

# 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

*Even  
though  
separated*

2. How much he loved them

3. How much he missed them

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 discipled 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:<sup>5</sup>~~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...