

# What Matters Most

## *Reclaim Your Time and Attention for the Lord*

My wife and I love to sit and people-watch when we go out for dinner. In recent years, we've watched more couples — young and old — silently seated at the table together, both of them staring at their phones. What a delightfully distracted date-night! But we've been there too, as maybe you can relate. Why is it that we're so easily distracted from living "in the moment" today? How can we reclaim our time and attention for what matters most?

We're modeling our dedication after Jesus' dedication, as we continue our [Cross Training](#) journey. Dedication includes counting the cost, wholeheartedness, establishing priorities, and making ourselves available to others. So why are our priorities so crucial to the Lord?

### **What You Need to Know**

Right before Jesus talked about counting the cost (Luke 14:25-33), he told the story of a man throwing a grand banquet (Luke 14:16-24). When the feast was ready, he sent word, and people "*all alike began to make excuses*" (Luke 14:18). One prioritized a recently purchased field, saying he needed to look at it instead of coming. Another wanted to inspect the oxen he just bought. A third said he couldn't go because he got married. You see, none of the excuses prevented people from attending. They just wanted to do something else they liked better. And that's how serving God works too. You're invited, but you get to choose if you value it more than anything else.

The Bible has a word for anything that takes priority above God in your life: idolatry. When we covet possessions, "*covetousness ... is idolatry*" (Col. 3:5). Or when we prioritize pleasing people above pleasing God (1 Thess. 2:4), we displace God from his rightful place. What is your most significant source of happiness, satisfaction, and peace? Our lives are full of good stuff from God, and we can rejoice in it all, offering service and thanksgiving to the source of "*every good and perfect gift*" (James 1:17). Even blessings — like marriage, children, work, and recreation — can become idols when we mix up the order of things and put them above Christ (cf. Matt. 10:34-39).

### **What You Need to Do**

Don't make excuses for distraction. It's easy to justify misplaced priorities, especially when we focus on "good" things. Remember Jesus' friend Martha, who busied herself cooking to show him hospitality? It took a wake-up call for her to see a "better" use for her time. But what if Jesus spoke to you, saying, "*... You are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary*" (Luke 10:41-42)? We all have a little Martha in us, at times.

But how do you know if you "*seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness*" or chase "*all these things*" that preoccupy most of the world (Matt. 6:33)? First, you can examine your thoughts. What concerns have your attention? Dump them onto a piece of paper or talk about them with a friend as you try to order them within God's service. "*Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that*

*are on earth*" (Col. 3:2). Second, you can review your expenses. "*Where your heart is, there your treasure will be also*" (Luke 12:34). Third, scrutinize your calendar and "free time" activities (John 9:4; Eph. 5:16). Do some weeding in your garden, so "*the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things*" don't "*enter in and choke the word*" (Mark 4:19). Rather than shoving more commitments into your schedule, consider what you could do for God without the added busyness. As our days fill up — even with necessary and useful activities — are we leaving ourselves enough time to build *his* house (Hag. 1:9-11; Phil. 3:8)?

### Through the Week

- **Read** — Luke 10:38-42; Matt. 6:24-34; Mark 12:28-31; Josh. 24:14-15; Hag. 1:7-11
- **Reflect** — Ask yourself, "*What distractions steal my time and attention away from the Lord?*"
- **Request** — Pray, "*Lord, clear out my life that you may rule it.*"
- **Respond** — Examine your calendar and expenses to discover what you prioritize. Edit and adjust to put the Lord first.
- **Reach Out** — Ask someone, "*What do you struggle to keep in its proper place in your life?*"