

# The Power of Proper Priorities

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When you get down to it, living as a Christian is primarily a matter of getting your priorities in line. And there are five powerful priorities in the gospel of Matthew.

## GET RIGHT WITH OUR BROTHER BEFORE YOU CAN WORSHIP

Matthew 5:23-24

If you're ready to put your tithe in the offering plate and think there is a breach in fellowship between you and someone in the family of God, then you should not leave an offering. Instead, God says you ought to leave the worship service.

Notice the Bible does not say that if you have something against somebody else, that you are to go see him or her (see Matthew 18). Matthew 5 says you need to reconcile before you make your offering if somebody has something against you.

Is there someone you have wronged? Some debt you have not paid? Some harsh words you have spoken? Some duty you have failed to fulfill? Before you worship, you are to be reconciled to your brother.

## PUT SPIRITUAL THINGS BEFORE MATERIAL THINGS

Matthew 6:33

Most Americans put things first and God second. And this causes a wretched cycle of worry. We put our eyes on what we can touch, see, hear, smell, and taste. And yet, what does God's Word tell us? Jesus said worry is the way an ungodly man lives (see Matthew 6:31-32).

Matthew 6:25 says, "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?"

What you go after here depends upon where you go hereafter. If you put things first, then you are going to hell. If you put God first, then you are going to heaven. It is just that plain.

## FIRST JUDGE OURSELVES BEFORE WE TRY TO JUDGE ANYONE ELSE

Matthew 7:1-5

Jesus is speaking about the beam our eyes and the mote in our neighbor's eyes. Now, what do you think that log is? Adultery? Murder? No. Jesus was talking to the Pharisees, these things weren't their stumbling blocks.

The log was their prideful attitude toward the speck that was in their brother's eye. They were going around with a heinous sin. And it was the sin of pride. Oh, how blind we can become to our own faults because of our pride.

If somebody stumbles spiritually, we ought to help him or her get right (see Galatians 6:1). We are to help one another, correct one another, and lovingly guide one another.

### BIND SATAN BEFORE WE LOOSE SINNERS

Matthew 12:22-30

In Matthew, we read the story of how a man was blind and mute because of the power of the devil (not everyone who is blind and mute has a demon). When Jesus entered the conflict, He knew that this was not a battle of flesh and blood.

Jesus went into Satan's treasure house and robbed him of one of his dirty playthings. How did He do it? It was a strong-armed robbery. Jesus knocked on the door and Satan answered. Jesus laid hands on him and bound him. Then, He left Satan writhing on the floor, took what He wanted, and walked out.

Now, how are we going to bind him? By taking the golden chains of God's omnipotent power and the silver cords of His love. Then, we can take the key of faith and free the captives.

### FIRST THE INSIDE AND THEN THE OUTSIDE

Matthew 23:25-26

Jesus scolded the Pharisees for their hypocrisy because they clean only the outside of their lives. When you only clean up the outside of your life that is reformation, but when you clean up the inside of your life that is regeneration. The Pharisees didn't need another bath, they needed a new birth.

When we try to help men, what do we do? We start on the outside. We think if we can reform him with a new environment, food, clothes, and education that we will change him. I am not saying that we should not compassionately help change man's environment. Instead, I am saying that man needs more than soap and soup, he needs salvation. He needs a birth from above, not merely a boost from below.

*These are God's powerful priorities. Will you join me in making these your priorities for the rest of your life?*

• Love Worth Finding (*Monday, July 22, 2002*)