

Session 9

Priorities

Welcome and Prayer

Ask for a volunteer to open the session with prayer.

Sharing

Invite the group to share any insights, questions or revelations from the daily reflections from the prior week.

Introduction of Session Focus

Life is full of competing values and interests. There are SO MANY worthwhile things to do in life! How does one choose the order in which to work on and accomplish things? That is the question of “priorities.” Your priority in life is the thing you put first. However, it’s much more than what you talk about doing first; your priorities are shown and proven by the things you actually do. As Christian believers, we know that our priorities should align with God’s priorities. Fortunately, God reveals his priorities to us in his Word of Scripture.

Time in the Word

Scripture reading — Matthew 6:31-33

Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (NRSV)

Large Group Discussion

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight words or phrases that stand out for you.
2. Why do you think these particular words and phrases caught your attention?
3. Jesus says here to strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness. What does it mean to “strive?” What is the “kingdom of God”? How can you strive for God’s righteousness?
4. Where do physical needs such as food, drink and clothing fit into your priorities?

Small group break-out sessions

Gather in groups of two or three.

Discipling Conversations:

Have each person share how they feel about their current faith life. Allow your discipling conversations to arise naturally out of the sharing. Try to follow the flow of discipling conversations.

- Where are you now? (Current Reality)
- Where do you want to be? (Vision)
- Does your vision reflect your beliefs, values & priorities? (Alignment)
- How do you plan to accomplish your vision? (Action Plan)
- What resources will you need?
- How can I hold you accountable?

Set a time for your small group to meet and reflect on the daily devotions for between the sessions.

Large group wrap-up

Have participants share any closing thoughts, questions, insights or observations that arose from the break out groups.

Reminder:

1. Continue to do the daily devotions and journal their insights and questions.
2. They should set a time during the second week of devotions to meet with one or two others for a discipleship guiding session.

Next Session (in two weeks): "Family Life"

Close in Prayer

Devotions: Week Ten & Eleven

Weekday 1 – Thursday

Scripture reading — Psalm 119:133

Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. How does having the proper priorities keep us from falling into sin?
4. Write out your top five priorities in life.
5. Take some time to pray that God would “keep you in step” with your stated priorities.
6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What has caused you to think deeper?

Weekday 2 – Friday

Scripture reading — Proverbs 3:5-8

⁵Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. ⁶In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. ⁷Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. ⁸It will be a healing for your flesh and a refreshment for your body. (NRSV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. Read the passage again and insert your “name” every place the word “your” appears. What did you see differently in the reading?
4. How do you feel about not relying on your own insight, or not being wise in your own eyes? How does God provide proper insight and wisdom for this purpose?

5. What percentage of your heart is currently trusting in the Lord? What is a simple step the Spirit has brought to mind that you can take which will move the percentage point in the right direction?

6. What would it mean today to acknowledge the Lord in all your ways? How might this shape the priority you assign to various tasks?

7. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What have you thought about today in this focus area that you longing for?

Saturday (before worship...preparing)

Saturdays are a day of preparation as we contemplate the coming Sabbath. Look back over the week, consider such questions as:

1. What sins will I lay before the Lord in my confession?

2. What prayers will I lift up?

3. What questions will I be seeking the answers to?

4. What burdens do I need to lay down in order to be fully open to the movement of the Holy Spirit?

5. Who might I invite to journey with me?

Sunday (after worship...pondering)

Sundays are devoted to worship and reflection. We gather together as the Body of Christ to lift our praises to God and receive what only he can give us. Later, reflect on such questions as:

1. What point of the sermon or Sunday School lesson most caught my attention? What exactly touched my heart?

2. Which song, hymn or portion of liturgy most became a prayer or conversation with God?

3. How will making my confession and hearing the absolution affect how I live this week?

4. What strength or comfort did I receive as I participated in worship today?

5. What was the gospel message I heard today and who did I share it with?

6. Who did I speak with that I can remember in prayer this week?

Weekday 3 – Monday

Scripture reading — Romans 12:1-2

¹I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. (NRSV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.

2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. Name a way(s) in which following God's priorities for your life might seem like a sacrifice at this time in your life.

4. What is the connection between living God's priorities in your life, and worshipping God?

5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What small specific step and active response can you take in the direction God's word is leading you?

Weekday 4 – Tuesday

Scripture reading — Luke 12:22-24

²²[Jesus] said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. ²³For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. ²⁴Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds!" (NRSV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.

2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. The word “worry” is the same word used in tomorrow’s reading about Martha. What worry is distracting you the most today? What is it distracting you from?

4. In what ways are faith and worry opposites? Where are you experiencing the tug of war?

5. How does knowing that you are valuable in God’s eyes affect your willingness to seek God’s kingdom and his righteousness?

6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

How does this passage focus my attention first on Jesus, second on my identity “in Christ,” and third on my participation in the Body of Christ?

How is this passage moving me beyond myself to take a specific small step in the direction of serving my family, church, or neighbor?

Weekday 5 – Wednesday

Scripture reading — Luke 10:38-42

³⁸Now as they went on their way, [Jesus] entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. ³⁹She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. ⁴⁰But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me." ⁴¹But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; ⁴²there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her." (NRSV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. How much do you relate with Martha here? How do your many tasks distract you from working on God's priorities in your life?
4. Notice that Jesus called Mary's activity a "choice." Do you see how you are choosing to do the things you do? If so, identify your current choice. What first step can you take in choosing the better part?
5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal (Reflecting on this week)

Reflecting on the Scriptures this week, what theme do you see developing?

Review any action steps you have felt led to take. If you have not yet started, consider beginning today.

Begin to write a one or two sentence statement for this week's focus area. Try to have it reflect what the verses this week have taught you about who Christ Jesus is, and his invitation to follow him in this area of life.

Weekday 6 – Thursday

Scripture reading — Philippians 4:6-8

⁶Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (NRSV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.

2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. This passage is more about thoughts than about actions. How is that relevant to setting and carrying out priorities?

4. As you consider your priorities, and putting your activities in the right order, what does this passage instruct you to do or not do?

In verse 6?

In verse 8?

5. What would having the peace of God bring to you as you work your priorities?

6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What has caused you to think deeper?

Weekday 7 – Friday

Scripture reading — Matthew 23:23

[Jesus said,] “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill, and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. It is these you ought to have practiced without neglecting the others.” (NRSV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. Jesus speaks about doing more important matters without neglecting the less important. What important, but less important things most often keep you from doing the most important things?
4. This passage is about actions that keep God’s law. What standard does Jesus use to compare these different actions?
5. What most often causes you to set and keep priorities? When do you set aside time to prioritize your day, week, month, or year?
6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

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What have you thought about today in this focus area that you longing for?

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1. What point of the sermon or Sunday School lesson most caught my attention? What exactly touched my heart?
2. Which song, hymn or portion of liturgy most became a prayer or conversation with God?
3. How will making my confession and hearing the absolution affect how I live this week?
4. What strength or comfort did I receive as I participated in worship today?
5. What was the gospel message I heard today and who did I share it with?
6. Who did I speak with that I can remember in prayer this week?

Weekday 8 – Monday

Scripture reading — Mark 12:28-31

²⁸One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?” ²⁹Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; ³⁰you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ ³¹The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (NRSV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. This Scripture passage is clearly about setting priorities. Jesus instructs that the first priority is to love God above all else. What are some examples of how you do that?
4. What neighbors have shown love to you and how? What gift do you have or what little act of kindness can you share with your neighbor?
5. How does this passage speak to your understanding of setting priorities?
6. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

What small specific step and active response can you take in the direction God's Word is leading you?

Weekday 9 – Tuesday

Scripture reading — James 1:5-8

⁵If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. ⁶But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. ⁸Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do. (NIV)

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.
2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?
3. This passage says that wisdom comes from God. Wisdom is about choices. In what ways does wisdom play a role in establishing your priorities?
4. In 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 Paul speaks about the foolishness of God being wiser than human wisdom and centers God's display of divine wisdom in the cross. How does the way of the cross guide you to act wisely and to set priorities?

5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

How has God granted you wisdom?

Weekday 10 – Wednesday

Scripture reading — Ephesians 5:15-17

¹⁵Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Focus Questions

Record your thoughts from prayer and reflection.

1. Read through the Scripture a second time and highlight the word or phrase that stands out for you.

2. What is going on in your life that connects with that word or phrase?

3. How can you learn what God's will is? What is God's will, his design, for your life?

4. If you are playing golf, the target is the little hole on the green. No person's golf ball always lands exactly where they intend with every shot. Where you are walking right now, how specifically does your aim need to change to be able to hit the target of God's will?

5. Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to respond this week?

Daily Journal (Reflecting on this week)

Reflecting on the Scriptures this week, what theme do you see developing?

Review any action steps you have felt led to take.

Review and update the statement you wrote last week. What are several steps you could take to move in the direction God is leading you? To get started, which one do you choose?