

RESETTING LIFE'S COMPASS  
**Establishing Priorities**

**Matthew 6:19-33**

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I invite you to hear some of the Facebook and text messages I received when I invited you to think with me about margins and priorities, about resetting life's compass. Someone wrote that the good crowds out the best, that the temptation is not between good and bad but between good and best. Every yes to one thing is a no to something else. And many wrote about guilt on the one hand if I take time for me and resentment on the other if I do for others. One person, whose family does not come to church, feels torn--be at church with spiritual family or at home with nuclear family?

Courtney E. Martin is coming out with a book soon, entitled *The New Better Off--More Fulfillment, Community and Fun, Less Debt, Status and Stuff*. In light of all the pressure we live with, that sounds tantalizing, doesn't it? We are tired, helpless, out-of-control, overscheduled, stressed, alone, afraid, frantic and empty. Have I left anything out?

Into this pain and lack of direction, Jesus speaks. In vv. 19-21, he invites us to reset life's compass. In v. 24, he warns us about mammon (not just wealth, but anything of value that becomes central in our lives). He states an obvious but overlooked fact: we can't have two masters. We cannot put God first while at the same time putting stuff first. He uses the analogy of a slave who has two different masters shouting orders to him. He can't listen to both. Clarence Jordan called this the case of the cross-eyed slave! He can't watch two masters at once!

Then Jesus uses a word for worry three times (vv. 25, 28, 31) that means to be divided, distracted and torn apart. Is that the way we are to live? Most of you remember Mr. Rogers, from the children's TV show. He was an ordained Presbyterian pastor. He said he believed if we took time, we could often go much deeper as far as the spiritual life is concerned than we can if there is constant distraction [<http://mentalfloss.com/article/49559/46-things-i-learned-making-mister-rogers-me>]. During his entire life, a quotation hung on his wall: "What is essential is invisible to the eye." (Antoine de Saint-Exupery). The things you can't see are the things that count.

Is it time to reset your compass? Have you lost your way? Bill Hybels writes that simplifying our lives is not about doing less; it is about being focused on God's purpose for our lives, about getting God's compass setting [*Simplify*, p. 2]. He goes on to point out that our schedules are less about what we get done and more about who we are becoming [p. 35]. Read v. 33: Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, then all these others things will be given as well. That's why it's so important to begin with our relationship with God, our commitment to

Jesus Christ, God's Son. You see, you can do all the right things, but if you start in the wrong place, you're sunk. It's like starting in the wrong place on your keyboard. Your fingers may make the right moves, but it doesn't matter. You started in the wrong place.

I know of a man who was diagnosed with cancer many years ago. The doctor told him, "We're on the border between hope and horror. He survived, and after reflecting on that brush with death, here's what he said: "The experience intensified my commitment to the lordship of Jesus Christ. I see Jesus as victor over the inconsequential and irrelevant junk in our lives" [James Dunn, *The Baptist Program*, Feb., 1987, p. 19].

Maybe that story is far from your reality. Maybe you've got lots of things going for you. But you're still struggling with priorities. You may have a position which makes you important. You may have income which gives you choices. But neither position nor income can make you happy, fulfilled or a growing person.

Many of us have done everything except seek God first. We seek God second or third, after we have made poor choices, unprayed-over choices. What would change in your life if you sought God first--regarding a job you feel stuck in? Regarding a relationship that is confusing? Regarding an old, stubborn, sinful habit you can't break?

So here's the application, the takeaway. Don't start with your to-do list or with your competing calendar demands. Start with God. Name one thing that you can do to bring you into a right or better relationship with God. It might be a daily quiet time, more consistent participation in worship or community groups for Bible study and prayer or it might be (with God's help) to give up some habit that is destroying you. It might be to forgive someone or obey God in some call to service. Find that one thing and do it. Seek God FIRST. Seek God FIRST. Seek God FIRST.