

QUALITY
OF
LIFE
BIBLE
STUDY



Priorities®

COMPILED BY
S.MCRAE

PRIORITIES “Quality of Life Series”

LEADER: “Typical Life Span” - Our Daily Bread

Source ~ <http://www.bible.org/illus/p-q/p-q-113.htm#TopOfPage>

Someone has calculated how a typical life span of 70 years is spent. Here is the estimate:

Sleep	23 years.	32.9%
Work	16 years	22.8%
TV	8 years	11.4%
Eating	6 years	8.6%
Travel	6 years	8.6%
Leisure	4.5 years.	6.5%
Illness	4 years	5.7%
Dressing	2 years	2.8%
Religion.	0.5 year	0.7%
Total	70 years	100%

LEADER: Does that sound about right... if you made a chart based on your life, how would it differ from this one? If you broke it down further into years, months, days, hours...what do you spend your time on?

LEADER: Are you on auto pilot or are you making conscious decisions with your hours, priorities and goals?

READER: “Time to Check Your Direction” By Rubel Shelly

Source ~ <http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon1a/timeto.htm>

Early on the morning of February 17, 1994, James Rich crawled behind the Controls of his plane at an airport near Louisville, Ky. The plan was to make a 30-minute flight to Crossville, Tenn., where a friend of his was the airport manager. He would arrive just about the time his friend was showing up for work and show off the 1972 Piper Seneca he had just finished restoring.

The 40-year-old pilot had not slept much the night before. He had been out late with some friends. So he was still tired when he cleared the runway and pointed his plane south for the quick trip. Climbing to 3,500 feet and putting the Seneca on automatic pilot, he dozed off.

Rich must have slept for about three hours. The next thing he knew, he was trying to get his head clear while looking through broken clouds onto what he took to be a lake. A closer look revealed that the “lake” extended to the horizon in all directions. Then a glance at the gas gauge told him he was out of fuel.

Knowing that he was in trouble, he radioed an SOS. Only then did he discover his true location - 188 miles west of Clearwater and 190 miles south of Panama City. He was over the Gulf of Mexico and had only a few minutes of gasoline left.

Eighty-five miles short of land, the last drop of fuel was gone. His uninsured \$70,000 plane hit the Gulf, sank in about 45 seconds, and pulled Rich down with its undertow. Two cushions pulled from the plane popped him back to the surface. They would have to keep him afloat until help came, for Rich couldn’t swim.

Within 15 minutes, a helicopter was there to drop a rescue basket. Rich scrambled in and was hoisted to safety - still clinging to his seat cushions.

Mr. Rich’s humorous-though-harrowing experience reminds all of us to stay alert about the direction of our lives. It is easy to get up, work, eat, and sleep day after day with our lives on automatic pilot. Thus many a life, marriage, or business winds up far off course and confused. Sometimes there is a devastating crash - with no last-minute rescue from death.

Be sure the things you do this week are consistent with your life goals and priorities. Getting there fast will be of little comfort if your landing site is off.

LEADER: “Living in the Present”

Source ~ <http://www.ozsermonillustrations.com/searchbytopic.htm#P>

In a university commencement address several years ago, Brian Dyson, CEO of Coca Cola Enterprises, spoke of the relation of work to one's other commitments:

Imagine life as a game in which you are juggling some five balls in the air. You name them - work, family, health, friends and spirit and you're keeping all of those in the air. You will soon understand that work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. But the other four balls - family, health, friends and spirit are made of glass. If you drop one of these, they will be irrevocably scuffed, marked, nicked, damaged or even shattered. They will never be the same. You must understand that and strive for balance in our life.

How?

LEADER: Let's look at work:

READER: "List Your Priorities" Liberating Ministry From The Success Syndrome, K Hughes
Source ~ <http://www.bible.org/illus/p-q/p-q-113.htm#TopOfPage>

A number of years ago a fascinating interview took place between Mr. Charles Schwab, then president of Bethlehem Steel, and Ivy Lee, a self-styled management consultant. Lee was an aggressive, self-confident man who by his perseverance had secured the interview with Mr. Schwab, who was no less self-assured, being one of the most powerful men in the world. During the conversation, Mr. Lee asserted that if the management of Bethlehem Steel would follow his advice, the company's operations would be improved and their profits increased. Schwab responded, "If you can show us a way to get more things done, I'll be glad to listen; and if it works, I'll pay you whatever you ask within reason." Lee handed Schwab a blank piece of paper and said, "Write down the most important things you have to do tomorrow." Mr. Schwab did so. "Now," Lee continued, "Number them in order of importance." Schwab did so. "Tomorrow morning start on number one, and stay with it until you have completed it. Then go on to number two and number three and number four...Don't worry if you haven't completed everything by the end of the day. At least you will have completed the most important projects. Do this every day. After you have been convinced of the value of this system, have your men try it. Try it as long as you like, and then send me your check for whatever you think the advice is worth." The two men shook hands and Lee left the president's office. A few weeks later Charles Schwab sent Ivy Lee a check for \$25,000—an astronomical amount in the 1930s! He said it was the most profitable lesson he had learned in his long business career.

READER: QUOTE #1

Source ~ http://www.cybernation.com/victory/quotations/subjects/quotes_priorities.html

"The older I get the more wisdom I find in the ancient rule of taking first things first. A process which often reduces the most complex human problem to a manageable proportion." - Dwight Eisenhower 34th President of the United States

READER: "Putting First Things First"

Source ~ <http://www.bible.org/illus/p-q/p-q-113.htm#TopOfPage>

Haddon Robinson points out that one old recipe for rabbit started out with this injunction: "First catch the rabbit." Says Robinson: "The writer knew how to put first things first. That's what we do when we establish priorities—we put the things that should be in first place in their proper order.

READER: "A Jar of Rocks"

Source ~ http://www.ozsermonillustrations.com/frames/priorities_frameset.htm

A time management expert was once speaking to a group of business students and, to drive home a point, used an illustration. He pulled out a one-gallon, wide-mouthed mason jar and set it on a table in front of him. Then he produced about a dozen fist-sized rocks and carefully placed them, one at a time, into the jar.

When the jar was filled to the top and no more rocks would fit inside, he asked, "Is this jar full?"

Everyone in the class said, "Yes."

Then he said, "Really?" He reached under the table and pulled out a bucket of gravel. Then he dumped some gravel in and shook the jar causing pieces of gravel to work themselves down into the spaces between the big rocks.

Then he smiled and asked the group once more, "Is the jar full?" By this time the class was onto him. "Probably not," one of them answered.

“Good!” he replied. And he reached under the table and brought out a bucket of sand. He started dumping the sand in and it went into all the spaces left between the rocks and the gravel. Once more he asked the question, “Is this jar full?”

“No!” the class shouted. Once again he said, “Good!” Then he grabbed a pitcher of water and began to pour it in until the jar was filled to the brim. Then he looked up at the class and asked, “What is the point of this illustration?”

One eager beaver raised his hand and said, “The point is, no matter how full your schedule is, if you try really hard, you can always fit some more things into it!”

“No,” the speaker replied, “that’s not the point. The truth this illustration teaches us is: If you don’t put the big rocks in first, you’ll never get them in at all.”

What are the big rocks in your life? A project that you want to accomplish? Time with your loved ones? Your faith, your education, your finances? A cause? Teaching or mentoring others? Remember to put these big rocks in first or you’ll never get them in at all.

READER: QUOTE #2

Source ~ http://www.cybernation.com/victory/quotations/subjects/quotes_priorities.html

“It is the mark of great people to treat trifles as trifles and important matters as important.” - Doris Lessing
Born 1919, Award Winning Author

READER: QUOTE #3

Source ~ <http://www.entwagon.com/cgi-bin/quotes/quotes.pl?cat=Priorities>

“It is very sad for a man to make himself servant to a single thing; his manhood all taken out of him by the hydraulic pressure of excessive business.” - Theodore Parker 1810-1860, American Minister

READER: “What I Believe In”

Source ~ <http://www.bible.org/illus/p-q/p-q-113.htm#TopOfPage>

The founder of McDonald’s, Ray Krock, was asked by a reporter what he believed in. “I believe in God, my family and McDonald’s,” he said. Then he added, “When I get to the office, I reverse the order.

LEADER: Anybody here guilty of that?

LEADER: Let’s look at what our money priorities are:

READER: “Money Priorities” USA Today (3/13-15/98), research by Yankelovich Partners

Source ~ <http://www.bible.org/illus/p-q/p-q-113.htm#TopOfPage>

The percentage of adults who say they would spend money on this first if they suddenly became wealthy:

House	31 %
Education for kids/self	30 %
Vacation	10 %
Car	9 %
Help for kids/family	3 %
Charity	2 %
Household help	2 %
Pay off debt	2 %
Boat	2 %
Investments	1 %
Clothes/jewelry	1 %
Others	7 %

LEADER: Think about what you would spend money on if you suddenly received an inheritance from a wealthy aunt.

READER: “Money Went Down With The Titanic”

Source ~ <http://www.bible.org/illus/p-q/p-q-113.htm#TopOfPage>

It was reported that eleven millionaires went down on the Titanic. Major A. H. Peuchen left \$300,000 in money, jewelry, and securities in a box in his cabin. "The money seemed a mockery at that time," he later said. "I picked up three oranges instead."

LEADER: The Titanic was full of people who were suddenly faced with what's really important in life:

READER: "Shuffling Priorities" (Steve Goodier)

Source ~ http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon2c/shuffling_priorities.htm

It happened on the evening of April 14, 1912. The Titanic, the largest ship afloat, struck an iceberg in the treacherous waters of the Atlantic. Four hours later she sank to the bottom.

A place on one lifeboat was reserved for a certain woman. She was just stepping into the boat when she asked if she could run to the ship's library to get something. She was allowed three minutes.

The woman ran through the corridors of the reeling vessel. Crossing the saloon she caught sight of jewelry strewn around the floor. Passengers had hurriedly cleaned out their safes and dropped valuables as they ran. What an opportunity! Wealth was literally at her fingertips!

But she ignored the jewelry, made her way to the library, snatched a copy of the Bible and ran back to the waiting lifeboat.

Earlier that day it may have seemed incredible to the woman to choose a copy of the Bible over valuable jewelry. But in the face of death, prized valuables became relatively worthless, and what may have seemed worthless became suddenly valuable.

Unfortunately, it often takes a catastrophe to shuffle our priorities into a sensible order. But what a catastrophe when we never do discover what is truly valuable.

LEADER: Some priorities are thrust on you... a job deadline, making a house payment, setting a broken bone, etc...but what about all the other decisions in your life...how you spend the hours in each day...do you have a choice?

READER: "Living in the Present" Cont: (read #'s)

Source ~ <http://www.ozsermonillustrations.com/searchbytopic.htm#P>

1. Don't undermine your worth by comparing yourself with others. It is because we are different that each of us is special.
2. Don't set your goals by what other people deem important. Only you know what is best for you.
3. Don't take for granted the things closest to your heart. Cling to them as you would your life, for without them, life is meaningless.
4. Don't let your life slip through your fingers by living in the past or for the future. By living your life one day at a time, you live all the days of your life.
5. Don't give up when you still have something to give. Nothing is really over until the moment you stop trying.
6. Don't be afraid to admit that you are less than perfect. It is this fragile thread that binds us to each other.
7. Don't be afraid to encounter risks. It is by taking chances that we learn how to be brave.
8. Don't shut love out of your life by saying it's impossible to find.
9. The quickest way to receive love is to give; the fastest way to lose love is to hold it too tightly; and the best way to keep love is to give it wings.
10. Don't run through life so fast that you forget not only where you've been, but also where you are going.
11. Don't forget that a person's greatest emotional need is to feel appreciated.
12. Don't be afraid to learn. Knowledge is weightless, a treasure you can always carry easily.
13. Don't use time or words carelessly. Neither can be retrieved.

READER: "It's About Time" (Excerpt) By Jan

Source ~ <http://www.cfdevotionals.org/devpg98/de981230.htm>

It's that commodity of which we all have the same amount. Whether we are young or old, fat or thin, rich or poor, we all have 24 hours in a day, though we often wish we had more! But how are we using this precious, non-renewable gift from God? We may think we have our priorities in the right place, but how we spend our time says a lot about what is in our heart, what is driving us.

LEADER: Jesus put it in perspective:

READER: Matthew 6:31-33

“Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ ‘For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

LEADER: “It’s About Time” Cont:

Source ~ <http://www.cfdevotionals.org/devpg98/de981230.htm>

Vine’s dictionary defines “striving” or “seeking” in this verse as “covetously yearning for.” Does the way you spend your time reflect a yearning for God’s Kingdom, or for something else? Think of your time use in terms of a checkbook register. What does your time usage show you are yearning after? How much time are you deducting for relationships with family or friends? Does your time with them reflect accurately their importance to you? How much time is spent serving in your local church, using the abilities God has given you? He didn’t give them to us, in order for them to lie dormant! And these expenditures can reap the interest of closer relationships and fulfilling service of God.

Too often, we squander this valuable resource of time. Two common time-wasters which I myself am sometimes guilty of, are worry and lack of organization. I wouldn’t want to see a tabulation of the time I have let slip through my fingers, worrying about things! And of course worry itself is a sin; Jesus instructs us to avoid it. However, that is much easier said than done. When we find ourselves worrying, we need to pray then and there about that matter.

READER: I Peter 5:7

casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

LEADER: Continuing with It’s About Time:

READER: “Leave it and Focus”

Source ~ <http://www.cfdevotionals.org/devpg98/de981230.htm>

We should ask God to help us leave it with Him and to focus our time, thought and energies where He wants us to focus them. I’m sure you have all heard the statistic -- something like 90% of what we worry about never happens anyway! And as Christ pointed out, our worrying can’t change a thing. What a time-waster!

READER: “Lack of Organization”

Source ~ <http://www.cfdevotionals.org/devpg98/de981230.htm>

Another time-dissipator is simply a lack of organization. If we take the time to become and stay organized, we usually save time in the long run, whether it’s time spent looking for lost car keys, birthday dates, books or whatever. I have found that trying to be more organized helps me save time, whether it’s in teaching Sunday school, preparing for that teaching, studying for classes, in volunteer activities or cleaning up.

READER: “Balance” (“It’s About Time” Cont.)

Source ~ <http://www.cfdevotionals.org/devpg98/de981230.htm>

One habit some of us take too far -- is when possible, doing two things at once. For example, always having something to read in the car, in case of traffic jams, for stoplights etc. The same goes for waiting in doctors’ offices etc. Instead of sitting there fretting over what we could be doing, we could take along mail we need to catch up on, or spend that time praying for those in the waiting room around us or those on our daily prayer lists.

But sometimes our perspective is skewed, and what we consider frustrating wastes of time -- interruptions -- are actually prime times of ministry if we are open to that. We need to ask God to help us see interruptions through His eyes. And it can be wise to simply leave a little time each day free for those pretty inevitable interruptions, because if we don’t, we may pay for it by falling behind.

I also feel the need to remind us that time we spend being replenished is NOT wasted time. As my fellow writer David has reminded me at times, even Jesus took breaks. That type of time actually renders us better stewards of God’s gifts to us. Our ministry won’t be as fruitful if we are burnt out ourselves. It’s all a matter of balance.

LEADER: “Living in the Present” Cont:

Source ~ <http://www.ozsermonillustrations.com/searchbytopic.htm#P>

Life is not a race, but a journey to be savored each step of the way. Yesterday is History, Tomorrow is a Mystery and Today is a gift: that’s why we call it - The Present.

READER: “An Indian in New York”

Source ~ http://www.ozsermonillustrations.com/frames/priorities_frameset.htm

A Native American and his friend were walking near Times Square, New York. The streets were filled with people, across multiple lanes cars were honking their horns, taxicabs were squealing around corners, and sirens were wailing. Suddenly, the Native American stops and says, “I hear a cricket.”

His friend is astounded, “What? You must be crazy. You couldn’t possibly hear a cricket in all of this noise!”

“No, I’m sure of it,” the Native American said, “I heard a cricket.”

“That’s crazy,” said the friend.

The Native American listened carefully for a moment, and then walked across the street to where some shrubs were growing. He looked into the bushes and sure enough, he located a small cricket. His friend was utterly amazed.

“That’s incredible,” said his friend. “You must have super-human ears!”

“No,” said the Native American. “My ears are no different from yours.”

“But that can’t be!” said the friend. “I could never hear a cricket in this noise.”

“Yes, you could,” came the reply. “Here, let me show you.” He reached into his pocket, pulled out a few coins, and dropped them on the sidewalk. And then, with the noise of the crowded street still blaring in their ears, they noticed every head within 5 meters turn and look to see if the money that tinkled on the pavement was theirs. “See what I mean?” asked the Native American. “It all depends on what’s important to you, on what you’re listening for”

Application: Listening/communication. Part of the art of conversation is to learn to listen to people, and in doing that to listen out for what matters, for the things that are important to them and that they’re trying to communicate, not simply what we want to hear or what we want to say next.

READER: “1000 Marbles”

Source ~ http://www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon2/1000_marbles.htm

The older I get, the more I enjoy Saturday mornings. Perhaps it’s the quiet solitude that comes with being the first to rise, or maybe it’s the unbounded joy of not having to be at work. Either way, the first few hours of a Saturday morning are most enjoyable. A few weeks ago, I was shuffling toward the basement with a steaming cup of coffee in one hand and the morning paper in the other. What began as a typical Saturday morning, turned into one of those lessons that life seems to hand you from time-to-time. Let me tell you about it:

I turned the dial up into the phone portion of the band on my ham radio in order to listen to a Saturday morning swap net. Along the way, I came across an older sounding chap, with a tremendous signal and a golden voice. You know, the kind, he sounded like he should be in the broadcasting business. He was telling whoever he was talking with something about “a thousand marbles.” I was intrigued and stopped to listen to what he had to say.

“Well, Tom, it sure sounds like you’re busy with your job. I’m sure they pay you well but it’s a shame you have to be away from home and your family so much. Hard to believe a young fellow should have to work sixty or seventy hours a week to make ends meet. Too bad you missed your daughter’s dance recital.”

He Continued, “Let me tell you something Tom, something that has helped me keep a good perspective on my own priorities.”

And that’s when he began to explain his theory of a “thousand marbles.”

“You see, I sat down one day and did a little arithmetic. The average person lives about seventy-five years. I know, some live more and some live less, but on average, folks live about seventy-five years.”

“Now then, I multiplied 75 times 52 and I came up with 3900 which is the number of Saturdays that the average person has in their entire lifetime. Now stick with me Tom, I’m getting to the important part.” “It took me until I was fifty-five years old to think about all this in any detail,” he went on, “and by that time I had lived through over twenty-eight hundred Saturdays. I got to thinking that if I lived to be seventy-five, I only had about a thousand of them left to enjoy.”

“So I went to a toy store and bought every single marble they had. I ended up having to visit three toy stores to round up 1000 marbles. I took them home and put them inside of a large, clear plastic Container right here in the shack next to my gear. Every Saturday since then, I have taken one marble out and thrown it away.” “I found that by watching the marbles diminish, I focused more on the really important things in life. There is nothing like watching your time here on this earth run out to help get your priorities straight.”

“Now let me tell you one last thing before I sign-off with you and take my lovely wife out for breakfast. This morning, I took the very last marble out of the Container. I figure if I make it until next Saturday, then I have been given a little extra time. And the one thing we can all use is a little more time.” “It was nice to meet you Tom, I hope you spend more time with your family, and I hope to meet you again here on the band. 75 year Old Man, this is K9NZQ, clear and going QRT, good morning!”

You could have heard a pin drop on the band when this fellow signed off. I guess he gave us all a lot to think about. I had planned to work on the antenna that morning, and then I was going to meet up with a few hams to work on the next club newsletter.

Instead, I went upstairs and woke my wife up with a kiss. “C’mon honey, I’m taking you and the kids to breakfast.”

“What brought this on?” she asked with a smile.

“Oh, nothing special, it’s just been a long time since we spent a Saturday together with the kids. Hey, can we stop at a toy store while we’re out? I need to buy some marbles.”

HAVE A GREAT WEEKEND AND MAY ALL YOUR SATURDAYS BE SPECIAL!

READER: “Can I Buy Some of Your Time?”

Source ~ http://www.ozsermonillustrations.com/frames/priorities_frameset.htm

A man came home from work to find his 5 year old son waiting for him at the door. “Daddy?”

“Yeah?” replied the man.

“Daddy, how much money do you make an hour?”

“Well son, I don’t really think that’s any business of yours” the man said.

“Please daddy, please tell me, how much do you make an hour?” pleaded the little boy.

“If I tell you, you must promise you won’t tell anybody else”

“I promise” said the little boy.

“Alright then” said his father. “I make \$25.00 an hour.”

“Oh,” the little boy replied. He looked a little sad, then said “Daddy, may I borrow \$10.00 please?”

His father was furious. “If the only reason you wanted to know how much money I make is so you can borrow some you can go straight off to bed. I work long and hard to provide the things you need, not so you can borrow money to spend on lollies or toys or whatever junk it is you want \$10 for!”

The little boy burst into tears and made his way to his room. After an hour or so the father had calmed down and went to his son’s room. “I’m sorry for being so hard on you earlier son. If you tell me what you wanted the \$10 for and it’s a worthwhile thing I’ll think about giving it to you.”

The little boy ran across the room to his piggy bank and counted out all it’s Contents, exactly \$15.00.

“\$15.00, that’s a lot of money son. Surely that’s enough for what you wanted to buy” said the father.

“Well with the \$10 you’ll give me it will be” the little boy replied.

“What is it that you need \$25.00 for son.”

“For you Dad. I’d like to buy an hour of your time.”

LEADER: How are your priority choices going in regard to relationships?

READER: “Cat’s in the Cradle” Ravi Zacharias, Can Man Live Without God
Source ~ <http://www.bible.org/illus/p-q/p-q-113.htm#TopOfPage>

Many of you may recall this popular song “Cat’s in the Cradle” sung by Harry Chapin.

My child arrived just the other day;
He came to the world in the usual way,
But there were planes to catch, and bills to pay,
He learned to walk while I was away.
And he was talkin’ fore I knew it and as he grew,
He’d say, “I’m gonna be like you, Dad.
You know I’m gonna be like you.”

And the cat’s in the cradle and the silver spoon,
Little Boy Blue and the man in the moon.
“When you comin’ home, Dad?”
“I don’t know when, but we’ll get together then;
You know we’ll have a good time then.”

My son turned ten just the other day.
He said, “Thanks for the ball, Dad, come on, let’s play.
Can you teach me to throw?”
I said, “No, not today,
I got a lot to do.”
He said, “That’s okay.”
And he walked away but his smile never dimmed.
It said, “I’m gonna be like him, yeah,
You know I’m gonna be like him....”

And he came from college just the other day;
So much like a man I just had to say,
“Son, I’m proud of you, can you sit for a while?”
He shook his head and he said with a smile,
“What I’d really like, Dad, is to borrow the car keys.
See you later, can I have them please?”

I’ve long since retired, my son’s moved away.
I called him up just the other day.
I said, “I’d like to see you, if you don’t mind.”
He said, “I’d love to, Dad, if I can find the time.
You see, my new job’s a hassle, and the kids have the flu,
But it’s sure nice talkin’ to you, Dad,
It’s been nice talkin’ to you.”
And as I hung up the phone
It occurred to me,
He’d grown up just like me.
My boy was just like me.

And the cat’s in the cradle and the silver spoon,
Little Boy Blue and the man in the moon,
“When you comin’ home, Son?”
“I don’t know when, but we’ll get together then, Dad.
We’re gonna have a good time then.”

The melodrama of this song was played out in Chapin’s own life almost like a self-fulfilling prophecy. I have

been told that his wife, who wrote the words of the song, asked him one day when he was going to slow down the torrid pace of his life and give some time to their children. His answer was, “At the end of this busy summer, I’ll take some time to be with them.” That summer, ironically and tragically, Harry Chapin was killed in a car accident.

It is not possible to read that postscript of Chapin’s death and miss the larger point—that something was known, believed, and even “preached,” but never lived. When we chase manmade crowns and sacrifice the treasured relationships for which God has made us, life loses its meaning.

READER: “NCAA Basketball Coach” VCG, Our Daily Bread

Source ~ <http://www.bible.org/illus/p-q/p-q-113.htm#TopOfPage>

The magazine article summarized the life of a former winning NCAA basketball coach and network sports announcer. Throughout his colorful coaching career he had been obsessed with the game and with winning. But years later, stricken with cancer, he came to realize the triviality of the goods and values to which he had been passionately devoted. “You get sick and you say to yourself, ‘Sports means nothing,’ and that feels terrible.”

Because he had spent little time with his wife and children, he confessed, “I figured I’d have 20 years in the big time, who knows, maybe win three national titles, then pack it in at 53 or 54....I was going to make it all up to them, all the time I’d been away....It sounds so silly now....But it went on and on, that insatiable desire to conquer the world.”

READER: “Jimmy Johnson, Dallas Cowboy Coach”

Source ~ <http://www.bible.org/illus/p-q/p-q-113.htm#TopOfPage>

Jimmy Johnson, when coaching on the college level, had a wife and the appearance of a marriage because it was expected of college football coaches. The wife and family was needed for social occasions. The day he was named head coach of the Dallas Cowboys, he set about to rid himself of this excess baggage. He threw her away like yesterday’s newspaper. He didn’t need her any more and he didn’t lose any time in losing her. He confessed that he never bought his boys birthday or Christmas presents. He just didn’t have the time, and they weren’t a priority. So he single-mindedly threw himself into his football team, and in January, 1993, he made it to the top, #1, they won the Super Bowl.

So what’s he going to do next year, and the year after that, and ... (In 1995 he was sacked, lost his job as head coach of the Dallas Cowboys. The question he’ll have to answer every day of the rest of his life is this, was it worth it?)

READER: “Football Coach” (Excerpt)

Source ~ <http://www.bible.org/illus/p-q/p-q-113.htm#TopOfPage>

In Contract to this, Tom Landry, former coach of the Dallas cowboys said, “The thrill of knowing Jesus is the greatest thing that ever happened to me ... I think God has put me in a very special place, and He expects me to use it to His glory in everything I do ... whether coaching football or talking to the press, I’m always a Christian ... Christ is first, family second and football third.”

READER: “Robert Schuller” Paul Harvey, Signs of the Times

Source ~ <http://www.bible.org/illus/p-q/p-q-113.htm#TopOfPage>

Recently Pastor Robert Schuller of Garden Grove, California, visited 14 cities in one week to promote one of his books. This in addition to other responsibilities which had to travel with him. Then his office advised that when he got home he was scheduled for a luncheon with the winner of a charity raffle. Raffle tickets had been auctioned off for a “lunch with Robert Schuller.” He hurried home, prepared to squeeze the luncheon into his crowded schedule, then learned that one person had bid \$500 to have lunch with him. Dr. Schuller was suddenly sobered. He happened to know that \$500 represented that individual’s entire savings. And the girl willing to bid her entire savings to have lunch with him was his own school-age daughter.

READER: “Paddleboat Race” In the Eye of the Storm by Max Lucado

Source ~ <http://www.bible.org/illus/p-q/p-q-113.htm#TopOfPage>

Clovis Chappell, a minister from a century back, used to tell the story of two paddleboats. They left Memphis about the same time, traveling down the Mississippi River to New Orleans. As they traveled side by side, sailors from one vessel made a few remarks about the snail’s pace of the other.

Words were exchanged. Challenges were made. And the race began. Competition became vicious as the two boats roared through the Deep South. One boat began falling behind. Not enough fuel. There had been plenty of coal for the trip, but not enough for a race. As the boat dropped back, an enterprising young sailor took some of the ship's cargo and tossed it into the ovens. When the sailors saw that the supplies burned as well as the coal, they fueled their boat with the material they had been assigned to transport. They ended up winning the race, but burned their cargo.

God has entrusted cargo to us, too: children, spouses, friends. Our job is to do our part in seeing that this cargo reaches its destination. Yet when the program takes priority over people, people often suffer.

How much cargo do we sacrifice in order to achieve the number one slot? How many people never reach the destination because of the aggressiveness of a competitive captain?

READER: "Faithful Servant" (John Underhill, Spokane, WA)

Source ~ <http://www.bible.org/illus/p-q/p-q-113.htm#TopOfPage>

Milt Rood worked for years and years in Spokane as a car salesman. He was also very active with the Union Gospel Mission work with juvenile delinquents. Week by week he'd patiently teach the Word and pray with young boys in trouble. One week Milt went into the Hospital for exploratory surgery. The doctors found he was full of cancer. They sewed him up again and sent him home. He died within a week. After the funeral, Ron Kinley remarked, "It's interesting that at the funeral no one ever asked how many cars he had sold!"

READER: Hebrews 12:2

fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

READER: Proverbs 4:27

Do not turn to the right nor to the left; Turn your foot from evil.

READER: "Staying on Course" By David (Excerpt)

Source ~ <http://www.cfdevotionals.org/devpg98/de980211.htm>

When my family and I went on vacation in the eastern part of NC, along the Pamlico River, I took the kids out on the boat for a ride toward the Pamlico Sound. On the trip home, God showed me something that I wanted to share with you all. Home is located off the river about 1 mile down a bay. The bay is marked with Channel markers. These markers keep you in the deeper water, and away from shallow areas and other dangers such as fishing nets and crab pots.

The water was low this weekend, so it was particularly important to follow the markers. As the sun was setting we headed in, and I noticed that if I lined up three distance markers, I could stay in the safe water, and be stay on course to guide us home. I had to "fix" my eyes on these markers and keep all three in line.

Are you fixing your eyes and your life on God's markers? Are you staying the course? It is very hard to stay on course, hard to stay in God's will. This weekend I tried to identify "course-busters" in my life. The key is to sit down, take quiet time and figure out what veers you off course, and be prepared when the obstacles come, to recognize them and deal with them. We never intend to go off course; usually it is a slow drift away from God's perfect plan for our life.

LEADER: "Staying on Course" Cont:

Source ~ <http://www.cfdevotionals.org/devpg98/de980211.htm>

My number one obstacle is busyness. Just purely and simply being too busy to focus on God and His will. Being too busy to see the markers, too busy sit back and focus on God. I think the evil one has got a grip on this country. with keeping us busy, busy, busy. Take time out, regroup, reevaluate your priorities, and focus more time on God. Discerning His will for your life in my opinion, is not a huge one-time "vision" or something that God will reveal to you. The discernment of His will comes from the moment-by-moment decisions we make to stay on course and evaluating what God has done so far in our life. If you slow down long enough, and look back over the course God has taken you on so far, I truly believe you will see where God is wanting you to go in the future.

READER: "Priorities in Prayer" Keith L. Brooks, Essential Themes

Source ~ <http://www.bible.org/illus/p-q/p-q-113.htm#TopOfPage>

Andrew Bonar (great man of prayer) had three rules:

1. Not to speak to any man before speaking to Jesus;
2. Not to do anything with his hands until he had been on his knees;
3. Not to read the papers until he had read his Bible.

READER: “Milan Cathedral”

Source ~ <http://www.bible.org/illus/p-q/p-q-113.htm#TopOfPage>

Over the triple doorways of the cathedral of Milan there are three inscriptions spanning the splendid arches.

- Over one is carved a beautiful wreath of roses, and underneath it is the legend, “All that which pleases is but for a moment.”
- Over the other is sculptured a cross, and there are the words, “All that which troubles us is but for a moment.”
- But underneath the great central entrance to the main aisle is the inscription, “That only is important which is eternal.”

If we always realize these three truths, we will not let trifles trouble us, not be interested so much in the passing pleasures of the hour. We should live for the permanent and the eternal.

LEADER: “ Where Is Your Heart?”

Source ~ <http://www.bible.org/illus/p-q/p-q-113.htm#TopOfPage>

The body of David Livingstone was buried in England where he was born, but his heart was buried in the Africa he loved. At the foot of a tall tree in a small African village the natives dug a hole and placed in it the heart of this man who they loved and respected.

If your heart were to be buried in the place you loved most during life, where would it be? In your pocketbook? In an appropriate space down at the office? Where is your heart?

COMMENTS IF TIME:

ALLOW TEN MINUTES BEFORE CLOSING FOR PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES:

COPY AND DISTRIBUTE THE FOLLOWING PAGES TO YOUR READERS:

READERS

“Time to Check Your Direction”

Early on the morning of February 17, 1994, James Rich crawled behind the Controls of his plane at an airport near Louisville, Ky. The plan was to make a 30-minute flight to Crossville, Tenn., where a friend of his was the airport manager. He would arrive just about the time his friend was showing up for work and show off the 1972 Piper Seneca he had just finished restoring.

The 40-year-old pilot had not slept much the night before. He had been out late with some friends. So he was still tired when he cleared the runway and pointed his plane south for the quick trip. Climbing to 3,500 feet and putting the Seneca on automatic pilot, he dozed off.

Rich must have slept for about three hours. The next thing he knew, he was trying to get his head clear while looking through broken clouds onto what he took to be a lake. A closer look revealed that the “lake” extended to the horizon in all directions. Then a glance at the gas gauge told him he was out of fuel.

Knowing that he was in trouble, he radioed an SOS. Only then did he discover his true location - 188 miles west of Clearwater and 190 miles south of Panama City. He was over the Gulf of Mexico and had only a few minutes of gasoline left.

Eighty-five miles short of land, the last drop of fuel was gone. His uninsured \$70,000 plane hit the Gulf, sank in about 45 seconds, and pulled Rich down with its undertow. Two cushions pulled from the plane popped him back to the surface. They would have to keep him afloat until help came, for Rich couldn't swim.

Within 15 minutes, a helicopter was there to drop a rescue basket. Rich scrambled in and was hoisted to safety - still clinging to his seat cushions.

Mr. Rich's humorous-though-harrowing experience reminds all of us to stay alert about the direction of our lives. It is easy to get up, work, eat, and sleep day after day with our lives on automatic pilot. Thus many a life, marriage, or business winds up far off course and confused. Sometimes there is a devastating crash - with no last-minute rescue from death.

Be sure the things you do this week are consistent with your life goals and priorities. Getting there fast will be of little comfort if your landing site is off.



“List Your Priorities”

A number of years ago a fascinating interview took place between Mr. Charles Schwab, then president of Bethlehem Steel, and Ivy Lee, a self-styled management consultant. Lee was an aggressive, self-confident man who by his perseverance had secured the interview with Mr. Schwab, who was no less self-assured, being one of the most powerful men in the world. During the conversation, Mr. Lee asserted that if the management of Bethlehem Steel would follow his advice, the company's operations would be improved and their profits increased. Schwab responded, “If you can show us a way to get more things done, I'll be glad to listen; and if it works, I'll pay you whatever you ask within reason.” Lee handed Schwab a blank piece of paper and said, “Write down the most important things you have to do tomorrow.” Mr. Schwab did so. “Now, “ Lee Continued, “Number them in order of importance.” Schwab did so. “Tomorrow morning start on number one, and stay with it until you have completed it. Then go on to number two and number three and number four...Don't worry if you haven't completed everything by the end of the day. At least you will have completed the most important projects. Do this every day. After you have been convinced of the value of this system, have your men try it. Try it as long as you like, and then send me your check for whatever you think the advice is worth.” The two men shook hands and Lee left the president's office. A few weeks later Charles Schwab sent Ivy Lee a check for \$25,000—an astronomical amount in the 1930s! He said it was the most profitable lesson he had learned in his long business career.



QUOTE #1

“The older I get the more wisdom I find in the ancient rule of taking first things first. A process which often reduces the most complex human problem to a manageable proportion.” - Dwight Eisenhower 34TH President of the United States



“Putting First Things First”

Haddon Robinson points out that one old recipe for rabbit started out with this injunction: “First catch the rabbit.” Says Robinson: “The writer knew how to put first things first. That’s what we do when we establish priorities—we put the things that should be in first place in their proper order.”

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“A Jar of Rocks”

A time management expert was once speaking to a group of business students and, to drive home a point, used an illustration. He pulled out a one-gallon, wide-mouthed mason jar and set it on a table in front of him. Then he produced about a dozen fist-sized rocks and carefully placed them, one at a time, into the jar.

When the jar was filled to the top and no more rocks would fit inside, he asked, “Is this jar full?”

Everyone in the class said, “Yes.”

Then he said, “Really?” He reached under the table and pulled out a bucket of gravel. Then he dumped some gravel in and shook the jar causing pieces of gravel to work themselves down into the spaces between the big rocks.

Then he smiled and asked the group once more, “Is the jar full?” By this time the class was onto him. “Probably not,” one of them answered.

“Good!” he replied. And he reached under the table and brought out a bucket of sand. He started dumping the sand in and it went into all the spaces left between the rocks and the gravel. Once more he asked the question, “Is this jar full?”

“No!” the class shouted. Once again he said, “Good!” Then he grabbed a pitcher of water and began to pour it in until the jar was filled to the brim. Then he looked up at the class and asked, “What is the point of this illustration?”

One eager beaver raised his hand and said, “The point is, no matter how full your schedule is, if you try really hard, you can always fit some more things into it!”

“No,” the speaker replied, “that’s not the point. The truth this illustration teaches us is: If you don’t put the big rocks in first, you’ll never get them in at all.”

What are the big rocks in your life? A project that you want to accomplish? Time with your loved ones? Your faith, your education, your finances? A cause? Teaching or mentoring others? Remember to put these big rocks in first or you’ll never get them in at all.

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QUOTE #2

“It is the mark of great people to treat trifles as trifles and important matters as important.” - Doris Lessing
Born 1919, Award Winning Author

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QUOTE #3

“It is very sad for a man to make himself servant to a single thing; his manhood all taken out of him by the hydraulic pressure of excessive business.” - Theodore Parker 1810-1860, American Minister

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“What I Believe In”

The founder of McDonald’s, Ray Krock, was asked by a reporter what he believed in. “I believe in God, my family and McDonald’s,” he said. Then he added, “When I get to the office, I reverse the order.”

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“Money Priorities”

The percentage of adults who say they would spend money on this first if they suddenly became wealthy:

House	31 %
Education for kids/self	30 %
Vacation	10 %
Car	9 %
Help for kids/family	3 %
Charity	2 %
Household help	2 %
Pay off debt	2 %
Boat	2 %
Investments	1 %
Clothes/jewelry	1 %
Others	7 %

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“Money Went Down With The Titanic”

It was reported that eleven millionaires went down on the Titanic. Major A. H. Peuchen left \$300,000 in money, jewelry, and securities in a box in his cabin. “The money seemed a mockery at that time,” he later said. “I picked up three oranges instead.”

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“Shuffling Priorities”

It happened on the evening of April 14, 1912. The Titanic, the largest ship afloat, struck an iceberg in the treacherous waters of the Atlantic. Four hours later she sank to the bottom.

A place on one lifeboat was reserved for a certain woman. She was just stepping into the boat when she asked if she could run to the ship’s library to get something. She was allowed three minutes.

The woman ran through the corridors of the reeling vessel. Crossing the saloon she caught sight of jewelry strewn around the floor. Passengers had hurriedly cleaned out their safes and dropped valuables as they ran. What an opportunity! Wealth was literally at her fingertips!

But she ignored the jewelry, made her way to the library, snatched a copy of the Bible and ran back to the waiting lifeboat.

Earlier that day it may have seemed incredible to the woman to choose a copy of the Bible over valuable jewelry. But in the face of death, prized valuables became relatively worthless, and what may have seemed worthless became suddenly valuable.

Unfortunately, it often takes a catastrophe to shuffle our priorities into a sensible order. But what a catastrophe when we never do discover what is truly valuable.

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“Living in the Present” Cont:

1. Don't undermine your worth by comparing yourself with others. It is because we are different that each of us is special.
2. Don't set your goals by what other people deem important. Only you know what is best for you.
3. Don't take for granted the things closest to your heart. Cling to them as you would your life, for without them, life is meaningless.
4. Don't let your life slip through your fingers by living in the past or for the future. By living your life one day at a time, you live all the days of your life.
5. Don't give up when you still have something to give. Nothing is really over until the moment you stop trying.
6. Don't be afraid to admit that you are less than perfect. It is this fragile thread that binds us to each other.
7. Don't be afraid to encounter risks. It is by taking chances that we learn how to be brave.
8. Don't shut love out of your life by saying it's impossible to find.
9. The quickest way to receive love is to give; the fastest way to lose love is to hold it too tightly; and the best way to keep love is to give it wings.
10. Don't run through life so fast that you forget not only where you've been, but also where you are going.
11. Don't forget that a person's greatest emotional need is to feel appreciated.
12. Don't be afraid to learn. Knowledge is weightless, a treasure you can always carry easily.
13. Don't use time or words carelessly. Neither can be retrieved.

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“It's About Time”

It's that commodity of which we all have the same amount. Whether we are young or old, fat or thin, rich or poor, we all have 24 hours in a day, though we often wish we had more! But how are we using this precious, non-renewable gift from God? We may think we have our priorities in the right place, but how we spend our time says a lot about what is in our heart, what is driving us.

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Matthew 6:31-33

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I Peter 5:7

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“Leave it and Focus”

We should ask God to help us leave it with Him and to focus our time, thought and energies where He wants us to focus them. I'm sure you have all heard the statistic -- something like 90% of what we worry about never happens anyway! And as Christ pointed out, our worrying can't change a thing. What a time-waster!

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“Lack of Organization”

Another time-dissipator is simply a lack of organization. If we take the time to become and stay organized, we usually save time in the long run, whether it's time spent looking for lost car keys, birthday dates, books or whatever. I have found that trying to be more organized helps me save time, whether it's in teaching Sunday school, preparing for that teaching, studying for classes, in volunteer activities or cleaning up.

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“Balance”

One habit some of us take too far -- is when possible, doing two things at once. For example, always hainge something to read in the car, in case of traffic jams, for stoplights etc. The same goes for waiting in doctors' offices etc. Instead of sitting there fretting over what we could be doing, we could take along mail we need to catch up on, or spend that time praying for those in the waiting room around us or those on our daily prayer lists.

But sometimes our perspective is skewed, and what we consider frustrating wastes of time -- interruptions -- are actually prime times of ministry if we are open to that. We need to ask God to help us see interruptions through His eyes. And it can be wise to simply leave a little time each day free for those pretty inevitable interruptions, because if we don't, we may pay for it by falling behind.

I also feel the need to remind us that time we spend being replenished is NOT wasted time. As my fellow writer David has reminded me at times, even Jesus took breaks. That type of time actually renders us better stewards of God's gifts to us. Our ministry won't be as fruitful if we are burnt out ourselves. It's all a matter of balance.



“An Indian in New York”

A Native American and his friend were walking near Times Square, New York. The streets were filled with people, across multiple lanes cars were honking their horns, taxicabs were squealing around corners, and sirens were wailing. Suddenly, the Native American stops and says, “I hear a cricket.”

His friend is astounded, “What? You must be crazy. You couldn't possibly hear a cricket in all of this noise!”

“No, I'm sure of it,” the Native American said, “I heard a cricket.”

“That's crazy,” said the friend.

The Native American listened carefully for a moment, and then walked across the street to where some shrubs were growing. He looked into the bushes and sure enough, he located a small cricket. His friend was utterly amazed.

“That's incredible,” said his friend. “You must have super-human ears!”

“No,” said the Native American. “My ears are no different from yours.”

“But that can't be!” said the friend. “I could never hear a cricket in this noise.”

“Yes, you could,” came the reply. “Here, let me show you.”

He reached into his pocket, pulled out a few coins, and dropped them on the sidewalk. And then, with the noise of the crowded street still blaring in their ears, they noticed every head within 5 meters turn and look to see if the money that tinkled on the pavement was theirs.

“See what I mean?” asked the Native American. “It all depends on what's important to you, on what you're listening for”

Application: Listening/communication. Part of the art of conversation is to learn to listen to people, and in doing that to listen out for what matters, for the things that are important to them and that they're trying to communicate, not simply what we want to hear or what we want to say next.



“1000 Marbles”

The older I get, the more I enjoy Saturday mornings. Perhaps it's the quiet solitude that comes with being the first to rise, or maybe it's the unbounded joy of not having to be at work. Either way, the first few hours of a Saturday morning are most enjoyable. A few weeks ago, I was shuffling toward the basement with a steaming cup of coffee in one hand and the morning paper in the other. What began as a typical Saturday morning, turned into one of those lessons that life seems to hand you from time-to-time. Let me tell you about it:

I turned the dial up into the phone portion of the band on my ham radio in order to listen to a Saturday morning swap net. Along the way, I came across an older sounding chap, with a tremendous signal and a golden voice. You know, the kind, he sounded like he should be in the broadcasting business. He was telling whoever he was talking with something about “a thousand marbles.” I was intrigued and stopped to listen to what he had to say.

“Well, Tom, it sure sounds like you're busy with your job. I'm sure they pay you well but it's a shame you have to be away from home and your family so much. Hard to believe a young fellow should have to work sixty or seventy hours a week to make ends meet. Too bad you missed your daughter's dance recital.”

He Continued, “Let me tell you something Tom, something that has helped me keep a good perspective on my own priorities.”

And that's when he began to explain his theory of a “thousand marbles.”

“You see, I sat down one day and did a little arithmetic. The average person lives about seventy-five years. I know, some live more and some live less, but on average, folks live about seventy-five years.”

“Now then, I multiplied 75 times 52 and I came up with 3900 which is the number of Saturdays that the average person has in their entire lifetime. Now stick with me Tom, I'm getting to the important part.” “It took me until I was fifty-five years old to think about all this in any detail,” he went on, “and by that time I had lived through over twenty-eight hundred Saturdays. I got to thinking that if I lived to be seventy-five, I only had about a thousand of them left to enjoy.”

“So I went to a toy store and bought every single marble they had. I ended up having to visit three toy stores to round up 1000 marbles. I took them home and put them inside of a large, clear plastic Container right here in the shack next to my gear. Every Saturday since then, I have taken one marble out and thrown it away.” “I found that by watching the marbles diminish, I focused more on the really important things in life. There is nothing like watching your time here on this earth run out to help get your priorities straight.”

“Now let me tell you one last thing before I sign-off with you and take my lovely wife out for breakfast. This morning, I took the very last marble out of the Container. I figure if I make it until next Saturday, then I have been given a little extra time. And the one thing we can all use is a little more time.” “It was nice to meet you Tom, I hope you spend more time with your family, and I hope to meet you again here on the band. 75 year Old Man, this is K9NZQ, clear and going QRT, good morning!”

You could have heard a pin drop on the band when this fellow signed off. I guess he gave us all a lot to think about. I had planned to work on the antenna that morning, and then I was going to meet up with a few hams to work on the next club newsletter.

Instead, I went upstairs and woke my wife up with a kiss. “C'mon honey, I'm taking you and the kids to breakfast.”

“What brought this on?” she asked with a smile.

“Oh, nothing special, it's just been a long time since we spent a Saturday together with the kids. Hey, can we stop at a toy store while we're out? I need to buy some marbles.”

HAVE A GREAT LIFE AND MAY ALL YOUR SATURDAYS BE SPECIAL!

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“Can I Buy Some of Your Time?”

A man came home from work to find his 5 year old son waiting for him at the door. “Daddy?”

“Yeah?” replied the man.

“Daddy, how much money do you make an hour?”

“Well son, I don’t really think that’s any business of yours” the man said.

“Please daddy, please tell me, how much do you make an hour?” pleaded the little boy.

“If I tell you, you must promise you won’t tell anybody else”

“I promise” said the little boy.

“Alright then” said his father. “I make \$25.00 an hour.”

“Oh,” the little boy replied. He looked a little sad, then said “Daddy, may I borrow \$10.00 please?”

His father was furious. “If the only reason you wanted to know how much money I make is so you can borrow some you can go straight off to bed. I work long and hard to provide the things you need, not so you can borrow money to spend on lollies or toys or whatever junk it is you want \$10 for!”

The little boy burst into tears and made his way to his room. After an hour or so the father had calmed down and went to his son’s room. “I’m sorry for being so hard on you earlier son. If you tell me what you wanted the \$10 for and it’s a worthwhile thing I’ll think about giving it to you.”

The little boy ran across the room to his piggy bank and counted out all its Contents, exactly \$15.00.

“\$15.00, that’s a lot of money son. Surely that’s enough for what you wanted to buy” said the father.

“Well with the \$10 you’ll give me it will be” the little boy replied.

“What is it that you need \$25.00 for son.”

“For you Dad. I’d like to buy an hour of your time.”

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“Cat’s in the Cradle”

Many of you may recall this popular song “Cat’s in the Cradle” sung by Harry Chapin.

My child arrived just the other day;
He came to the world in the usual way,
But there were planes to catch, and bills to pay,
He learned to walk while I was away.
And he was talkin’ fore I knew it and as he grew,
He’d say, “I’m gonna be like you, Dad.
You know I’m gonna be like you.”

And the cat’s in the cradle and the silver spoon,
Little Boy Blue and the man in the moon.
“When you comin’ home, Dad?”
“I don’t know when, but we’ll get together then;
You know we’ll have a good time then.”

My son turned ten just the other day.
He said, “Thanks for the ball, Dad, come on, let’s play.
Can you teach me to throw?”
I said, “No, not today,
I got a lot to do.”
He said, “That’s okay.”
And he walked away but his smile never dimmed.
It said, “I’m gonna be like him, yeah,
You know I’m gonna be like him....”

And he came from college just the other day;
So much like a man I just had to say,
“Son, I’m proud of you, can you sit for a while?”
He shook his head and he said with a smile,
“What I’d really like, Dad, is to borrow the car keys.
See you later, can I have them please?”

I’ve long since retired, my son’s moved away.
I called him up just the other day.
I said, “I’d like to see you, if you don’t mind.”
He said, “I’d love to, Dad, if I can find the time.
You see, my new job’s a hassle, and the kids have the flu,
But it’s sure nice talkin’ to you, Dad,
It’s been nice talkin’ to you.”
And as I hung up the phone
It occurred to me,
He’d grown up just like me.
My boy was just like me.

And the cat’s in the cradle and the silver spoon,
Little Boy Blue and the man in the moon,
“When you comin’ home, Son?”
“I don’t know when, but we’ll get together then, Dad.
We’re gonna have a good time then.”

The melodrama of this song was played out in Chapin’s own life almost like a self-fulfilling prophecy. I have been told that his wife, who wrote the words of the song, asked him one day when he was going to slow down the torrid pace of his life and give some time to their children. His answer was, “At the end of this busy summer, I’ll take some time to be with them.” That summer, ironically and tragically, Harry Chapin was killed in a car accident.

It is not possible to read that postscript of Chapin’s death and miss the larger point—that something was known, believed, and even “preached,” but never lived. When we chase manmade crowns and sacrifice the treasured relationships for which God has made us, life loses its meaning.

“NCAA Basketball Coach”

The magazine article summarized the life of a former winning NCAA basketball coach and network sports announcer. Throughout his colorful coaching career he had been obsessed with the game and with winning. But years later, stricken with cancer, he came to realize the triviality of the goods and values to which he had been passionately devoted. “You get sick and you say to yourself, ‘Sports means nothing,’ and that feels terrible.”

Because he had spent little time with his wife and children, he confessed, “I figured I’d have 20 years in the big time, who knows, maybe win three national titles, then pack it in at 53 or 54....I was going to make it all up to them, all the time I’d been away....It sounds so silly now....But it went on and on, that insatiable desire to conquer the world.”

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“Jimmy Johnson, Dallas Cowboy Coach”

Jimmy Johnson, when coaching on the college level, had a wife and the appearance of a marriage because it was expected of college football coaches. The wife and family was needed for social occasions. The day he was named head coach of the Dallas Cowboys, he set about to rid himself of this excess baggage. He threw her away like yesterday’s newspaper. He didn’t need her any more and he didn’t lose any time in losing her. He confessed that he never bought his boys birthday or Christmas presents. He just didn’t have the time, and they weren’t a priority. So he single-mindedly threw himself into his football team, and in January, 1993, he made it to the top, #1, they won the Super Bowl.

So what’s he going to do next year, and the year after that, and ... (In 1995 he was sacked, lost his job as head coach of the Dallas Cowboys. The last I heard, he’s being considered as a TV football commentator. The question he’ll have to answer every day of the rest of his life is this, was it worth it?)

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“Football Coach”

In Contract to this, Tom Landry, former coach of the Dallas cowboys said, “The thrill of knowing Jesus is the greatest thing that ever happened to me ... I think God has put me in a very special place, and He expects me to use it to His glory in everything I do ... whether coaching football or talking to the press, I’m always a Christian ... Christ is first, family second and football third.”

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“Robert Schuller”

Recently Pastor Robert Schuller of Garden Grove, California, visited 14 cities in one week to promote one of his books. This in addition to other responsibilities which had to travel with him. Then his office advised that when he got home he was scheduled for a luncheon with the winner of a charity raffle. Raffle tickets had been auctioned off for a “lunch with Robert Schuller.” He hurried home, prepared to squeeze the luncheon into his crowded schedule, then learned that one person had bid \$500 to have lunch with him. Dr. Schuller was suddenly sobered. He happened to know that \$500 represented that individual’s entire savings. And the girl willing to bid her entire savings to have lunch with him was his own school-age daughter.

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“Paddleboat Race”

Clovis Chappell, a minister from a century back, used to tell the story of two paddleboats. They left Memphis about the same time, traveling down the Mississippi River to New Orleans. As they traveled side by side, sailors from one vessel made a few remarks about the snail’s pace of the other.

Words were exchanged. Challenges were made. And the race began. Competition became vicious as the two boats roared through the Deep South.

One boat began falling behind. Not enough fuel. There had been plenty of coal for the trip, but not enough for a race. As the boat dropped back, an enterprising young sailor took some of the ship’s cargo and tossed it into the ovens. When the sailors saw that the supplies burned as well as the coal, they fueled their boat with the material they had been assigned to transport. They ended up winning the race, but burned their cargo.

God has entrusted cargo to us, too: children, spouses, friends. Our job is to do our part in seeing that this cargo reaches its destination.

Yet when the program takes priority over people, people often suffer.

How much cargo do we sacrifice in order to achieve the number one slot? How many people never reach the destination because of the aggressiveness of a competitive captain?

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“Faithful Servant”

Milt Rood worked for years and years in Spokane as a car salesman. He was also very active with the Union Gospel Mission work with juvenile delinquents. Week by week he’d patiently teach the Word and pray with young boys in trouble. One week Milt went into the Hospital for exploratory surgery. The doctors found he was full of cancer. They sewed him up again and sent him home. He died within a week. After the funeral, Ron Kinley remarked, “It’s interesting that at the funeral no one ever asked how many cars he had sold!”

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Hebrews 12:2

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Proverbs 4:27

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“Staying on Course”

When my family and I went on vacation in the eastern part of NC, along the Pamlico River, I took the kids out on the boat for a ride toward the Pamlico Sound. On the trip home, God showed me something that I wanted to share with you all. Home is located off the river about 1 mile down a bay. The bay is marked with Channel markers. These markers keep you in the deeper water ,and away from shallow areas and other dangers such as fishing nets and crab pots.

The water was low this weekend, so it was particularly important to follow the markers. As the sun was setting we headed in, and I noticed that if I lined up three distance markers, I could stay in the safe water, and be stay on course to guide us home. I had to “fix” my eyes on these markers and keep all three in line.

Are you fixing your eyes and your life on God’s markers? Are you staying the course? It is very hard to stay on course, hard to stay in God’s will. This weekend I tried to identify “course-busters” in my life. The key is to sit down, take quiet time and figure out what veers you off course, and be prepared when the obstacles come, to recognize them and deal with them. We never intend to go off course; usually it is a slow drift away from God’s perfect plan for our life.

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“Priorities in Prayer”

Andrew Bonar (great man of prayer) had three rules:

1. Not to speak to any man before speaking to Jesus;
2. Not to do anything with his hands until he had been on his knees;
3. Not to read the papers until he had read his Bible.



“Milan Cathedral”

Over the triple doorways of the cathedral of Milan there are three inscriptions spanning the splendid arches. Over one is carved a beautiful wreath of roses, and underneath it is the legend, “All that which pleases is but for a moment.”

Over the other is sculptured a cross, and there are the words, “All that which troubles us is but for a moment.”

But underneath the great central entrance to the main aisle is the inscription, “That only is important which is eternal.” If we always realize these three truths, we will not let trifles trouble us, not be interested so much in the passing pleasures of the hour. We should live for the permanent and the eternal