

## Organizing Your Priorities

Have you ever had one of those days (or maybe several of those days!) where you feel out of control and trapped in a whirlwind of activity? A day spent reacting to events and people which left you wondering “Did I accomplish anything of importance today?” If this happens to you often, the answer may be found in taking some time to re-evaluate your priorities and goals.

To help you do this, first consider the difference between goals and priorities. Vicki Norris, in her book Reclaim Your Life, and Get Organized for Good, makes these distinctions between the two terms. “A goal is finite and measurable and once you achieve it, you can check it off your list. She goes on to say that “if you live by goals, you may feel as if you are ceaselessly striving, because once one goal is reached, it is invariably replaced by another goal.” Priorities are different and she describes priorities as “an expression of your guiding beliefs and values.” Furthermore, “if you live by your priorities, you can experience contentment.” In other words, if we simply use goals to guide our lives, we can stay busy, yet feel like we’ve never accomplished anything. But if we keep our priorities straight, we may be just as busy, but with a sense of accomplishing what is most important.

So what are your priorities? Answering the following questions may help you find out!

- What do I value?
- What is important to me and my loved ones?
- What drives and motivates me?
- What responsibilities do I have?
- What are my gifts and talents?
- What do I spend my money on?
- How do I want to be remembered?

Once you’ve established your priorities, how do you live according to them? This is where goals come in. Goals are used to guide you in your daily routines so that you live according to your priorities. For example, if one of my priorities is a healthy marriage, I may set goals for weekly date nights, daily time alone without children to talk, weekend getaways, reading a marriage book together or even counseling for special issues. So while goals can be dangerous by themselves, they can help us live effectively by giving us regular opportunities to live out our priorities.

At this point, the unneeded activities and extra expenses in your life will become apparent. Be strong, let go of these extras and purge them from your schedule. After the initial anxiety, you’ll love the focus and freedom that you gain. Take some time to reflect on your life, organize your priorities, set the right goals and really live. Invest your life in the right things and you won’t regret it! The choice is yours, do you want to control your schedule or have it control you?

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