

Getting your priorities straight

How to prioritize people

1. Intro – Priorities
 - a. What are your priorities?
 - b. Priorities in daily life
 - i. Every day we make priorities
 - ii. Whenever we choose to do something instead of another we

are prioritizing that thing over the
other

iii. When people say, 'I'm too busy'

iv. They are really saying, 'I have
something of greater priority I need
to do first'

c. Jesus' priorities

i. But what were Jesus' priorities?

ii. In the Bible we have the answer

1. Jesus was asked what was
the greatest commandment?

2. In other words what
commandment did Jesus
prioritize over the others?

3. Jesus' answer

a. Love God

b. Love neighbor as yourself

i. Side note

1. Jesus said this not
to teach you to do
these things to go to
heaven

2. He said this to
expose our utter
failure to actually
fulfill these
commandments

3. So we would
repent and trust in
the Lord

4. Back to Jesus' priorities

a. Today we will be examining
the priority of loving
neighbor as self

b. In other words
prioritizing people

5. The point of today's sermon

a. How to prioritize people

i. 3 ways to prioritize
people

1. Love people in person (v.17)

a.Context first

i. Paul's history with the Thessalonians

1. Thessalonica a city Paul

visited to preach the gospel

2. Went to synagogue to the

Jews that Jesus is long awaited

Messiah

3. Some believed both Jew and

Greeks

4. But many Jews became upset
started a riot
5. Kicked out Paul and his
companions
6. Paul became separated from
the new believers who came to
the Lord through his ministry
 - a. Side note- this is all in Acts

17

ii. After Thessalonica

1. Paul continued his mission in
other nearby Greek cities such as
Berea

a. Same thing

i. Preach gospel

ii. Some believe some don't

iii. Jews get mad

iv. Kick out Paul

2. Growing concern for
Thessalonica

a. As time passed Paul became
more concerned

b. Concerned for

Thessalonians and false
teachers

c. Concerned for their spiritual
well being

d. So Paul sent Timothy we
see this in ch.3

e. Timothy brought good report

i. They were doing so well

ii. Even other churches

other cities proclaimed

the Thessalonian

church's great

faithfulness (ch.1 v.8)

iii. The purpose of Paul's letter to the
Thessalonians

1. To explain to Thessalonians
that he still cared for them

2. How much he loved them

3. How much he missed them

*Even
though
separated*

4. And to provide clarity on
certain Christian teachings

iv. The purpose of 1 Th 2:17-20

1. How much Paul's missed the
Thessalonians

2. Like a husband separated
from his wife being separated

a. Telling her how much he
loves her and misses her

b. Exposition – v.17

i. Tragic separation – ‘having been

taken away from you’

1. Greek

a. Referring to when a child

loses one or both parents

b. This is the same grief

Paul felt

i. Being torn away from

them because of an

angry mob

ii. Temporary separation – ‘for a short while’

1. But Paul assures them not permanent but temporary

iii. Separated physically but not in the

heart – ‘in person’ *not in spirit!*

1. Even though they were separated physically
2. They were still constantly in Paul’s heart and thoughts

3. He still deeply cared for
them

iv. Powerful affections – ‘were all the
more eager with great desire’

1. Not only in Paul’s heart
2. But in Paul’s heart greatly
3. Paul’s heart was on fire for
them

4. Eager also translated as
excessively

a. Paul was willing to do this
one thing for them at any
cost

v. What was this one thing? – ‘to see
your face’

1. There was nothing more Paul
wanted but to see the
Thessalonian church again
2. He was willing to do anything
again to see the Thessalonians in
person

3. He wanted to make sure they
were ok

a. Safe from spiritual harm
from false teachers

4. Paul was happy that he got a
good report about them

a. But he would not be satisfied

b. He would not rest

c. Until he could see them in
again person

vi. Why Paul wanted to see them in

person?

1. Because Paul knew

a. He could not make his love

truly known for them

b. Unless he showed his

face

2. The Thessalonians wouldn't

truly believe Paul's words

a. Without action

3. They thought

a. 'If Paul truly loved us'

b. 'Surely he would return
to us again in person!'

4. Summary of why Paul

wanted to see them in person

a. Make his love truly known

b. Walk the walk and not
just talk the talk

c. A modern parallel

i. I hope this situation between the
Thessalonians and Paul 2000 years
ago

1. Is starting to feel very similar
to today's situation

ii. What has happened in the past
year?

1. That caused us to be
separated from each other for a
long time?

a. The lockdown

i. Obviously we still met

once in a while in person

ii. But there are some I have

not seen in almost a year

d. Exhortation

i. Self-examination

1. When you read this passage

do you feel the same way Paul

did toward the Thessalonian

church as you do toward this

church?

2. Do you feel a grief like a child who lost his parent when we *were* lock down separated from *other* each as Paul was?

3. Did you see the separation as only a temporary thing because you wanted to see each other again in person so badly like Paul did?

4. Or were you relieved with the lock down so that you don't

have to come in person

anymore?

a. I get it

b. I wouldn't want to see

my face every Sunday either

c. I'm not much to look at!

ii. Come to church

1. But church, today is the day

2. This is the first Sunday in

more than a year



Finally

3. Where we are meeting every

Sunday consistently

4. If you want to prioritize

people

a. The best way to do it is to do

love them in person

5. Love cannot truly be shown

online

a. It's too limited!

b. You can't shake hands

c. You know it's not the same

d. Illustration- online

wedding?

i. I don't know anyone who

1. Dated online

2. Married online

3. Kept their

marriage completely

online

4. No wife will ever

believe a husband

loves her if he says

a. I love you

b. But let's just

stay online

e. There is a power of meeting

in person

iii. Cross ref- Heb 10:24-25

1. We are commanded by

scripture

a. To stimulate one another to

love and good deeds

b. By not neglecting our
assembling together

i. In other words by
meeting together in
church in person every
Sunday

1. Because many
people were starting
to make a habit

a. Of 'skipping
church'

The bible
commands you
to go to
church in person!

2. The author of

Hebrews says

a. Don't do that

Come
to
church!

c. The limitations of online only

i. I can't help you move

online

d. The urgency of meeting

in person

i. The writer says it is

essential

1. Because the end
is coming closer and
closer
2. Jesus is coming
3. Days are getting
darker and darker
4. We need to be
here for one another
5. To encourage one
another

a. A cold computer
screen will not
do!

b. Zoom was not
meant to be
forever!

iv. Cross ref- Psalm 42:1-4

1. In fact the Psalmist felt the
same pain Paul felt

2. Misconception of Psalm 42

a. Picture of deer in lush green

and drinking by gentle creek

b. Completely opposite!

c. Panting for God

i. To pant means he is

starving

ii. He is about to die soon

without water

d. A more accurate picture

i. Is a skinny deer with
bones showing through
its skin

ii. In a parched desert

iii. Desperately looking for
water

3. The desire of the psalmist –

v.4

a. He used to go temple to
worship with fellow believers

i. But separated

ii. Just like Paul

iii. He's been separated for
too long

iv. The Psalmist misses
worshipping together
with believers in person

1. So much he feels
like a deer about to
die because of lack of
water

v. That's how our heart
should be for one
another as well!

v. Exhortation: evangelism

1. Paul's converts were in
person

a. Final important note

b. Most of the believers
who became born again
through Paul's ministry

i. Heard the gospel

ii. And were disciplined by

Paul

1. In person

2. Parallel

a. God can certainly use online
tools to save people

b. But sharing the gospel in
person

i. Face to face

ii. Far more personal

iii. Far more powerful

Isn't
c. Transition ~~this is~~ what God
~~himself~~ did ?

vi. Cross ref – Php 2:5-8 – Incarnation

1. The comfort of God's

heavenly throne

a. When God saw the

wickedness of man

b. Did he stay in his lofty

throne

i. With angels

ii. Without any care?

c.No God came down in the
flesh

i. To meet with man

ii. Face to face

iii. In person

d. Jesus sacrificed the
comforts of heaven

e.Sacrificed his divine
privileges

i. To come in the flesh

ii. Meet with us face to face

iii. To be with us

iv. And sacrifice his life for
us to save us

f. If God came in person, how
much more should we?

g. The purpose of Php 2:⁵~~4~~-8

i. That's why Paul wrote
this to the Philippians

1. Commanded
them to have same

humble attitude as

Jesus

2. Not be proud

3. But sacrifice your

comforts

4. Think of others

interests

5. And serve them

vii. Exhortation: Sacrifice

1. We need to sacrifice the

comforts

a.Of our beautiful

b. Luxurious Northern VA
homes

c.Especially in comparison to
the rest of the world

d. And be there for one
another in person

2. The world needs you

a.Not only the church needs
this

b. Lost souls need you

i. They need you to touch
them with grace of the
gospel

1. Some are proud
and comfortable

a. Need to see you
face to face

b. To realize the
seriousness of the
gospel you preach
to them

2. Some are broken

a. That need your

compassionate

eyes

b. Caring touch

c. To feel the tender

love of the gospel

e. Summary – Prioritize people

i. We need to prioritize people

ii. And the first way we prioritize

1. Love them in the flesh

2. As Jesus loved us in the flesh

3. Love people in person

2. Love people tenaciously (v.18)

a. Life happens

i. Sometimes in life

1. We may have purest desires

and goals

a. To love and serve people

2. But life happens

a. We get caught in traffic

b. We miss our life

flight

c. We get sick

ii. And the Apostle Paul was not

exempt from the interruptions of life

iii. He had an incredible passion for the

people

1. But he didn't just have warm

fuzzy feelings

2. He put his feelings into

action

b. Exposition – v.18

i. Paul tried more than once to see them - 'For we wanted to come to you- I, Paul, more than once'

1. Community to personal – 'I, Paul'

a. Paul switched from 'we' to 'I'

b. Christians part of body of Christ

i. We lovingly act for whole church

c. But Paul wanted

Thessalonians to know

i. That not only him and his

companions wanted to

see them again

ii. But Paul personally

himself wanted to see

them

*- he didn't
hide behind
social
media.*

iii. And he tried more than

once

iv. Transition: Because Paul
was hindered

ii. 'And yet Satan hindered us'

1. Hindered

a. Greek referring to a military
type of hindrance

b. In war armies would
destroy roads and supplies

i. To halt advance of
opposing armies

2. Silence of the text

a. In Paul's case we don't know exactly how Satan stopped him

i. To return to the Thessalonians

b. All we know is that Satan did something to stop Paul

c. Transition: This is not new God allowed Satan to take away Job's family and wealth

iii. Cross ref Job 2:4-6

1. Context: After God allowed
Satan to attack Job's family and
wealth

a. Job continued to worship
God

b. So Satan returns to God
and says (read Job 2:4-6)

2. The complete authority of
God over Satan

a. Now how anything Satan
wanted to do he had to
request it to God first

b. Like an employee
requesting time off to the
manager

i. Its all in the hands of the
manager not the
employee

c. Even Satan's plans were
altered by God

i. God limited Satan's
attack on Job's health by
preventing Satan from
killing Job

d. At the end of the day

i. Satan is God's dog

ii. He is on a leash

controlled by God

iii. He can't do anything

unless God allows him to

3. Parallel

a. Too often in the world

i. People have complete
fear and paranoia for
Satan and demons

ii. On the other hand
people completely reject
their existence

iii. Both wrong

b. Christians

i. We acknowledge Satan is
real

ii. But God has complete
authority over him

c. The point

i. Things happen in life that stop us
from doing things we want to do

ii. Even things that are holy and pure
and motive

iii. Whether it's Satan himself doing
stopping us or not God is in control

iv. Parallel

1. 2020 was a prime example

2. Church plans

a. Churches made incredible

plans to

i. Reach the lost

ii. Reach more unreached
people

iii. Encourage the church
more

iv. All in 2020

v. But then suddenly halted
due to COVID lockdown

d. Exhortation

i. Just because something stopped you
from doing the good work of the
Lord

1. Doesn't mean you should
suddenly stop

2. And give up

ii. Example of Paul

1. Paul did not give up

2. Even though Satan stopped
him

3. He kept trying

a. At least more than once

4. He didn't lose hope

5. He kept loving people no

matter the setback

a. Because he prioritized the

Thessalonians greatly in his

heart

iii. Love people tenaciously

1. If you want to prioritize

people

a. You need to love them

tenaciously

b. You need to love them no

matter what setback occurs

2. Example

a. If you make plans to

fellowship with one another

b. But something comes up

c. Reschedule it, try again

d. Don't let your good work
of encouraging one another
through fellowship die

i. Just because something
happens

ii. Try again reschedule on
calendar

e.Or what if another believer

i. Said something that hurt
you

ii. Or hindered a ministry at
church

iii. Are you supposed to stop
loving them>

iv. Cross ref 1 Peter 4:8

f. Tenacious love

i. No matter what someone
says or did to you

1. Christian or non-
Christian

2. Church or not at
church

ii. You need to keep on
loving them

iii. Love covers a multitude
of sins

1. Just how the love
of God covers your
sins as far as the east
is from the west!

3. Evangelism

a. And what if a person you
shared the gospel with does
not accept Christ?

i. Some people end the
relationship there

ii. Don't!

iii. Keep the relationship
going

iv. Keep loving them

v. God may use your
tenacious love for an
unbeliever

vi. Down the line

1. When things
become rough

2. You will be the
first person they
come to hear the
gospel again

3. And may even be saved

e. Summary

- i. If you want to prioritize people
 1. Don't give up loving people
 - a. When setbacks occur
 - b. Or because of relational conflicts
 2. Keep loving them
 3. Love people tenaciously

3. Love people above earthly things (v.19-

20)

a. A variety of treasures

i. People treasure all sorts of things

1. Cars

2. Houses

3. Boats

4. Money

5. Championships

ii. Or even peculiar things

1. Stamps

2. Trading cards

iii. A life centered on a treasure

1. For them their life revolves

upon their treasure of choice

2. Example

a. Some people treasure a

house so much

b. Willing to move hours

away from workplace

c. Just to afford it

d. Work more hours

e. Drive 2-4 hours a day just to

own a home

f. They have little time for

anything else but their home

g. Because that is their treasure

iv. Paul was different

1. If there was anything Paul

treasured after Jesus

2. It was people

b. Exposition (v.19)

i. Hope, joy, crown of exultation

1. Hope

a. First Paul called the

Thessalonians his hope

b. Meaning Paul hoped to

receive a reward from Jesus

for sharing the gospel with

them and discipling them

c. Like a parent who hopes the

best for a child's future

2. Joy

a. Second Paul called them his

joy

i. Paul experienced great

joy being with them and

serving them

ii. But also joy in the fact

that Jesus will reward

Paul for their faithfulness

3. Crown of exultation

a. The crown was a wreath in

the Thessalonians day

- i. These were awarded to
people of great honor
 - ii. Such as athletes who
won in competition
- b. Paul knew because of the
Thessalonians new identity in
Christ
 - i. Jesus would reward Paul
with a crown
 - ii. And the Thessalonians
were Paul's crown

iii. His treasure

iv. In other words to Paul,
the Thessalonians were
his gold medal

v. Exhortation

1. Do you see the
reward of helping one
another grow
spiritually as a gold
medal?

a. That as they
become more
loving and patient

b. You find that
as your reward?

c. You find that as
your gold medal?

c. Paul's treasure

i. People hope in wealth

ii. Find joy in the newest
toys

iii. Value the crown of
success at their jobs

1. From overworking

iv. But Paul valued and
treasured the

Thessalonian church

above all earthly things

v. He treasured people

vi. Unlike what people today
treasured

vii. Transition if that wasn't

clear enough look at v.20

ii. Exposition (v.20)

1. What Paul boasts in

a. Paul doesn't boast in

expensive cars, houses,

riches or wealth

b. Instead he boasts in the

spiritual growth the

Thessalonians were

experiencing

iii. Exhortation

1. Church if you want to

prioritize people

a. You must love people above

earthly things

2. Not saying

a. You can't enjoy things at all

b. Or have no relaxation or

fun

c. But our current era

- i. Has far more temptation
than any time before it
- ii. To love materialism and
hobbies more than
people
- iii. There's just so many
options for toys
- iv. For hobbies
- v. So many options to have
endless enjoyment in
everything but people

3. Self examination

a. Ask ourselves

i. Do we love one another
more than the stuff we
own?

ii. Do we care more about
each other's spiritual
wellbeing than our own
pleasure and happiness?

b. Cross ref Php 2:3-4 –

Looking for the interests of
others

c. Application

i. Reach out to one another

1. A simple way

a. Reach out to one
another in the
week

b. Call/text

c. Ask

*have
dinner in
each others
home / houses*

d. 'How's your
week? How are
you doing in the
Lord?'

2. We have a
wonderful Facebook
group chat for church

a. That's another
great place

b. But also reach

out to one

another directly



c. It takes more

effort

d. But it's more

meaningful and

impactful when

someone asks

you directly to

see how you are

with the Lord

e. Make time for

people

f. Prioritize time for

people above

your personal

hobby

3. Evangelism

a. Don't forget

about the lost

b. Cold for

evangelism

i. How are we to

be on fire for

lost souls to

be saved

ii. If we are too

wrapped up

iii. In our own

personal

enjoyment

and happiness

iv. We must find

more joy and

pleasure in

seeing the lost

saved

v. Than seeing a

movie

c. We need to value
souls more than
diamond and gold

c. Summary

i. The challenge

1. It's not easy to prioritize
people

2. To love people

3. But if you start in your heart

a. To treasure people above
earthly things

4. Your actions will flow from a heart

a. That treasures people above earthly things

5. If you feel like your heart isn't really in it for people

a. Ask the Lord to make your heart treasure people

b. He will make your heart on fire to treasure people

c. God will light your heart for
the church and for the lost to
be saved

ii. That's the final way to prioritize
people: love people above earthly
things

d. Conclusion: Gospel

i. To end this sermon...