

Living in Hope with the One Leader Study Series

Title: Responding with God's Priorities and Plan

Instructions: This Bible study is provided for personal or group use. Please copy, print, or share with anyone.

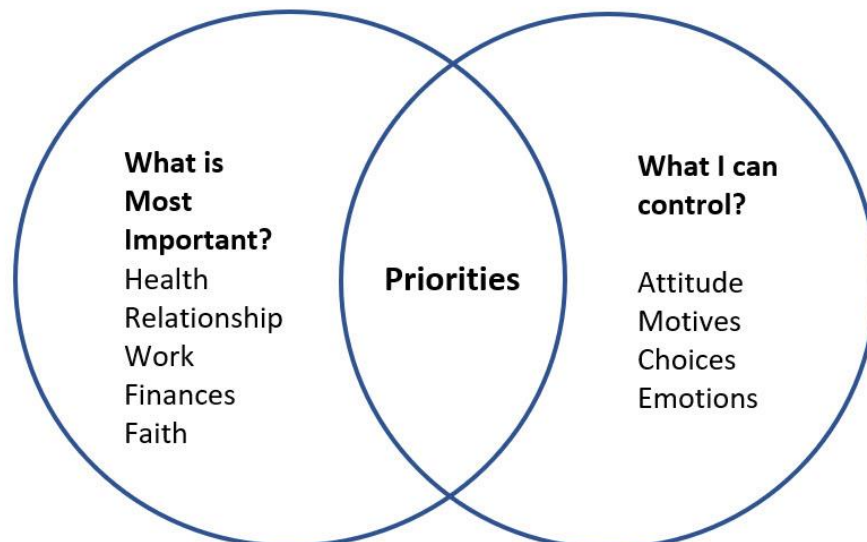
We are all going to come through this current COVID-19 crisis. In some of the darkest days of WWII, when Great Britain stood alone against the tyranny of the Nazi attacks upon their nation, Winston Churchill said this, *"If you are going through hell, keep going."*

How do we keep going? How are we coming through?

We must ask ourselves: Where are we? Are we stuck (frozen, struggling, tied up emotionally), reacting (getting angry, blaming, having a short fuse) or responding (thinking, praying, asking for advice)? Obviously, we need to be responding while working through being stuck or reacting.

Life is probably not meeting your expectations right now. In times of uncertainty, the tendency is to make things more complex. Our real need is to keep it simple and targeted. To simplify, we must have two fundamental things with God's guidance: Priorities and a Plan.

The first thing is to focus on PRIORITIES. Priorities are those things that are regarded as more important than others.



Priorities are found at the intersection of two fundamental questions:

- **What is most important?** (relationship, health, work, finances, faith)
- **What I can control?** (attitude, motives, choices, emotions)

The Bible gives us good direction on key priorities that serve as a framework for living and thriving.

Here are three of them:

1. *Matthew 6:33 says, “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”*
2. *Psalm 27:4-5 says, “One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in His temple. For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle; in the secret place of His tent He will hide me; He will lift me up on a rock.”*
3. *Philippians 3:8 says, “More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ.”*

What’s the key principle we should learn? We can’t control the damage, pain, and timing of much of life. Choose to be thankful and focus on priorities.

Here are five key life priorities:

1. Stay connected and anchored to the Lord. Take life one day at a time.
2. Understand that people are more important than things.
3. Put your financial house in order.
4. Help and serve others more than yourself.
5. Be positive and keep moving forward.

The second thing to focus on is a PLAN. My definition of the word *plan* is “a course of action that sees today and sees the horizon.”

To frame the plan, begin with the Stockdale Paradox: Balancing realism and optimism in a dire situation is a key to success.

“You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end—which you can never afford to lose—with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be.” – James Stockdale

Simply put, planning is hoping for the best, but acknowledging and preparing for the worst.

“A time of crisis is not just a time of anxiety and worry. It gives a chance, an opportunity, to choose well or to choose badly.” – Desmond Tutu

Proverbs 16:1, 3, 9 says, “The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord....Commit your works to the Lord, and your plans will be established....The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.”

An interesting thing lies between brutal reality and optimism, and that is people—hurting people in need. Take time for others: listen, care, and spend more time appreciating people.

A successful short-term plan requires that we:

1. Adapt any business model to changing conditions.
2. Maintain an optimistic outlook that seeks opportunities.
3. Serve People. Take our eyes off our needs and our world and, instead, serve others.

Concluding thoughts:

- Goals do not equal outcome. Priorities always equal outcome.
- Balance optimism with reality while keeping your focus on others.
- If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail.

[Click to Download](#) the other studies in this series from our website.