

End of Summer Blues

The end of summer is here. We have enjoyed several months of beach, mountain and lake activities. Summer is a more carefree life with large blocks of time spent enjoying vacations, visits with family and summer recreational activities. Because of that church attendance may have been sporadic. Many other routine activities were abandoned over the summer but now we are getting ready for the consistency of the school year. We know what is to come as summer draws to a close. I feel overwhelmed at the thought of a more regimented schedule and it has put me in a fragmented frame of mind.

How do I simplify my thinking to prepare for what is important and purposeful? How do I give first rate time and attention to the important things and not let the frivolous, less important activities consume my attention and valuable time?

For me it starts with prayer. I ask God what He wants me to do. If I am to live a life of emulating Christ how do I refocus on what He wants me to do? I went to the Lord in prayer and realized I needed to prioritize. I came up with a list that included faith, family, health and a purposeful life. This year I have one new task and I need to give it significant energy. That requires planning, commitment and prioritizing.

It is easy to come up with a long to-do list that keeps me “busy.” That kind of list can swallow up your entire day if you let it. Some of the items relate to the priorities that came to me in prayer, but many of the items are wish list items of secondary importance. For me, it is important to tackle the important items as top priority and limit the time spent on frivolous tasks.

I remember freshman orientation at college. On the day when we could learn about all of the extracurricular activities we were told, “There are hundreds of clubs and organizations on campus. Select several and you will have an enriching college experience; select too many and you will flunk out at the end of the first quarter.”

After a summer of a less regimented schedule it is time to re-prioritize what will make a difference in my life. Here are some thoughts on the process of establishing priorities, relying on God to help you put them into action. *“Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.” Proverbs 16:3.* Understand that your initial thoughts may not be what God wants you to do. Listen for God’s direction. *“In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps.” Proverbs 16:9.*

After you pray about it, list your top four or five priorities on a piece of paper. Too many priorities will dilute your effectiveness. Here is an unusual step: Search the web for Bible verses relating to each priority so that it becomes part of God’s plan. If you skip this step you will miss out on God’s wisdom and power, and decrease your chance for success. It will all be on you to make it work. Type in your browser, “bible verses about ___.” Numerous verses will instantly pop up for you to consider. Not all may fit your objective, but some will. Write down three or four verses for each priority. Then, list a few action steps and a mentor who can help you keep on track for this priority. Post this plan where you will see it often. Even with priority tasks, keep a balance in how you allocate time. Overemphasizing one priority at the expense of others will be detrimental. *A false balance is an abomination to the LORD, but a just weight is his delight (Proverbs 11:1).*

As you go through your day, limit the time you spend on items that are not on your priority list. You may even want to chart out your day, hour-by-hour, to schedule time for the important things and limit time spent on the others. Remember the word of caution given at college orientation that if you try to do everything, you will fail. Sure, taking out the trash, washing the dishes and cutting the grass may not be top priorities but they have to be done. We all have to do things not on the priority list. Just make sure these tasks don’t monopolize your day and prevent you from doing what is important.

It has been said, “The key is not to prioritize what’s on your schedule but to schedule your priorities.” You will lose effectiveness if you don’t intentionally work on your priorities. Involve God in the plan. *“Many are the plans in a person’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails.” Proverbs 19:21.* Then move forward with conviction. *And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him (Colossians 3:17).* The themes of your priorities reveal who you are and how you serve God at this time. God placed you on earth for a purpose. Priority #1 is the anchor for your life. Make sure it gets appropriate attention. The other priorities are how you carry out God’s purpose.

I wrote this devotion for a purpose. I was feeling overwhelmed and pulled in too many directions. Completing this exercise helped me focus on what is important. I urge you to not just read this devotion but to complete the planning chart. Periodically review how you are doing on keeping your life in order. Remember, it starts with prayer. By walking hand-in-hand with God on this He will enable your success. *I can do all this through him who gives me strength (Philippians 4:13).* Perhaps it will be helpful to you.

Priority Planning Chart for Fall 2017

Date: _____

Priority



#1: _____

Anchor Priority for your life

Action Steps:

Action Step 1:

Action Step 2:

Action Step 3:

God's Word on this priority:

Verse 1:

Verse 2:

Verse 3:

Who will mentor or keep you on track: _____

Priority #2: _____

Action Steps:

Action Step 1:

Action Step 2:

Action Step 3:

God's Word on this priority:

Verse 1:

Verse 2:

Verse 3:

Who will mentor or keep you on track: _____

Priority #3: _____

Action Steps:

Action Step 1:

Action Step 2:

Action Step 3:

God's Word on this priority:

Verse 1:

Verse 2:

Verse 3:

Who will mentor or keep you on track: _____

Priority #4: _____

Action Steps:

Action Step 1:

Action Step 2:

Action Step 3:

God's Word on this priority:

Verse 1:

Verse 2:

Verse 3:

Who will mentor or keep you on track: _____

*Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans. Proverbs 16:3.
In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps. Proverbs 16:9*

Prayer: Heavenly Father. We can get overwhelmed at trying to do everything, thus not allocating the time for what is really important. Help us to re-order our priorities of life so that what we do is pleasing to you. Amen.