

PRIORITIES

by Debi Hugel ~ 6.13.09

Our topic today. What does the piece we just watched have to do with priorities?

Nicole's vignette comes from the gospel of Mark. I call it, "Tell, Don't Tell... How Can I Tell for Sure?"

I would like to show you how incredibly fundamental priorities are, yet how easy we miss them.

NJ is reading f/the gospel of Mark 1:40-45. But I'd like to start at the beginning, chap. 1, vs. 1... NLT
"This is the good news about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It began just as God had said in the book written by Isaiah the prophet. 'I am sending my messenger to get the way ready for you. In the desert someone is shouting, 'Get the road ready for the Lord! Make a straight path for him.' So John the Baptist showed up in the desert and told everyone." (Mark 1:1-4)

A lot of telling going on early on, but later...!

(NIV) *"A man with leprosy came to Jesus and begged him on his knees, 'If you are willing, you can make me clean.' Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!' Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured. Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: 'See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.' Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere."* (Mark 1:40-45)

"After Jesus strictly warned the man, he sent him on his way. He said, "Don't tell anyone about this."

Priorities are about putting 1st things 1st. To be able to do that, we need to know what God's priorities are for our life. In the beginning of Mark, God assigned John the Baptist as His messenger to prepare people for the coming of Jesus Christ. Jesus told the leper NOT to tell anyone. He was NOT assigned as a messenger. But he chose to act as one! And he DIDN'T go to the priest or offer a sacrifice like Jesus told him to. WHY DO YOU THINK HE DID THAT?

I know for myself, many times I want to do what I WANT to do, instead of what I SHOULD be doing. First, Jesus told the man to make a public confession to the priest. We're told in James to confess our sins to one another to be healed. And in 1 John we're told God will forgive us and cleanse us if we confess our sins. HOW QUICK ARE WE TO CONFESS OUR SIN? John the Baptist's message was "Repentance!"

I don't know about you, but for me to sit down, pray to seek God's priorities for my life, write them down, apply them, and then review them on occasion to see if I am being obedient... that is a sacrifice! I'd rather just go "fellowship" with my girlfriends about what God has done for me. What it takes is discipline and obedience. If I write down a plan for my priorities, I am more likely to follow the plan. An accountability partner is always helpful. Fail to plan, plan to fail!

Scripture says we can know God's will... *"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will."* (Rom 12:2)

"Therefore, be careful how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is." (Eph 5:17)

And God makes His will known in both places in Mark 1 very clear... "Tell... don't tell." So, the obvious contrast between the two people being commanded is obedience. We're not told WHY the leper decided to disobey Jesus' command, but we do see the consequences... *"The man talked about it so much*

and told so many people, that Jesus could no longer go openly into a town. He had to stay away from the towns” (v. 45) Our consequence? But God will fulfill His plan. “Yet the people still came to Him from everywhere.” We’ll be the ones to miss out!

The moral of the story? If you obey Jesus’ commands, you will put 1st things 1st! Very simple... the Holy Spirit changes our heart as we change our behavior!

1. Can you share an activity that competes with priorities you believe God has for you?
2. What are some consequences you have experienced from not setting priorities?
3. Have you set aside time to pray about and discern God’s priorities for your life? Did you record/journal them? How successful have you been?
4. Even people who have made a personal decision to follow Jesus as their Lord and Savior still sin and are tempted to sin. Share various ways a person can “abide in Christ” to be able to “understand God’s will” to obey Him.

Scripture to help you know **God’s will** for your life and **set priorities**:

Romans 12:1-2, Ephesians 5:15-17

Recommended Reading:

Freedom from Tyranny of the Urgent by Charles E. Hummel

Simplify Your Time by Marcia Ramsland

Spiritual Leadership by Oswald Sanders