



What is Important in Life?

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The direction of my life first began to change when I woke up one morning to the abrupt realization that I had lived half my life! No longer did the future stretch endlessly before me. The future was now. It suddenly seemed urgent that I take a look at my life and analyze my priority system. Was what I had been living for worth living for? In fact, I began to ask myself exactly what I HAD been living for. Would my life count for anything beyond the grave?

A couple of years ago, I began to see and to admit to myself that in spite of my having been raised by Christian parents and attending church all my life, no one would be able to look at my life and differentiate between it and a life without Jesus.

I was becoming obsessed with the "things of this world". I had been spending my time seeking fulfillment of my needs for happiness, much of the time pursuing activities that would make life more pleasurable to ME. It was me-me-me!

Jesus said that we should lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven where moths and rust do not corrupt and thieves do not break through and steal. I definitely was not doing that. I was too busy laying up for myself treasures on earth.

How do Christians get to this point? With me, it came about slowly because of disappointments in people and disappointments and disillusionments in "the church".

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If you are possibly where I was in life, I want you to know that I am praying for you and your walk with the Lord and that He'll change your focus as He changed mine, and that He will give you abundant life as He has given me, a life consisting not of the abundance of THINGS that I possess.

God will get our attention. When He does, it is up to us to make the choice as to which way we are going to go. Are we going to live for Jesus or for the devil? There was a time when I believed there was a "middle of the road" choice, but not any more.

God has said that whoever is not with Him is against Him. Being WITH Him involves realizing Who He is-the Creator and Redeemer Who deserves all our love, and Whose ways are perfect and all Whose paths are peace. Being WITH Him is understanding that the path of obedience is the path of blessing.

How did God get my attention? First, he began by speaking to me through his Holy Spirit at a Ladies' Prayer Retreat my church has every year. Our speaker spoke on the vital importance of prayer and a daily quiet time with God.

To be honest, at that time my prayer life and my time with God was nowhere to be found. I was depending on my own strength and we all know what a mess we can get our lives into when we rely on self. I had become disgruntled with the church and instead of seeking God's will for my life through those times; I felt I could get by on seeking my own will.

"Serving the church" was my biggest problem-I was no longer seeking God, loving him, praying to him, having a daily relationship with him, I was "serving the church". Paul's summation of the problem with the Jews fit me to a "T". " And Israel , who seemed so interested in reading and talking about what God was doing, missed it. How could they miss it? Because instead of trusting God, they took over. They were absorbed in what they themselves were doing. "They were so absorbed in their "God Projects" that they didn't notice God right in front of them." (The Message).

I truly believe God's greatest command is for us to raise our children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). And the way of the Lord is to " Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." This is found in Deuteronomy 6:5-7.

God is first-everything else is second. I do know from my own experience how the devil can change a person's focus and priorities from God to the things of this world in a very short period of time. The devil is waiting and longing for his next victim and we all need to be aware of him. NO ONE-absolutely NO ONE is free of the devil. If we are not wiser than he, then it is because of neglect, because the Psalmist said that by HIS word we are made wiser than our enemies.

When Satan has managed to cause us to forget the true God who created us, who loves us no matter what we've done, he has accomplished his mission with us. It is so sad that that can happen to us without our even realizing it. We seem not to miss the God we have replaced.

God in His mercy knocked me to my feet and through His Word and the love of Christian friends I saw what is Most Important: serving the Lord who gave His Son Jesus to die on the cross for my sins and your sins and daily to strive to serve the risen Savior. My job as a parent is to teach my children the way of the Lord and raise them according to His Word-not my word's, or the world's words, but God's Words.

The Bible has made a vast difference in my life since I discovered the priceless treasure of a daily quiet time, a time when I withdraw from distractions, sit down and read God's Word and then spend time in prayer, in conversation with the Lord alone. It is by "renewing our mind with the washing of the Word" that we "put on the mind of Christ," and therefore continually come to deeper understanding of what is truly important, what will not die with us.

The Bible tells us that all we do in our own efforts apart from the guidance and help of the Holy Spirit is good for nothing and will be cast in the fire as week, hay and stubble. Only those things we have accomplished through His guidance and His strength will be rewarded.

I truly wish I could have been a better Christian in the past. I regret not realizing before half my life was over what is most important in life. But what is so great and marvelous and wonderful is that God forgives and God loves me just as I am. All I have to do is ask His forgiveness and He forgives and I don't have to look back-just go forward in the Lord.

Since I have become closer to the Lord, He has worked in some mighty ways in my life and in the lives of my family. Believe me, not all things have been wonderful, but there is a peace and joy I have never known before.

It is amazing to me that at the age of 40, having been raised in the Baptist faith my whole life, it is only in the last two years that I have truly experienced a daily walk with the Lord and know the blessings that come from it.

Psalm 36:7-9, The Message: "How exquisite your love, O God! How eager we are to run under your wings, to eat our fill at the banquet you spread as you fill our tankards with Eden spring water. You're a fountain of cascading light, and You open our eyes to light."

I am so humbled because I know I don't deserve God's tremendous grace, love and forgiveness but I'm so very thankful he can deliver even a sinner like me and he can do the same for you.

And: (Phil. 3:12 -14, The Message) "I'm not saying that I have this all together, that I have it made. But I am well on my way, reaching out for Christ, Who has so wondrously reached out for me. Friends, don't get me wrong: By no means do I count myself an expert in all of this, but I've got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward-to Jesus. I'm off and running and I'm not turning back. So let's keep focused on that goal, those of us who want everything God has for us. If any of you have something else in mind, something less than total commitment, God will clear your blurred vision-you'll see it yet! Now that we're on the right track, let's stay on it."

I would like to close with a poem by the gifted poet Ruth Harms Caulkin, a poem which touched my heart one day while during my daily quiet time with the Lord I was reading from my Women's Devotional Bible.

It was a difficult sheet of music.
Laboriously she struggled-
Measure by measure,
Note by note,
Finally, with ten-year-old exasperation
She pressed her fists into her cheeks;
"I KNOW I'm playing the right notes,
But I just don't hear the music. "

O God, what a vivid portrait
Of our harassed and hectic lives;
We live in the right houses,
Give to the right charities,
And read the right books,
We sit in the right church pews,
Speak to the right people,
And smile the right smiles.

We buy the right clothes,
Drive the right cars,
And join the right clubs;
Yet, far too often
There's a mysterious emptiness-
A futility in the midst of activity.
The music is missing!
O God,
You alone can create new songs
In the depths of our jangled hearts.
Take over.

If the music is missing from your life, my prayer is that you will realize it,
and let God create a new song in your heart.

Let Go and Let God Take Over!

