

Joke: An elderly husband and wife noticed that they were beginning to forget many of the little things around the house. They knew that could be dangerous, as one of them could accidentally forget to turn off the stove and that could cause a fire.

So, they decided to go see their physician to get some help. Their physician told them that many people their age find it useful to write themselves little notes as reminders.

The elderly couple thought this sounded wonderful, and left the doctor's office very pleased with the advice.

When they got home, the wife said, "Dear, will you please go to the kitchen and get me a dish of ice cream? And should write that down so you won't forget?"

"Nonsense," said the husband, "I can remember a dish of ice cream!"

"Well," said the wife, "I'd also like some strawberries on it. You better write that down, because I know you'll forget."

“Don’t be silly,” replied the husband. “A dish of ice cream and some strawberries. I can remember that!”

“OK, dear, but I’d like you to put some whipped cream on top. Now you’d really better write it down now or you’ll forget,” said the wife.

“Come now, my memory’s not all that bad,” said the husband. “No problem—a dish of ice cream with strawberries and whipped cream.”

With that, the husband gets to the kitchen and his wife could hear him getting out pots and pans, and making some noise inconsistent with his preparing a dish of ice cream with strawberries and whipped cream. He emerged from the kitchen about 15 minutes later.

Walking over to his wife, he presented her with a plate of bacon and eggs. The wife took one look at the plate, glanced up at her husband and said, “Hey, where’s the toast?”

The Woodworker - Week 4

Show video: www.skitguys.com

The Woodworker got his priorities mixed up and out of alignment. He thought he could monetize the cross by selling out to the Romans, while using his skillset to refurbish them for crucifixions rather than doing what Jesus taught us to do about crosses.

What did Jesus teach about crosses you ask? We find that in Matthew chapter 10.

Matthew 10:38–39 (NIV): Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

Matthew 10:38–39 (TPT): And whoever comes to me must follow in my steps and be willing to share my cross and experience it as his own, or he cannot be considered to be my disciple. 39 All who seek to live apart from me will lose

it all. But those who let go of their lives for my sake and surrender it all to me will discover true life!

Now while there is no mention of an actual woodworker who was paid by the Romans to restore used crosses for the next crucifixion as was depicted in the video, plenty of people have challenges having the proper positioning when it comes to priorities.

Think about Martha for a moment she was busy making preparations which the Bible says, “had to be made.” Yet Jesus let her know that Mary had chosen the right response by sitting at His feet.

And so many like Martha forget sometimes what’s most important.

Think about this. . .

One of the reasons Jesus went to the cross was because of His priority to make a way for people to come back into a right relationship with the Father.

Jesus prioritized Himself to be the sinless sacrifice who willingly would lay down His life for the salvation of all who would put their faith, hope, and trust in Him for the forgiveness of their sin and the new life that is available through His name.

Humanity's salvation was a priority for Jesus and the mission He came from heaven to earth to accomplish.

Consider one definition for the term "priority." Priority is superiority in rank, position, or privilege.

If you have ever heard a person say, "You need to get your priorities straight," that individual is saying that you need to rank or position in order what is superior or most important in your life.

I've said this before but it bears repeating here. . .we will always make time for what is important to us.

So, determine what is most important.

Set in place what is most valuable. Identify what will have the highest priority and what will have a lower one.

Let's dig a little deeper about priorities for a minute.

For this Jewish woodworker that we just met in the video, his priority seemed to be making money rather than serving God. He sold out his woodworking skills to acquire more cash, even if it meant the result of his handiwork would be used to execute people of his own kind who were being unnecessarily persecuted at the hands of the oppressive Roman empire.

This certainly was a misplaced priority.

Jewish people were fiercely loyal to one another.

Historically speaking, Jews prided themselves in suffering together through the difficulties of life. Throughout their rich and storied past, the Jews waited for a Messiah who would rescue them from their oppressors and restore their people back to their rightful, chosen place as the people of God.

For a Jew to betray a Jew by helping their people's oppressors for money, was a sign that something was amiss and their priorities were out of proper alignment.

Something must have happened in the woodworker's heart to give such assistance to the oppressors of the Jewish people to occur for mere money.

The video depicts this woodworker recognizing that he had misplaced priorities when his life was impacted by what Jesus, a fellow Jew, went through on the cross.

And if this Jew named Jesus was who some of the Jews were saying He was, the woodworker just aided and abetted in murdering the Messiah on a cross that had his fingerprints all over it.

Prior to Jesus experiencing the atrocities that accompanied Him on Good Friday at the cross, Jesus gained great popularity because of His teaching and ministry all throughout Israel.

When Jesus taught the masses one day on the hillside overlooking the Sea of Galilee, one of the many things he spoke about was a person's priorities.

This teaching on priorities can be found in the middle of the most famous sermon Jesus ever preached, known as the Sermon on the Mount.

N.T. Wright notes how the whole sermon Jesus preached was about taking the great risk of faith. Meaning that to change the world right now, you need to believe that God is God; to let that turn all of your priorities upside down.

Within the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us that a priority of having an outward obedience to God and the law of God in and of itself isn't enough.

Instead, God wants a revolution of everything, including people giving God their heart! Which should be on top of our priority list as believers.

In the Sermon on the Mount, the priority Jesus is talking about begins in a person's heart!

In other words, it's not about solely what is on the outside that matters. Rather, what's on the inside of a person is what counts in God's economy!

Look what God told the prophet Samuel when he was looking for a new king to replace Saul. . .

1 Samuel 16:6–7 (NIV): When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed stands here before the Lord." 7 But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

Matthew 6:16-24 is where we see Jesus teaching about priorities.

As we examine this part of Jesus' sermon, I want you to pay attention to how He redirects people's priorities from what they do on the outside that everybody around them can see to what's coming from the inside of a person that only our Heavenly Father truly can see.

Jesus is talking about the priority of our hearts being right with God.

Let's begin by jumping into the middle of what Jesus was saying and notice the priority of the heart Jesus is speaking about in this passage.

Beginning in Matthew 6:16, Jesus starts off by talking about what people prioritize on the outside that others can see when He says,

Matthew 6:16–18 (NIV): 16 “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that it will not be

obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Jesus is telling us that it's not about what is seen on the outside that really matters. But it's about what God sees on the inside of a person's heart.

Two times in those three verses, Jesus says the phrase: "when you fast. . ."

Fasting is a spiritual discipline that can help a person keep the main thing the main thing. It helps us keep our priorities in the correct order.

Jesus sometimes fasted, as we see in the gospels, and He wanted his followers to do the same. Fasting from something means going without for a while.

We are on the 21 day fast from negativity. How are you all doing with that? Harder than you thought it would be?

In this part of His sermon, Jesus is talking about going without food for a set time as a spiritual discipline to help people focus on making sure God is their number one priority rather than food.

Fasting is a way to help people remember what truly is priority #1.

Let those hunger pains remind you that although food is important, it is not priority #1. God is priority #1. So you replace food with Scripture, after all that is the bread of life.

And Jesus is not rejecting fasting as a spiritual discipline in His message.

However, what Jesus is rejecting was anybody fasting for display. A person who was fasting for the accolades of others seeing how devoted they were had a misplaced priority that meant something on the inside of that person was out of alignment.

The Mosaic Law did not explicitly require fasting except for one day of the year known as the Day of Atonement.

However, in Jesus' day, the religious leaders known as the Pharisees, they fasted twice a week and was proud of it.

They made sure everybody saw them do it as an outward display of how holy and righteous they were trying to appear to everybody around them.

The Pharisees of Jesus' day wanted to make a big deal of it and made sure everybody knew they were fasting.

In their misplaced priorities, if everybody didn't see them fasting, they thought then why even do it?

It's like some people on Facebook. They post all those pictures of them on vacation so everybody knows they are enjoying the season. They need to make sure everybody knows they are living it up. And sometimes I see that and I wonder did you really even go on vacation?

They think: “Everybody needs to see me living my best life so they can see how great my life is.”

And there’s nothing wrong with posting on Facebook unless it’s simply to show off what’s going on. Then it becomes a heart issue.

Because that line of thinking is a misplaced priority for my image of just impressing people.

For the Pharisees, it wasn’t about smiling and taking selfies showing how great their life was. It was about frowning and letting their hair look uncombed and unkempt and making their outward appearance look tough, sad, hard, and difficult.

Let me read that Scripture in Matthew from The Passion Translation. . .

Matthew 6:16–18 (TPT): 16 “When you fast, don’t look like those who pretend to be spiritual. They want everyone to know they’re fasting, so they appear in public looking

miserable, gloomy, and disheveled. Believe me, they've already received their reward in full.^{17–18} When you fast, don't let it be obvious, but instead, wash your face and groom yourself and realize that your Father in the secret place is the one who is watching all that you do in secret and will continue to reward you openly.”

They thought this misplaced priority would somehow make other people be impressed by how much these Pharisees must really love God if they were willing to go through all that difficulty to impress God.

But trust me God wasn't all that impressed

These fasting hypocrites were purposely drawing attention to themselves so they could get thousands of “likes” by everybody viewing their social media account, rather than prioritizing getting the “like” by the one that really matters. . . God who was looking not at the outward appearance but at their heart.

Jesus is saying in His Sermon on the Mount: there can be no right fasting apart from a right heart.

And a right heart leads to right living and a right attitude.

Jesus is talking about making our heart a priority before God because Jesus knows a profound truth.

And that is, that many of our Spiritual problems are actually heart problems.

Watch as Jesus talks about our heart problems in the next few verses.

Remember, Jesus is talking about the priority of our heart and making sure our heart is focused and set on God.

This is the root of the woodworker's problem that was manifested in the video.

Jesus goes on to say in verse 19 through 24:

Let me read this from The Passion Translation. . .Listen close.

Matthew 6:19–24 (TPT): 19 “Don’t keep hoarding for yourselves earthly treasures that can be stolen by thieves. Material wealth eventually rusts, decays, and loses its value. 20 Instead, stockpile heavenly treasures for yourselves that cannot be stolen and will never rust, decay, or lose their value. 21 For your heart will always pursue what you value as your treasure. 22 “The eyes of your spirit allow revelation-light to enter into your being. If your heart is unclouded, the light floods in! 23 But if your eyes are focused on money, the light cannot penetrate and darkness takes its place. How profound will be the darkness within you if the light of truth cannot enter! 24 “How could you worship two gods at the same time? You will have to hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You can’t worship the true God while enslaved to the god of money!”

In these verses, Jesus is talking about spiritual problems; spiritual problems are often times heart problems.

These spiritual problems stem back to the issue of the priorities in our lives.

In verses 19-21, Jesus talks about priorities between finding ultimate value in the treasure we try to get our hands on that will perish versus those we store up in heaven, which will endure.

Then in verses 22-23, Jesus talks about priorities between the stinginess which leaves one in darkness, versus the generosity which gives one light.

Jesus continues in verse 24 and talks about the priority of worshiping money versus worshiping God.

All these warnings all stem back to inside issues that Jesus identifies as heart problems.

In verses 19-21, Jesus is not prohibiting making sensible provisions for the future. I believe we need to plan for our future that's why we have IRA's.

Instead, Jesus is calling out a misplaced priority that leads to greed.

Jesus is not calling people to live in poverty; He's simply trying to deliver people from a false sense of security in their wealth and possessions.

Jesus says beware because the stuff that you are trying so hard to get your hands on will be destroyed by moths and rust if your priority is what is on this earth.

I'm not sure he was the first one to say this, but I love what Dave Ramsey has said! "We buy things we don't need with money we don't have to impress people we don't like."

Anyway did you notice that in verses 19-20?

The word for "rust" is the word 'brosis' in the Greek and can be translated as "eating."

This word has the context of mice eating away at the stored up clothing or food.

Some questions worth thinking about from this part of Jesus' teaching might be:

- What's eating away at you in this season of life?
- What's eating away at your peace?
- What's eating away at your joy?
- What's eating away at your hope?

Could it be that what's eating away at you stems back to a misplaced priority?

Might Jesus diagnose what is eating away at you as a spiritual problem rather than a money problem?

Remember: Spiritual problems are often times heart problems.

Perhaps the woodworker did not have money problems; he may have just had some heart problems that caused him to have some misplaced priorities.

However, if we think Jesus only cares about our hearts and not our hunger pains from lack of food, we don't fully understand the teachings of Jesus.

Jesus was (and is) deeply concerned about people which includes us having the material necessities of life.

Luke 12:6–7 (NIV): Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. 7 Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

Then in Philippians we read. . .

Philippians 4:19 (NIV): And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:19 (TPT): 19 I am convinced that my God will fully satisfy every need you have, for I have seen the abundant riches of glory revealed to me through the Anointed One, Jesus Christ!

What Jesus is telling us is that He desires for people to be free from the tyranny of things, free from materialism, and free from the misplaced priority that if not careful can lead to greed.

Biblical scholar D.A. Carson says, “The things most highly treasured (prioritized) occupy the ‘heart,’ the center of the personality, embracing mind, emotions and will; and thus the most cherished treasure (priority) subtly but infallibly controls the whole person’s direction and values.”

And so, based on that observation, here’s a follow-up question for us to consider:

- Do you like the direction of your life?

If the direction you are headed is going to determine where you ultimately end up, does that mean you are on a track that is moving closer towards God and the person He wants you to be or farther away from that?

If there are areas in your life that need to be reprioritized, then I want to encourage you to make decisions today that will change the direction in which you are headed.

If you don't, those misplaced priorities will continue to eat away at you as you keep drifting further and further away in a direction you do not want to go.

Those spiritual problems of misplaced priorities will continue to haunt your life.

And as we have identified from Jesus' teachings: Spiritual problems are often times heart problems.

Jesus says in Matthew 6:21, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

He declares just a few verses later in verse 24 that a person can't have a heart set on both God and money.

Jesus categorizes God and money as two different masters, and a person can't serve them both.

You can't keep one eye on God and one eye on money. It will divide your focus, your loyalty, and your heart.

You must prioritize who "own's" you, whom you bow to, and who you follow. Otherwise, you will end up cross-eyed, out of focus, which stems from a problem with the heart.

Perhaps Jesus wants us all to consider:

- What is your priority?
- Who is your priority?
- Where are your eyes focused?

It's interesting to notice that in verses 22-23 of this passage from Matthew 6, Jesus says something about our eyes. He says, "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"

Some biblical scholars make the point that the eye of a person looks into the heart of that person. Some have

even suggested that the eye can be the equivalent to the heart.

The “healthy eye” or “good eye” Jesus mentions in those verses stems back to a definition concerning generosity.

The “unhealthy eye” or “bad eye” or the “evil eye” as some refer to it that Jesus mentions stems back to a definition concerning living life in a stingy, miserly, and greedy manner.

It's the difference between living open-handed and freely, knowing that everything you have comes from your Father in heaven versus living close-fisted trying to hold on to everything you can get your hands on for fear of losing any of it.

This is how the woodworker in the video was living, close-fisted with unhealthy eyes and misplaced priorities.

His eyes were on the money rather than the Messiah.

Jesus is inviting us to open our eyes and have a clear-eyed view of life. He urges us to live open-handed and life free from a treasure that links our heart only to what is on this earth.

Instead, Jesus beckons us to generously and obediently as we choose to bless, share, and trust that all we have comes from the open hand of our Father in heaven.

That kind of priority living is good for your heart.

God would rather us be obedient to Him, rather than our checkbooks.

Open-handed and generous living never lets the moth and rust get to you; it never eats you up from the inside out.

Instead, you get to experience the priority of God's provision for your life as one who trusts Him to be who He said He is for you.

Our God is our Father in Heaven who loves you and will provide all you need.

Know this: You are a priority to God. You are not a coincidence, an after-thought, a surprise, a mistake, a nuisance, or just another mouth to feed.

You were made on purpose for a purpose for such a time as this.

Therefore, how can we respond to being a priority of the God who says the following through the sending of His one and only Son, Jesus?

God says. . . “I love you! I created you! I have plans for you! I love you from the inside out!

And to show how much I love you, I chose to go all the way to the cross to die in your place that you might know that you are a priority to Me.”

We can respond to that by living lives that prioritize showing and telling God that we love Him too!

And we choose to set our eyes and our hearts on Him. We choose each day to reprioritize everything in our lives and set it on you!

We choose to live for you and point other people to you in our actions and with our words.

A man once asked Jesus, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. And love your neighbor as yourself."

Jesus was talking about an inside priority of the heart that leads to an outside blessing of others as a side benefit.

If the heart is prioritized rightly, everything else in life falls into its proper place.

A final question we can respond to from our time today could be this one:

Where is one area of life that needs to be reprioritized today?

David said it this way, “search me and know my ways.”