
Lesson in Action

AT 17, Trevor had become a father. He was already struggling to graduate high school and didn't expect (or want) to be a father. After telling his mother about his girlfriend's pregnancy, she gave him one piece of advice: ask God. He decided to listen, especially since she had given birth to him at age 15.

So, early on a Saturday morning, Trevor went to the church to pray. He wasn't sure how much he believed in God but figured asking couldn't hurt. He walked in, sat down on an old pew, and began to talk to God like an old friend.

"I'm not sure if you listening, or if you're even real. If you are, I'm not sure you'd even want to listen to me. I don't give you much of my time. But right now, I'm not praying for me. I'm praying for a baby. My baby. I don't know what to do but I know I am not ready to be a father. So, I'm asking that you take care of the baby. I hope it has a better life than I had."

Trevor walked out of the church and didn't think twice about his prayer. Twenty years later Trevor walked back into the same church, as its pastor. As he passed the bench where he had prayed, he suddenly remembered his prayer and realized that was the day everything changed. He came in praying unselfishly for his child. He left pursuing his purpose.

That day Trevor preached his initial sermon as pastor, concluding it with the sermon about how one unselfish prayer changed his life.

"That day I went in to pray for God to handle my problem. I left with the real problem being solved: my selfishness. By praying for my son to have a better life than me, I was actually praying for me to become a better father. That's how God works."



ONE PRIORITY

Introduction

How many things do you have on your to-do list? 5? 10? 20? Are you stretched so thin you don't bother keeping one?

If you're like most people, the list of things you need to get done is longer than you desire and grows every day. In fact, so many people struggle with keeping track of everything they need to do that most smartphones come equipped with apps to help track it. It's common to hear people say things like "Alexa, remind me to get milk from the store" or "Hey Siri, add a reminder for me to book a flight tomorrow." And for those who still prefer pen and paper, there are dozens of journals to buy aimed at helping you maximize productivity with effectively organizing your to-do lists into monthly goals and weekly commitments.

The truth is no journal or app can fix the source of why most people struggle to finish their to-do lists: too many competing priorities.

The Word

Mark 12:28-34 (NIV)

28 One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

29 "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

32 "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. 33 To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

34 When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

Breaking It Down

Our passage of scripture includes only seven verses but offers a lot of key information.

The man asking the question was an expert in the commandments.

Religious teachers at that time were called scribes. Scribes were considered experts in Mosaic law (aka "the commandments"). The man asking Jesus was not asking out of ignorance but out of interest.



Bible Reading Plan

We recommend using the New Living Translation (NLT) or New International Version (NIV) when reading these scriptures each day.

Day One

Matthew 6:33

Day Two

Proverbs 3:9-10

Day Three

Matthew 10:38

Day Four

Psalms 9:10

Day Five

James 2:8

Day Six

1 John 4:8

Day Seven

James 4:12

Ask Yourself

After reading the passage, consider these questions.

1. What four things did Jesus say we need to love God with (verse 30)?
2. What three things did the scribe say we need to love God with (verse 33)?
3. What are the differences between Jesus' list and the scribe's list?
4. Why might those differences exist?

Going Further

Matthew 22:34-40 tells a similar account to the one recorded in Mark 12:28-34. Read the other account to go further and answer these questions.

1. What's similar about Matthew's and Mark's accounts?
2. What's different in their accounts?
3. What does Matthew 22:40 mean?

Applying It In Life

The world suggests there are multiple priorities in life. For the Believer, there's only one. God said our priority is to: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. In other words, love Him unconditionally.

When we love God unconditionally, we love Him no matter what we're going through, no matter what we have, no matter what we don't have, and no matter what our future looks like. That level of love allows us to obey the second commandment,