

RIGHT PRIORITIES
“Taking the First Steps”
Sermon by Rev. Dr. Joseph Parker
(Matthew 6:33-34; 22:36-40; Proverbs 3:9-10)

- On our life journey we all waste time. And every journey begins with a single step.
- This morning I offer you advice on how to no longer waste time, by **taking the 1st steps.**
- I recently started reading a book, **When: The Scientific Secrets of Perfect Timing**, by Daniel Pink.
- He notes that “every day we confront a never-ending stream of ‘when’ decisions. When to change jobs. When to schedule a meeting or a class. When to get serious about a person or a project. Yet we make such decisions haphazardly – based on intuition and guesswork. In When, Pink argues this is exactly the wrong approach.”
- Drawing on a rich trove of research from psychology and biology, neuroscience and economics, **Pink** says science reveals the “best time” of day each of us should make certain decisions.
- But I suggest that before knowing when you should make decisions, you should know what are your priorities which should inform your decisions. **Make prioritizing a priority.** It’s the first step for us.
- (**Michael Hyatt**) “Having priorities is essential. So is having them in the right order.”
- I recognize that prioritizing is hard. We must look at it from a different angle.
- We must make sacrifices, even regarding what feels urgent.
- But when we don’t know what our purpose is, it’s really easy to fill our schedule with things that seem important or productive but, in the end, don’t lead us closer to God and aren’t life-giving.
- In Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount” in Matthew 6, he gives us all the advice we need to take the first steps in our lives. Hear his words again: *33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you. 34 Therefore don’t worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*
- Studies show that the one factor in being **successful** is establishing the **right priorities.**
- “Desires dictate our priorities, priorities shape our choices, and choices determine our actions.”
- “The key is not to prioritize what’s on your schedule, but to schedule your priorities.” (**Stephen Covey**). **Big priorities before the small priorities. BISHOP CHARLES BLAKE:**
 - ❖ At the end of my life, what will I wish I had given my attention to?
 - ❖ What role have I allowed God to have in the planning of my life?
 - ❖ What do you value, from most important to least important?
 - ❖ Do my pursuits conform to my beliefs about God, God’s Word, the Bible? **Our priorities matter!**

INTENTIONALLY PRIORITIZE RIGHT RULES (Matt. 6:33; Prov. 3:9; Psa. 1:2)

- “**Seek first God’s kingdom.**” Pursue/work for God’s rule and reign experiencing blessings and joy in his kingdom. **Golden rule (Matt. 7:12) is not the only rule. God’s rules matter!**
- God gives us **rules for living** not to restrict our freedom but to liberate and enhance our joy.
- **God** gives clear instructions **to help and protect us from ourselves and others.**
- Without them life ends up in chaos and destruction. **Lesson about GIVING to God.**
- **Put God first. Not laissez-faire attitude, assuming all will be well. Top button of shirt...**
- **Honor** the Lord with your *possessions* and with the *first produce* of your entire harvest... (Prov. 3:9)

- **FIRST FRUIT:** the choicest, the best of what you possess and produce
- **God asks for our first and best... NOT LEFTOVERS! **Live like it!****
- Jesus said, “*If you love me, you will obey my commandments*” (**John 14:15**).
- Decide the Lord’s way is better than our own. Give the Lord charge of our lives; right rules follow.
- “*I find the doing of the will of God leaves me no time for disputing about His plans.*” (**George Macdonald**)
- “When we put God first, all other things fall into their proper place or drop out of our lives. Our love of the Lord will govern the claims for our affection, the demands on our time, the interests we pursue, and the order of our priorities.” (**Ezra Taft Benson**)
- Following Lord’s rules offers abundant life that comes from following Him.
- Choosing to follow Jesus is a lot like choosing to join a sports team. You voluntarily commit to following the coach’s directions. **Live like it!**

INTENTIONALLY PRIORITIZE RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS (Matt. 6:33; 22:36-40; 2 Cor. 8:5)

- **Seek first God’s righteousness, through living right by submitting to God’s will. **How?****
- Line up, get in step in right relationships with God and others. **God is after our hearts.**
- **God’s righteousness matters!** It brings blessing, peace, satisfaction, and joy.

INTENTIONALLY PRIORITIZE RIGHT RESULTS [TRUST GOD?]

- God asks for our first and best and promises that He’ll bless the rest. (Lev. 22:19-20). Concerned?
- And **all these things [6:25-32] will be provided for you. **Therefore**, don’t worry about *tomorrow*, because *tomorrow* will worry about itself. Each day has enough *trouble* of its own. (Matt. 6:33b-34)**
- Worry is wasted time! **Birds don’t worry. Flowers...Grass... All these things = life’s necessities**
- **God’s results matter!**
- ...**THEN YOUR** barn will be completely filled... A **full barn** is a sign of prosperity.
- **AND your vats will overflow with new wine. (Prov. 3:10) Wine: *blessings* overflowing **YOUR vats****
- **Change your Facebook profile picture today; even old postings will be transformed with your new picture. Today repent of your flawed rules and righteousness and change your profile.**
- *If anyone be*...Let your living not be in vain but a witness that you **seek first God’s rules**...

*Living for Jesus a life that is true,
striving to please him in all that I do,
yielding allegiance glad hearted and free
this is the pathway of blessing for me
Living for Jesus, who died in my place,
bearing on Calvary my sin and disgrace:
such love constrains me to answer his call,
follow his leading, and give him my all.
Living for Jesus wherever I am,
doing each duty in his holy name,
seeking the lost ones he died to redeem,
bringing the weary to find rest in him.*