

DISCIPLESHIP LESSON 19

1	PRAYER
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Pray for God's guidance through his Spirit, for awareness of his presence and for listening to his voice. Dedicate this lesson about disciple making to the Lord.

2	WORSHIP (20 minutes)	<i>[CHARACTERISTIC OF GOD] GOD IS MORALLY PERFECT</i>
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Meditation.

Theme: God is morally perfect.

Read the Bible passages and the explanation. Or explain them in your own words.

Read Deuteronomy 10:17-18; Deuteronomy 16:18-19; Psalm 34:15-16; Isaiah 5:8,11-12,18,20-23

1. God is impartial.

You are "partial" when you show more patience and friendliness to certain people: when you harbour particular prejudices against certain people; when you hold unreasonable and unfavourable opinions about certain people; or when you favour particular people, like the rich, the powerful and the famous.

You harbour a "prejudice" when you form an opinion or judgement about someone without taking into account the facts or neglecting the facts that oppose your opinion.

God does not show favouritism to the rich and powerful and he also does not show partiality to the poor (Leviticus 19:15). He does not discriminate people of any race, but associates with people from every race, culture and social position (Acts 10:28,34-35). The God of the Bible is impartial and shows no favouritism!

2. God does not accept bribes.

People who worship idols often bribe their gods and priests with gifts. Psalm 115 warns people that those who worship idols or man-made gods finally become exactly like their "gods". Their idols are corrupt, because their favourable disposition towards people can be bought with bribes. That is why people who worship them also become corrupt and give or receive bribes!

The God of the Bible can never be bought with a bribe! No one can win the favour of God by giving money to a religious organisation, by doing specified religious ceremonies (prayers, fasting, dressing in a particular way) or by doing good works. No one can win the living God for his point of view or his cause in the world by doing good works or by any means. The living God simply accepts no bribes! Man cannot manipulate the living God, the God of the Bible! The God of the Bible relates to people, not on *their* terms, but on *his* terms!

3. God defends the cause of the weak.

Many people in the world believe in "the survival of the fittest" or in "might makes right" or in "everyone for himself". They exploit and oppress orphans, widows, the aged, the single woman and the foreigners living among them. Child labour, child slavery and child soldiers are on the increase in the modern world. Women are lured or captured into slavery. Unemployed young people are recruited into fanaticism and terrorism, etc. The rich people get richer all the time at the expense of the poor, who get poorer all the time. About nine million children and adults die every year due to hunger and malnutrition (that is about 24000 every day)! The poor, the oppressed, the foreigners (refugees) and people belonging to minority groups are increasingly persecuted in every culture.

In contrast to all this immoral behaviour of people in every nation in the world, the living God defends the cause of the weak. For those who have no father on earth, he becomes a Father in heaven (Ephesians 3:14). For those who have no husband on earth to protect them, he becomes a Protector (Isaiah 54:5). For those who are lonely, he becomes a Friend (John 15:14-15). For those who are foreigners, he becomes a special Defender (Deuteronomy 10:18). For those who need a hug, he gathers in his arms and carries them close to his heart (Isaiah 40:11; Hosea 11:1-4). The living God cares for people, especially that they have food and clothing and a roof above their heads (Matthew 6:25-32). God uses Christians all over the world to be his feet to go to the oppressed and exploited, to be his hands to help and give to the poor and to be his mouth to speak words of comfort and encouragement to the destitute. The God of the Bible defends the cause of the weak, but will punish the oppressors, exploiters and extortionists on the final judgement day!

4. God has absolute values and norms.

God has a moral and spiritual system of values and norms that remain absolute and unchangeable. God is absolutely separate from what is wrong, evil, unjust, unholy and godless. But God is equally absolutely dedicated to what is right,

good, just, holy and godly. God's value system is never *relative*, never dependent on circumstances or the changing ages of man. God's moral and spiritual values are always absolute! All the words of God in the Bible intend to say exactly what they mean (Numbers 23:19)! He wants all people in history to know him and understand his will. God's value system is expressed in his commandments and prohibitions. God's commandments and prohibitions remain the same in every culture and throughout the history of this world. God's value system is therefore the fixed point and absolute standard for what is "right" and "good" and "true" *in every age*. Whoever transgresses God's values and norms, God's commandments and prohibitions, will never experience peace in the present and will be punished in the future by God. The God of the Bible "is against those who do evil, but his eyes are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayers" (1 Peter 3:12). Therefore, whoever submits to God's value system and obeys his commandments and prohibitions, will have a good conscience, will experience peace and will live in greater security. Christians know what the living God thinks about them and they know how he wants them to behave. The God of the Bible has absolute and unchangeable moral and spiritual values!

Worship.

Take turns to worship God (in one or two sentences) in his characteristic as being morally perfect!

3	SHARING (20 minutes)	[QUIET TIMES] ACTS 15:1 – 18:17
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Take turns and **share** (or **read** from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your quiet times out of the assigned Bible passages (Acts 15:1 – 18:17).

Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares.

4	TEACHING (70 minutes)	[LORDSHIP] CHRISTIAN PRIORITIES
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A. PRIORITIES

Which priorities should a Christian have? Which areas of life are most important to God? What does God say about *what he regards as important* in each of these areas?

1. What is a priority?

A *priority* is that interest or area of life that has the claim of first consideration and that comes before the other interests or areas in time, order or importance.

2. Which areas in life are important to God?

The Bible clearly teaches which areas in life are important to God. They are: your work (study), your family, your ministry in his kingdom (your task and relationships within the church and community), your own development (personality, character, health, sport, recreation, etc.) and your personal relationship to God (your spiritual growth).

These five areas are all important. But there is *no fixed order* of importance within these areas. As a Christian you try every day to give the right priority, attention and time to each of these important areas of life.

3. Assignment.

As you read this study, discover for yourself what God regards as the most important areas in your life.

What should receive a high priority within each of these five areas of life?

Read the Bible verses and discover what God teaches about priorities.

B. THE FIVE MOST IMPORTANT AREAS IN LIFE

1. Your WORK.

(1) What is important in the area of your work (study, profession)?

- **Read** 2 Thessalonians 3:10. You must work in order to maintain yourself and your family.
- **Read.** 1 Timoteüs 6:8. You must be content when you earn the real necessities of life – food and clothing.

(2) Which boundaries does God set for your work?

- **Read** Mark 8:36. Do not lose your soul by spending your whole life on your work or career!
- **Read** Proverbs 23:4-5. Do not wear yourself out to get rich. Have the wisdom to show restraint in how much time and energy you spend on your work. Reserve some of your time and energy for the other important areas of your life. They may not suffer loss.

(3) How does your personal relationship with God relate to your work?

- **Read** Luke 10:38-42. Quiet time. Make time for personal fellowship with Jesus Christ before you start your work. Do not allow any activity to rob you from time spent with God.
- **Read** Exodus 23:12; Leviticus 23:3; Mark 3:4. Day of rest. Take at least one day out of every seven days to rest from your work, to get refreshed, to meet God together with other believers, to do the good works and save lives.
- **Read** Psalm 127:1-2. Dependence. Be dependent on God for wisdom, strength, influence and results in your work.
- **Read** Proverbs 16:3; Colossians 3:23. Motive. Do all your work as if for the Lord and not for men. Then it can never fail.
- **Read** Acts 5:29. Priority. Give to God the highest loyalty within your work, even if you have to turn down the unjust demands of your boss with respect.

(4) How does your ministry relate to your work?

- **Read** Colossians 3:22 – 4:1. Do honourable work and respect authority.
- **Read** 1 Timothy 3:7. Produce excellence within your work and gain a good reputation with the people at your work. Do not allow your service for God to cause you to neglect your work. A good reputation at your work is a condition for leadership in the church.
- **Read** Matthew 6:31-33. Advance God's kingdom and righteousness by means of your work and at your working place.

2. Your FAMILY?

(1) What is important in your family?

- **Read** Colossians 3:18-21. (Ephesians 5:22-6:4). Relationship rules. See to it that every family member obeys the God-given family rules.

(2) How does your personal relationship with God relate to your family?

- **Read** Matthew 10:37. Priority. Give to God the highest loyalty within your family, even above your dearest family members.

(3) How does your work relate to your family?

- **Read**. 2 Corinthians 12:14; 1 Timothy 5:4,8. Work to provide and take care of all the genuine needs of your family.

(4) How does your ministry relate to your family?

- **Read** Deuteronomy 6:5-7. Study and discuss the Bible within your family and apply its truths.
- **Read** Ephesians 5:22-33. Develop your marriage relationship and make it an example. Serve one another in love and in accepting one another's authority (verse 21).
- **Read** Ephesians 6:4. Bring your children up in the training¹ and instruction² of the Lord, that is, in the knowledge and application of the truths in the Bible.
- **Read** Luke 2:52; (Ephesians 6:1-4). Develop all the important areas of life in your children (mental, physical, spiritual and social).
- **Read** Proverbs 23:22-25. Teach your children obedience and respect, truth, wisdom, righteousness, etc.
- **Read** Mark 10:29-30. Priority. Obey Jesus Christ whenever he calls you to serve him for a shorter or longer period of time.
- **Read** 1 Timothy 3:4-5,12. Priority. The proper management of your family is more important than a management or leadership task within the church.

3. Your MINISTRY?

(1) What is important in your ministry?

- **Read**. Mark 10:45. Follow Jesus by being a servant. The real meaning of life is serving other people for the sake of Jesus Christ.

(2) How does your personal relationship with God relate to your ministry?

Read. John 15:5. Priority. Develop your personal relationship with Jesus Christ. This has a higher priority than your ministry activities, because without a personal relationship with Christ, there will be no genuine or lasting fruit in your ministry.

(3) What is your ministry within the congregation?

- **Read** John 4:23-24. Worship God in truth and in Spirit.
- **Read** John 13:14-15. Serve God by serving people, especially in tasks that no one else is willing or able to do.
- **Read** John 13:34-35. Develop relationships, because it is more important than executing activities and programmes.

¹ Greek: paideia = upbringing, training, instruction as it is attained by discipline, correction (Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament by Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich)

² Greek nouthesia = admonition, instruction, warning. Litterly: engrave in the mind!

- **Read** Ephesians 4:12-16. Make disciples and equip labourers. Make all the Christians in your congregation disciples of Jesus Christ (mature, functioning and persevering Christians); equip them for different kinds of service or ministry that build up the Body of Christ.

(4) What is your most important ministry outside the congregation?

- **Read** 2 Corinthians 2:14-16; 3:2-3. Influence. Be a person that continually has good influence on the people around you: spread “the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ” that attracts people and be “a letter from Christ” that is read by people.
- **Read** Matthew 10:32-33. Witnessing. Witness for Christ, preach the gospel and teach the truths of the Bible to others.
- **Read** James 1:27; 2:15-17. Mercy. Take part in a ministry of mercy to the poor, oppressed, etc. people in the world.

4. What God says is important in your PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT?

(1) What is most important in your personal development?

- **Read** Mark 8:34-38. Self-denial: deny yourself, take up your cross every day and follow Christ.
- **Read** Mark 12:30-31; Isaiah 43:4. Love: grow in love for God, for others and for yourself as Christ loves (John 13:34-35). If you do not love yourself, you cannot love another person! And if you cannot love another person, you cannot love God (1 John 2:9-11). You have not just been “created”, but created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). You are not just “somebody”, but somebody precious in God’s eyes (Isaiah 43:4). That is why God does not want you to look down upon yourself, but have respect for yourself as created by God! This you will do practically by developing yourself in various areas.
- **Read** Psalm 101:3; 141:3-4. Guard your eyes, mouth (your words), hand (your deeds), and heart (your thoughts, feelings, emotions, choices and decisions).

(2) How does God relate to your personal development?

- **Read** Psalm 16:2; 73:25. Spiritual welfare. Apart from God you have no good thing. Desire nothing besides God.
- **Read** 1 Timothy 4:7-8. Spiritual welfare. Training in godliness is more important than physical training (fitness, sport).
- **Read** Ephesians 5:2. Emotional welfare. Walk in love.
- **Read** Psalm 34:18. Emotional welfare. Let God take care of your brokenness (hurts, weaknesses, failures, losses in life).
- **Read** Proverbs 9:10. Mental welfare. Getting to know God and learning to trust God is the beginning of wisdom and understanding.
- **Read** Proverbs 3:5-6; (Ephesians 5:10,17). Mental welfare. Test whether something is true or not. Understand what God’s will is. Let go of negative thoughts and love God and people *with all your mind* (Mark 12:30-31). Find out what pleases the Lord.
- **Read** 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. Physical welfare. Honour God with your body (your health, fitness and appearance).
- **Read** 1 Corinthians 15:33. Social welfare. Avoid bad company, because it corrupts your good character.
- **Read** 1 Peter 2:11. Moral welfare. Abstain from sinful desires, because they war against your soul. Break with every form of sexual immorality (pornography, masturbation, sex before marriage, flirting, etc.).
- **Read** Exodus 31:3-5. Abilities. Develop your God-given talents spiritual gifts and creativity.
- **Read** Ephesians 5:15-16 (Matthew 25:15). Opportunities (challenges). Make good use of your God-given opportunities (chances).
- **Read** Romans 5:3-5; (James 1:2-4). Trials and sufferings. Develop perseverance, maturity and character.

(3) How does your ministry relate to your personal development?

- **Read** Luke 16:10. Whoever is faithful and trustworthy with little will be faithful and trustworthy with much.
- **Read** 2 Corinthians 10:18; Philippians 2:22. Your assigned tasks are tested. When approved you will be commended (praised) by God.

(4) How does your work relate to your personal development?

- **Read** Proverbs 12:3. Unshakeable. The wicked (corrupt) cannot be established, but the righteous (for example, being honest) cannot be uprooted.

(5) How does your family relate to your personal development?

Read Proverbs 15:22; 19:20. Wisdom. Ask and consider the advice from your parents and advisors. It makes you wise and makes your plans succeed.

5. What God says is important in your personal RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD?

- **Read** John 15:5-8; Revelation 2:4-5. Christ. Put Christ first and remain in him. All else will fail!
- **Read** Colossians 2:6-7. Obedience. Live as a Christian and grow as a Christian: get rooted in Christ (invisible) and built up (visible).
- **Read** Colossians 3:16; Matthew 7:24-27. Word. Acquire God’s Word in abundance and apply it diligently. Read the Bible once a year. Meditate every day on a Bible verse during your quiet time. Regularly memorise a Bible verse.

Give lots of time to do Bible study. Take part in a discipleship group every year. Apply the words in the Bible to your own life. Pass the truths of the Bible on to others.

- **Read** Matthew 7:7-8. Prayer. Ask specific things from God. Pray in accordance with the Bible. Persist in knocking (on the door).
- **Read** Hebrews 10:24-25. Fellowship. Regularly meet with other Christians. Gather together every week for a worship service. Meet every week in a small group where you build one another up. Encourage one another not to stay away, but to come even when you do not feel like it. Spur one another on to love and good works.
- **Read** John 15:16. Fruit bearing. Jesus chose you to take the initiative to bear fruit in the lives of other people – by sharing the gospel, by making disciples (mature, functioning and persevering Christians) and by developing character.

6. God is the highest priority in every area of life.

Read Matthew 4:10. “Worship God and serve him only”. All the above-mentioned Bible passages show that God wants you to keep him in the centre of every area of your life! GOD is the only permanent priority in every area of your life!

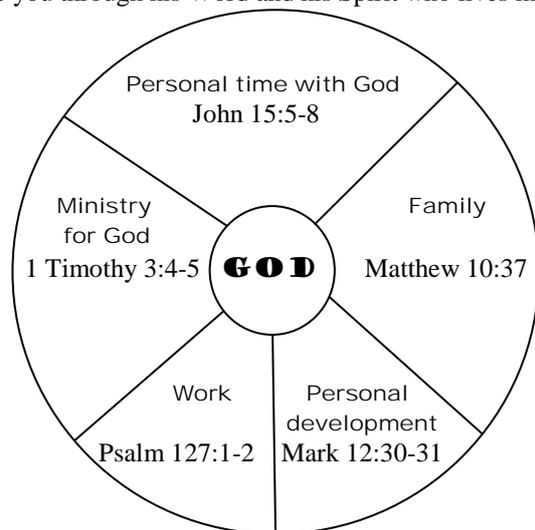
The Bible says that only God can determine the right priority within each area. Only he knows what is best for you! In some situations, God regards your (school) work to be more important than an activity in the church. And in another situation he regards your personal development as more important than your (school) work. But God does not want you to spend all your time at work or at personal development, while you neglect the other important areas of your life. Also the other areas of life are important!

There is but one priority: GOD! Every day he must head the list of priorities that day! Every day he will determine what you should give a high priority that day within each of the five area of life. Therefore, no priority list devised by man should determine what you give your time and energy to. GOD must determine what you give your time and energy to. He wants to be the Lord that rules your life and will lead/guide you through his Word and his Spirit who lives in you.

GOD is the sovereign King of every area of your life!

Not a priority list, but GOD himself should determine what you give your life, your time and your energy to every day!

GOD is the only permanent priority in every area of your life!



C. THERE IS A TIME FOR EVERYTHING

How do you maintain the right balance between

- these five important areas (priorities) on the one hand
- and all the other urgent things in your life on the other hand?

(1) How does God view your activities and time?

How does the Bible view the relationship between all your activities and your time?

- **Read** Ecclesiastes 3:1-8; 8:5-6. There is a time for everything! Make sure that you give the proper time and attention to all the important areas in life! Also give time and attention every day to other less important areas in your life that often present themselves as “urgent” things.

(2) What does God teach you about completing your task?

- **Read** Acts 20:24; 2 Timothy 4:7.
Paul finished the race and completed the task God had given him.
- **Read** Mark 13:34; 1 Corinthians 3:5; Colossians 4:17
God has given to every Christian a task and 24 hours every day to complete it. How can this be done?
- **Read** Mark 1:32-39; John 17:4.
Jesus did not heal every sick person and did not preach the gospel to everyone in the world. Yet he completed the work God gave him to do!

(3) How did Jesus do this?

Jesus did not have a set list of activities and priorities to finish every day. As he was used to do, Jesus prayed and waited for God's instructions and power to accomplish those instructions. In his daily fellowship with God, Jesus learned to discern God's will and also to differentiate between matters that thrust themselves upon him as urgent and matters that were really important. In this way he warded off the urgent and accomplished the important.

(4) How can God help you to determine your priorities?

How can God help you to give the right amount of time and energy to important things in life and to find the right balance between all these important things?

- **Read** Acts 22:10; Psalm 32:8. Pray at the beginning of each day about the things you need to do that day.
- **Read** Isaiah 30:1-2; Proverbs 3:5-6; 16:3. Involve God in everything you do.
- **Read** Colossians 3:23. "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men."
- **Read** Psalm 16:8. "I have set the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken."

5	PRAYER (8 minutes)	<i>[REACTIONS]</i> PRAYER IN RESPONSE TO GOD'S WORD
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Take turns in the group to pray short to God in response to what you have learned today.
Or divide the group into two's or three's and pray to God in response to what you have learned today.

6	PREPARATION (2 minutes)	<i>[ASSIGNMENT]</i> FOR NEXT LESSON
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(Group leader. Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. **Commitment.** Be committed to make disciples.
Preach, teach or study the teaching of "Christian priorities" together with another person or group of people.
2. **Personal time with God.** Have a quiet time from half a chapter of Acts 18:18 - 21:40 each day.
Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
3. **Bible study.** Prepare the next Bible study at home. (4) Ephesians 5:22-33. Theme: "The Christian relationship to his marriage partner." Make use of the five steps method of Bible study. Make notes.
4. **Prayer.** Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
5. **Update your notebook** on making disciples. Include the worship notes and teaching notes and this preparation.