

Identifying Your Core Values

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One of the intriguing aspects of studying the life of Christ is how little that we know about him prior to his public ministry. I am often surprised when I hear folks talk about how big they think the Bible is. I think you could easily make the point that the Bible is surprisingly small. It is surprisingly short. It really is amazing how much we are not told. The apostle John, by the way, even makes that same point about what he says regarding the life of Christ in his gospel. He said:

“And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they *were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself *would not contain the books that *would be written.”¹

Well, if that could be said about the material we have regarding the public ministry of Christ, how much truer is it of what we know about Jesus between his birth and when his public ministry actually began. And the answer is we only have a couple of statements in all of the Word of God about that period of time. There is that fascinating vignette when Jesus visits the temple when he was 12 years old and is separated from his parents. Remember that? And anybody who has ever raised children can picture exactly how that could have happened.

But it makes you scratch your head as you wonder of everything that could have been said about that particular period of time. Why did Luke think that was so important?

Or another statement we have is just a very brief summary. It says this in Luke 2:52.

“And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”²

Please think with me about that for a moment. Why did Luke think it was so important for us to understand that from age 12 until Christ’s public ministry at age 30 that Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and in favor with men? Well, I am sure there is a lot of answers to that question and here is one of them. So that we understand that a person who is going to be pleasing to God, a person who is going to

¹ John 21:25.

² Luke 2:52.

be used of God, that requires developing in multiple areas simultaneously. Think about that. Developing in multiple areas simultaneously: in wisdom, mentally; in stature, physically; in favor with God, spiritually; and in favor with men, relationally. See, you have to develop on multiple fronts simultaneously. That is a big part of the challenge, isn't it?

See, it would be one thing if you could say, "You know? I am just going to concentrate at this time in my life on working out physically. For the next six months that is all I am going to care about, my exercise plan, my eating habits, my training regimen. That is all I am going to care about." I am fairly certain your boss at work would not agree with that approach. He would probably say something like, "You can care about your exercise a little bit, but we would really appreciate it if you would get some work done around here every day." Bosses are just like that, aren't they? Or if you said, "We are just going to focus on our marriage. For the next six months that is all we are going to care about." Well, that is great, but somebody might want to feed the kids. So nobody has the luxury of focusing on one area at a time to the neglect of everything else. Not even the creator of the world can do that. Life is a lot like juggling, isn't it? It really is where the key is not to hold any one ball too long or a whole lot of other balls are going to come crashing to the floor.

See, Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and in stature and I favor with God and in favor with me. You have to be advancing multiple areas simultaneously.

Now if you are trying to think this through I can imagine you might have an objection to all of this or at least a concern based on what I am saying and that is the other part of the challenge is there is an endless number of balls you could be juggling. That complicates the simultaneous issue, doesn't it? So trying to do everything will eventually end up in actually accomplishing nothing. So how do you decide how many areas of life to concentrate on at any given period of time and how much effort do you give to each particular area and in what specific ways? That, my friends, is where and how strategic planning could be a marvelous blessing.

With that in mind, open your Bible, if you would, to Colossians chapter one. And if you don't have a Bible with you, just pull out that one from under the chair in front of you and turn to the back section to the New Testament to page 156.

Our church's theme this year is planning to grow and we are emphasizing this theme this year in three key areas. One is to continue to discuss and refine and implement our discipleship process. So we are talking about how do we help every person who is part of our church grow spiritually. And then, secondly, to organize and launch our new cluster of ministries at Faith West. Are you excited about that? I hope that you are as we contemplate planning to grow in that new ministry venue. And then, thirdly, to work together as a church family to develop our next five year strategic ministry plan together. And so that is what we are all about this year, planning to grow.

Well, we started all this at the beginning of the year by talking about the value, the importance of planning, because if we are not motivated in our hearts that this is important, we are never going to get it done. So we follow God's counsel. We considered one of the insects that he has created. Seriously, that is what we did. We went to Proverbs chapter six verse six:

Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways and be wise, Which, having no chief, Officer or ruler, Prepares her food in the summer And gathers her provision in the harvest. How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? "A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest" — Your poverty will come in like a vagabond And your need like an armed man.³

So God doesn't just tell us what to do. He doesn't tell us what we should be like. He gives us reasons. He gives us motivations that can drill down deeply in our hearts where we convince ourselves that this is really important. That is where we started a couple of weeks ago. Then last Sunday your service pastor, pastor Folden, spoke to you about defining your mission, your goal, your purpose. See, if you are going to talk about planning, everybody needs to have a target. You need to have a goal. You need to have a mission that guides the direction of your planning. And thankfully that isn't something that you or I or any of the rest of us have to determine that on our own. God's goal for all of us is that we be becoming more like his Son, we be pleasing him or glorifying him. That is our mission. And in Christ we have all the resources necessary to take regular steps on that marvelous path.

In fact, I hope you are excited about how this particular worship service can help everybody here grow to become more like Christ. And with the size of these worship services in a lot of ways they become like little churches. That is why they have service pastors. And I hope you are excited about what your particular group can accomplish.

Now if we have the motivation we thought about the ant and we determined the target. We are committed to the mission or the goal. Then what is the next step? Well, here is an important answer to identifying your core values. It is identifying your key effectiveness area. See, if you can only juggle so many balls, so many areas of responsibility, then what are the key areas you have to be sure are receiving attention. And then what specific plans can you make to be sure you are advancing in each one of those categories? That is the key. And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and simultaneously in stature and simultaneously in favor with God and simultaneously in favor with men. How does that need to be adjusted to fit your particular situation right now? This text of Scripture can really help us, Colossians chapter one beginning at verse three where Paul says:

We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel

³ Proverbs 6:6-11.

which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth; just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf, and he also informed us of your love in the Spirit.

For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.⁴

What a tremendous passage of Scripture and with the time we have remaining from this passage and some others throughout this marvelous book, let's talk about three areas of life where it is especially important to have core values. We are not talking so much this morning about making a specific plan. We are talking this morning about establishing the key effect in this area. We are talking about building the frame work of priorities on which those specific plans can hang, three areas of life where it is especially important to have core values. First of all, core values for your personal life.

I think it might be wise for us just to kind of push the pause button and think about where is all this heading? What are the deliverables? What are we trying to accomplish? And the answer is that all of us would make decisions both as individuals and as a church through a grid of careful planning that reflects proper priorities, right? So let's make it practical. Let's say that you are at Best Buy. You are at Sam's and you see an item you would really like to have that costs several hundred dollars. You know some people actually make a decision like that in a very impulsive manner based on how they feel at the moment. Well, that wouldn't be very ant like, now would it? No, a wiser approach

⁴ Colossians 1:3-20.

would be: How does that purchase fit into our overall financial plan, right? Well, the only way you and I would ever have reason to slow up and ask that question is if we actually had taken the time to craft a financial plan. You say, “Ok, I got that.”

Now wait, though. Let’s say about the same time you are offered a promotion at work. It is going to require more time away from home and more travel, maybe even a relocation. How do you make a decision like that? Some will say, “Well, you just said it, on the basis of money. I would make it on the basis of my financial plan.” So they have a financial plan, but that is all they have. There are no balancing priorities. There is no balancing core values. There is no thought of what or all of my key effectiveness areas. That would be like Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and in wisdom and in wisdom, but he had not time for people because he was out of balance and he had never grown in his love, his favor with man.

No. The ultimate deliverable is that as individuals and as a church we are living in a balanced, purposeful, wise, proactive way where we have taken the time to craft plans in our key areas of life, not just one, but several, like a colony of ants.

Now I want to push the pause button on that pause button, because I want to be sure that we have said this somewhere along the way and probably several times along the way. Please don’t be perfectionistic about this. The way you go about actually applying what we are talking about in this particular series, it may be dramatically different than the person sitting right next to you and here is why. You might be sitting this morning next to somebody who could fire up their iPad right now and show you page after page of plans they have crafted in each key area of life this year. And you look at that and say, “I could never do that.” That is not the point. Don’t try to be like somebody else. The issue here is taking small regular steps to becoming what God wants us to be. We believe in progressive sanctification. I really do believe that many times perfectionism is the enemy of progress. Perfectionism is the enemy of accomplishment. And so don’t think if I can’t get to a place of perfection I ought not to do anything. For you this year you may identify two or three key areas of life that you want to especially focus on with one key initiative, one key plan in each of those areas. That is your plan, three things, three ideas. And maybe you never get around to actually writing those down, but those three ideas, those three plans, they are going to impact the way you live, the way you make choices this particular year.

Do you know what? If you have three more than you have ever had before, that is progress. Praise God for that. Now hopefully you will to a better place down the line, but don’t miss the joy of the process and don’t let the burden of self righteous perfectionism rob you of the joy of the journey.

Now did you notice how Paul helped us think in a priority oriented fashion in this particular passage we just read? And here is the crux of it. Colossians 1:18.

“He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.”⁵

There is the ultimate core value, that Jesus himself might come to have first place in everything.

Now what are some of those key areas in our personal lives in which Jesus ought to have first place? What are some of the balls related to who you are as an individual that you simply have to keep in the air simultaneously? Let’s think about it from the Word of God. One is, of course, growing in your relationship with Christ.

You see, what if that item you were thinking about buying at Best Buy was going to take time away from your desire and interest in prayer? What if the item you really wanted to buy in Sam’s that was going to take time away from you quietly walking with God? Have you ever asked yourself that question? Before I buy this hunk of junk down at junk mart that I can’t really afford anyway, is this possibly going to negatively hinder my relationship with Christ. And if it is, I am going to run out of this door as fast as I can because one of my core values is my walk with Jesus. Did you ever think about that down at the Sam’s? I think we should, because material things can rob you of what should be your core priority.

Matthew 13:22.

“And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.”⁶

Do you feel that? Your junk is choking the Word because you had your priorities out of balance. It chokes the Word and it becomes unfruitful.

What if the demands of that new job were going to make it less likely that you were going to have time and energy to commune with Christ? Is the money and the prestige worth it? And I hope all of us would say right now that if any ball is going to stay in the air as we juggle through life, it is going to be cultivating our walk with Christ. We want him to have first place in everything. That is why many men and women in this church in the last three weeks have been laying out specific plans about how they can grow in their walk with Christ. Why? Because they want this priority to stand. They want that ball to always be in the air.

Now what else does the book of Colossians emphasize, though? Remember, it can’t be just one. You have to be focusing on several areas at once. And so what are the other key effectiveness areas? Well, pleasing God and your family. Look over at chapter three or you may want to follow along on the PowerPoint, either way, but chapter three verse 18 helps us understand a second priority when it says this:

⁵ Colossians 1:18.

⁶ Matthew 13:22.

Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them. Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart.⁷

I believe in an economy of words God has just given us keys for having a family that honors him. And, by the way, if you are a wife and you say, “I don’t like that verse,” see letter A and whether Jesus is going to be first place. If as a husband you say, “I don’t want to love my wife and sacrifice for her, I want my life to be about me,” see letter A fast. If you are a young person her and you say, “I am not obeying my parents. That is not going not be a key effectiveness area. I am not going to make that a priority,” see letter A. And if you don’t want to, come see me and I will help you see letter A. What is wrong with you? And fathers, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. And I really do believe this. The older I get the more I believe that if families would follow those simple principles as a priority, that God would help you build a family that can honor him and ultimately bring joy to you.

See, for all sorts of biblical reasons, that has to be a core value. My relationship with Christ and growing in my family and that supersedes work. That supersedes the church. God’s first institution on earth was the family which is why this is the area that is especially under attack in our culture. And we can get all wound up about that if we want and fuss about the president and march down to Indianapolis and blah, blah, blah, or we can say that as a church we are going to try to do everything in our power to help men and women and children and encourage men and women and children to develop strong families, while we are simultaneously encouraging singles to be all that God wants them to be. But that goes along with what I said the first Sunday of the year. We are not going to walk through this series talking about how bad everybody else is out there. We want to be a church that is helping people develop strong families as a priority.

And if you look at the newspaper this morning and the feature article about single moms, we want to be a place that loves single moms and we want to be a place that provides all sorts of resources for single moms. Do we not? Absolutely. But without apology. We are going to say that we are going to do everything in our power as a church to challenge and encourage families to keep their families the kind of priority that God wants them to make it at all times.

So now we have got two. I have got my relationship with Christ as a key effectiveness area. I have got the privilege and the responsibilities as a family as a key effectiveness area. And then I have got the matter of serving faithfully in Christ’s Church.

See, this book is written to a local church.

⁷ Colossians 3:18-21.

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the saints...”⁸

See that is the context in which this phrase, Christ having first place in everything, is uttered. The last chapter. What are the book ends? Well, the very last chapter is filled with all sorts of garden variety local church instructions, because so much of their lives was wrapped up in proclaiming the name of Christ through the ministries of their church. So God wanted them to be people who had as a key effectiveness area cultivating their walk with Christ and cultivating biblical families and cultivating joyful service in their church. You have got to keep them all. You have got to be growing simultaneously.

By the if you say, “Well, I am not sure I am buying that,” well, one of the haunting statements in this book is at the end when Paul says, “When this letter is read among you,” to the Colossians, “Send it down the road and have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans.” That is not the last time the church at Laodicea is going to be mentioned in the Bible, is it? Why? Because Laodicea is one of the seven churches that Jesus speaks to in the book of Revelation about the fact that they are what? Luke warm. And what does Jesus say about people who are lukewarm, who didn’t make the issue of knowing him and developing biblical families and serving joyfully in their church? What did Jesus say about people who chose not to have biblical priorities? Well, yeah, let’s just let him say it.

“So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.”⁹

And if you say, “You know, pastor Viars, I kind of liked it when you were in another country last Sunday, because you are so pushy...” But do you know why I am so pushy? It is because some of you need it. How is that for just being sweet to you this morning? Some of God’s people need it. And I need it, too. I need the Word of God to challenge me because I don’t want to be a priority oriented person by nature. I want to organize my life around me. There is my priority. Me. And I need the Word of God to challenge me and help me change and so do you. And I would rather we are a little bit uncomfortable from time to time in the house of God, but Jesus would say to us some day, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” Then we just went on our merry way without letting the Word of God ever challenge us. And him being in a position where he wanted to spew us out of his mouth. I hope we say we never want that to happen.

So now we have three balls in the air and then there is honoring the Lord at your job. God created work before the fall. Do you know that? Before the fall. It is a good thing. And with the parameters of other priorities we have mentioned, it is possible to make Christ first in the way you work. That is why we read later in this book:

Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of

⁸ Colossians 1:1-2.

⁹ Revelation 3:16.

heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.

Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.¹⁰

The economy of Colosse was heavily dependent on the production of a kind of a cloth that was very labor intensive. And Bible teachers believe that a significant percentage of the members of the Colossian church would have been slaves, not necessarily like the slavery that we had in our country, but slaves nonetheless. And you may not like this, but my job is to teach Scripture. The Bible's first purpose was not and is not to try to right every societal wrong. It is for God's people to learn how to live under sinful injustice in a cursed world. And if over time enough people become followers of Christ then culture will eventually improve which is certainly and thankfully on that particular topic. But the point is that one of the ways that we can give Christ first place is the way we work, by honoring and submitting to our bosses and working hard even when our bosses aren't looking, et cetera.

Now I have said a lot and here is the overall idea. If we are going to please God, we are going to have to be making plans to advance in each one of these areas. We have to identify what is a skeleton here. What are the core values? What are the key effectiveness areas that we have to be sure to give attention to?

Now you might say, "Well, are there others?" Oh, there sure are. In fact, let's just call it et cetera. And what I mean by that is you may have all sorts of things at this particular time in your life are going to have to be priorities for you. For example, let's say you have aging parents and so one of your key effectiveness areas right now is caring for your aging parents. Or you may be in a season of life where you have to give your health special attention. The point this morning is not to make a comprehensive list of one size fits all of everybody in the room. But the point is to challenge all of us to consider the question: Have I ever thought through my core values? The areas that are especially important right now, the balls that I have to keep in the air at this point in my life all in the context of Jesus having first place in everything? See, just like the Lord who kept increasing in wisdom and simultaneously in stature and in favor with God and with men.

Now, do you think I love you? Ok, that would have been a good time for a yes. Well, while you contemplate your answer to that question, I am feeling like we need a homework assignment. Aren't you? You ever just had that thought where I need a homework assignment right now. Well, ok, here is your homework. I want to encourage you to find 10 to 15 minutes this week, maybe even this afternoon, because, let's face it. I don't think there is any football on at all today. Is that right? So you have got all kinds of time. Well the {?} seriously. Let's talk about football. But anyway... they asked me to be

¹⁰ Colossians 3:22—4:1.

in it and I said no. But anyway, I got off my notes there for a minute. Before or after you watch the probowl I want to encourage you to list your core values in your personal life. Maybe discuss them with somebody else. And if you would like to talk with someone on our staff about it or one of our deacons, we would be happy to set that up, but list your core values. Maybe they are the ones that I have listed here. Maybe it is some adjustment from that. But then ask yourself this question. Am I neglecting any of those areas? Am I letting any balls crash to the floor? Does Jesus really have first place in that?

Now where is this going to lead? The answer is starting next week we want to start thinking about biblical principles that are going to help us make specific action steps, specific initiatives within that framework, but it will be very confusing if we all haven't thought through our priorities, if we haven't thought through our key effectiveness areas in which those plans need to be made.

Now I am not going to take nearly as much time on these others, of course. But you could have the same process as we talk about the planning we are doing in our church. What are our church's core values as we plan together? Here they are. Growing stronger. In other words, wanting to be a place where every person associated with our church has the resources necessary to become a more faithful follower of Christ. We read about that in Colossians one.

For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.¹¹

I would encourage you to do this. As we go through this planning process as a church I would encourage you to ask yourself: How well are we doing as a church family at the matter of providing resources to help everybody here grow stronger? Now be honest about that. What do we need to improve? And be honest and open and authentic about answering. Here are some ways we need to grow if we really value that. However, here is the caveat. Don't say in your mind, "Oh, I can't wait to blast him. They really need to..." Here is what we need to get? There is no they. We is they. We got that? I know it is not grammatically correct. Don't send me an email, but that is theologically accurate. We is they, meaning, yes, we are going to talk openly about the ways we need to get better and then we, same we, are going to talk about the resources we are going to bring to the table in order to make that a higher value. Do we agree with that? So as we plan we want to be honest on both the evaluation side and on the solving side. True? Yes, yes and yes. So what is another value? It is reaching out. It is not just a strengthening what we have. It is trying to win others to Christ. And that is a perfect example of what I am talking about this morning because some churches are great at discipleship, not very good at outreach. Others are great at outreach, not very good at follow up. That is what I am talking about. We have to be good at both. How? Simultaneously. That is today's word.

¹¹ Colossians 1:9-10.

And Paul talked about that. He even asked them in Colossians chapter four to pray that God would open up for them a door for the Word. Outreach. He is passionate about that. I hope you are going to be here tonight for our church family night. We have got a lot of important things to do together as a church. One of them is to receive those who are seeking membership in our church. And it is somewhere between 30 and 35 people, 17 of them by baptism. Now how in the world could that happen? The answer is a number of people in this church have as a core value reaching out and yet you saw it in the text. God blesses people with delightful fruits who choose to live that way.

Then a third value that we have established as a church is serving together. And you have these wonderful examples of the end of this book of people named by name as they served one another.

I am so thankful for the many people in this church who believe in serving. In fact, we have a conference coming up here in a couple of weeks. We are expecting about 1700 people from literally around the world. I was with people in the Caribbean last Sunday who are going to be up here in a couple of weeks for that conference. Is that crazy or what? And I asked them: Do you understand what snow is? And but they are coming. And so I asked Rob Green this morning about what are the serving needs. And I will mention them in the service today. Do you know what he told me? He said all the serving positions are filled. How could that be? It is because there are a number of people around here who have their priorities straight. That is it. And when everybody serves a little, nobody has to serve a lot, meaning nobody has to serve out of priority. And that thing about 90 percent of work is done by 10 percent of the people in the church house is wrong. But I believe there is a lot of people around here who have as a value, as a priority the matter of serving. And I am so thankful when Rob said that. I said, "Praise God for people who would make up this church family."

There is also the matter of meeting needs. And what we mean by that is looking out into the community for ways that we can possibly serve others. And I hope as you read those articles today in the newspaper about single moms, I hope you won't look down your nose at anybody. Listen, if our marriage is still together after a period of time it is by the amazing grace of God. Go back to the worship song and so we are never going to look down our nose anybody. And you understand people become single moms for a whole lot of reasons. Many times it is not because of sinning, it is because of suffering. And I hope this church as we would read an article like that wouldn't think, well, we are somehow better than somebody else. I hope we would think: How can we serve? How can we love? How can we meet the needs that are identified in our community? And then strengthening others. And what we mean by that is we want to be a blessing to other churches. We want to be a blessing to people around the world. That is one of the reasons we would have this conference in a couple of weeks. And yeah it is going to stretch us. It is going to stretch our facility. It is going to stretch our church family. It is going to stretch our staff. At the end of the time we will be tired.

There is something a whole lot worse than being tired for God, huh? Being lazy, being self centered. Do you know why people get depressed in the winter a lot of times? It is

because they are focusing too much of their life on themselves. You get busy serving God and there is a joy that comes from that and it doesn't matter if the weather stinks. I am glad we have that conference right in the middle of February. It gives us something joyful to do regardless of the weather. And as we seek to strengthen others as a priority, I believe that God is really honored.

Think about this. A lot of the people that are coming to that conference in a couple of weeks, they are in single staff churches. See, we are not used to that. We have 170 people who work on the staff here. Frankly, I hide from some of them. I mean, I do. I have a big wooden door and I say that tongue in cheek. But there is a lot of people running around here that if I have got a question I have got a need, I have got whatever. They are all around. You realize for many pastors when they walk in the building in the morning they are the one who unlocks the door. They are the one who turns on the lights. They are the one who answers the phone when it rings. That can be a very lonely life. Small churches. We want to be their friend. We want to serve them. We want to resource them. We want to help them in any way we possibly can. That is a core value. And so if it stretches our facility, so what? If we have to repaint some walls, replace some carpet, so what? If it tires us out, again, within reasonable parameters, then fine. That is part of what it means to have our priorities in a way that is consistent with Scripture.

Now I am just going to mention this. You could take this exact same mentality and apply it to a specific area of ministry you are in. You say, "Look. I teach two year old Sunday school." Good. Think about what are your core values when it comes to teaching two year olds. I am involved in community athletic leagues. Good. What are your core values when it comes to community athletic leagues? You could apply the same thing to your own business, to your own job. And I would encourage you to do that.

Now I have been talking all morning to followers of Christ, but I would say if you have never trusted Christ as Savior and Lord the first step, the highest priority is to admit your need and place your faith in him. And I would encourage you to do that if you have never done that. Your homework. I know some of you said, "Oh, he said it so fast, I didn't get to write it down." Good. I am going to give it to you again. And here it is. Remember. We have to be advancing in multiple areas simultaneously. That is the point. And this week's task is not to make the plan. This week's task is to establish the framework. What are my God given priorities? What are the key effectiveness areas in which I must plan well?