should a Christian Man’s highest priority be?”

Our children come after our wives but before other family members and priorities

Remember the passage from I Timothy 5:4-8 where the Apostle Paul tells us that the first way we put our religion in practice is in our home? The needs of our children come only after our service to God and then the needs of our wife. But the needs our children come before other priorities like our work and our local church. In truth part of what it means to serve God is to serve the needs of our children.

“A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children’s children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.” – Proverbs 13:22 (KJV)

“The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him.” – Proverbs 20:7 (KJV)

“Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.” – Colossians 3:21 (KJV)

“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” – Ephesians 6:4 (KJV)

“As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children,” – I Thessalonians 2:11 (KJV)

As fathers we have a responsibility to care for the physical and spiritual needs of our children. In the same way that marriage is to be a model of the relationship between God and his people, so too the father/child relationship is yet another model of the relationship between our heavenly father and us as his children. We as fathers are not to discourage our children or needlessly anger them, but rather we are to bless them, exhort them, comfort them, discipline them, teach them in the ways of God and love them as God loves his children.

We should care for the needs of our parents and other extended family

So, while the needs of our wife and children are to come before other family obligations that does not mean we don't still care for the needs of our parents and other extended family. We simply need to seek God's guidance in where we expend our time and resources – I will get more into that in my next post “What should a Christian Man's highest priority be?”

Don't forget YOU are a part of your family

Often times in Christian circles believers are led to believe that they can never think of their own needs. People over-commit, even to good things like family, work and church to the detriment of their own health. We need to rest. We need to see a doctor when we are sick. We need relaxation and down time for our brains to recharge so that we will be of better service in these other areas in which God calls us to serve.

If you have ever been on a plane they always tell you that in case of an emergency when the oxygen mask comes down put yours on first, then help those around you. The reason is that if you put on the masks of those around you first you may not be able to help them if you pass out before you can do it. This same principle applies to our lives in general. If we can't breathe, then we are of no use to anyone around us.

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Application/Activity

Make a list of your priorities and bring it to class.