When we have faith that is rooted in God’s Word (the Bible), it changes the way we think about things. We have a new perspective and source from which we organize the things that are most important to us. This perspective impacts our priorities in such a way that we are able to fall in line with God’s heart for us here on this earth. If we choose to follow after what God say is most important we will look different than the world around us. Others will see that we seek God first, that we believe truth over opinion, and that people are more valuable than things. Let’s beg God to transform our priorities so that He would be glorified and that our choices would impact the the generations to come.

His story

This week we are going to examine what the Bible says about our priorities. We want to follow God’s truth rather than allowing the world’s opinion to direct us.

Do you ever feel like you are going, going, going all day long - putting out fires, taking care of others, cleaning, working, doing the next thing and then getting up tomorrow to do it all over again? If so, you’re not alone! Sometimes the idea of evaluating our priorities can feel like one more item on the the “to do” list. Who has time to set priorities? God has something to say about how we spend our time. Ecclesiastes 3:1 says “For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven.”

❖ Read Matthew 6:33 and write it here.

In the above verse, the Bible gives us some clarity on we are to do FIRST. Seek first the kingdom of God. That’s it! First priority. Easy right? If only we knew where the kingdom of God was! A road map might be nice. Perhaps it simply means that before we do anything else, we should be talking to God and getting to know Him and finding out how He created us to live with others.

In Luke 10:38-42 Jesus is teaching at Mary and Martha’s house. Martha is preparing food for dinner, and Mary is sitting at Jesus’ feet, listening to Him.
Read these verses for yourself, and determine which woman you most identify with. Why do you identify with her?

What do you think Jesus meant when He said Mary had figured out the most important thing?

Paul says it this way in Philippians 3:8. "Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." Once you spend consistent time reading and studying your Bible, spending time in prayer talking to God and then stopping to be quiet enough to listen to God, you will eventually experience God in a way that leaves you hungry for more. Paul gave up everything he had worked so hard for because the value of knowing Jesus was worth way more. How did he get to know Jesus? He spent time with Him. That's what we need to do too. That's seeking the kingdom of God and there are no shortcuts.

Priority #1 - Spend time with Jesus. (Not time at church, or doing church activities, or talking to your church friends, but time spent reading the Bible, talking to Jesus, and quietly listening for His answers.)

From there, it gets a little fuzzy, and that's the beauty of this life with Jesus. Jesus calls each of us to something different. Once we spend time with Him, He is able to sort that out with us. Think about it - Paul was called to travel from city to city encouraging the new Christians. But at one point, Paul was under house arrest for telling people about Jesus but his priorities never changed. God used this time in Paul's life to allow him an opportunity to share with his jailer and those guarding him about the Savior. Paul was also able to write and send letters to the churches he had visited previously, encouraging those believers once again.

As women of hope we desire to get our priorities right. We can read Proverbs 31 and learn a lot about a virtuous and capable wife. Though we might not use a spindle to sew clothes for our family today, there is much to learn about priorities here. Let's venture into that portion of the Bible for a few minutes. Please read Proverbs 31:10-31.

What does the wife in Proverbs 31:12 bring her husband?
❖ Who does she spend time helping in Proverbs 31:20?

❖ Proverbs 31:26-27 gives us a good description of her character. What stands out to you in these verses?

You don’t have to be a wife and/or mother to gain insights from these verses. In addition there are many of other verses in the Bible that can help direct our priorities. Let’s examine a few of them.

❖ In Matthew 22:37-40, what does Jesus say is the most important commandment?

❖ And the second most important commandment?

❖ How could these commandments help you prioritize things on your schedule? Do you see the importance of valuing people over things?

Journal
Have you stopped to consider what your priorities really are? Take some time today to make a list in your journal about your priorities. First make a list of what you actually spend your time, money and resources on. Then make a list of what you desire to prioritize. Challenge yourself to begin making the necessary changes. Ask for God’s wisdom to see His desire for you! It’s important to do this kind of exercise regularly to keep first things first!

Our story
Getting our priorities straight can help us in life. We learned that God needs to be our first priority and that we prioritize people over things. But, since we are all wired
differently, how do we know what God would want us to do next with our time and resources? The more we spend time with God the more we gain perspective on what is really most important. We can’t just let the world around us tell us what’s important. We have to be intentional to set standards that are aligned with God’s Word about our time and our resources. The unfortunate reality is that when it comes to staying on track with these standards we can be our own worst enemy. When was the last time you said “yes” to something and then days (or even hours later) you realized it was a mistake?

When it comes to setting priorities, some people have no problem setting boundaries with their time and resources, but for most of us we have a hard time knowing when to say “yes” and when to say “no.” The challenge is knowing how and when to say “no.” Saying a confident “no” when needed allows us the freedom to give our best “yes” when desired. Here are a couple of suggestions about how to feel confident saying “no,” so that you can keep your priorities in the right order.

Never say yes on the spot. Always tell the person you will call back, after you’ve had time to pray and think about it. This keeps you from making an on-the-spot decision you may regret later. This is a wise course of action for both big and little opportunities that come our way. If we say “yes” to many “little” things, thinking that is not a big time commitment they can add up to a large portion of our time and deplete our resources pretty quickly.

When you do say no, don’t feel that you need to give a long list of excuses. Yes, this is easier said than done. For some reason we think we owe others a reason why we would say “no.” We don’t. You know what is best for your family and for yourself. If you feel you must give an excuse, simply say that it would not fit into your schedule at this time, being confident that you are keeping things in the right order!

Keep in mind that you do not have to say “yes” simply because you are capable. You may have been the best PTA president the school has ever seen or you might have great leadership, organizational skill, or past experience. That doesn’t mean you have to say “yes” to those responsibilities that fit your skill set. You should say “yes” only after considering your time availability, other volunteer responsibilities, your family commitments and what you might need to give up to properly do this job well. Who knows, this opportunity might be meant for someone else who needs to gain the practical experience to grow in their gifts. Don’t assume that just because you might be good at it, that it’s good for you.
Journal
Today write down your thoughts about why it’s hard to say “no.” Consider what internally motivates you to say yes even when you know you should say “no.” Tie in what you learned about your identity in Christ with what motivates you.

Prayer & practice
Remember, your assignment for this section has two parts; prayer and scripture memorization.

Prayer
Set your timer for 5-30 minutes (choose how much time you have that day) and pray specifically for help in aligning your priorities with God’s desires for us.

❖ Ask God to quiet you and speak His peace into your busy life.

❖ Ask God to help you prioritize what people need to be seen and loved by you most. Who is God putting in your world at this time to be a priority?

❖ Ask God to guard your heart from fear of failure and the uncertainty around us.

❖ Ask God to make clear to you what should be most important to you in this season of life. Pray that your priorities line up with God’s.

Practice
So grab your to-do list, planner, calendar or phone and let’s honestly look at our past week. Our days have been full, full of expectations of others, full of must do’s and errands, full of things we can see and touch. Did you get it all done? Do you have heaviness in your spirit that you have somehow missed the important in all the urgent? Is there a new bestseller book completed or a new recipe downloaded and your bible not yet opened? Is there clean laundry but a friend whose tears needed drying? Have you let the noise of the world and its tragic events drown out the truth that God is in control?

Are you afraid to let go of your busyness? Will you stop each day long enough to hear God’s voice. Our hope comes from knowing He is taking us one step at a time. We don’t have to do it all by ourselves.

Journal
Find Psalms 37:23 in your Bible and write this verse down in your journal. Isn’t that amazing? The more we focus on the unseen things like our relationship with Jesus our daily details are directed by Him and He is delighted! Memorize this week’s selected passage of scripture. After you have written it in your journal, say it out loud.
daily, recite to your family, make sticky note reminders, etc. Get it memorized this week! Say it aloud with your small group this week

**Encourage & explore**

**Encourage**

"Sometimes we may have nothing to show for our work but much to show for our God."

*Ann Voskamp*

The importance of saying “Yes” to God’s priorities is essential. David's prayer in Psalm 90:12 was “Teach us to realize the brevity of life so that we may grow in wisdom.”

This same godly wisdom David prayed for is promised to us in James 1:5 when we seek God for it. It says wisdom is given generously to us when we ask. We need God’s wisdom to teach our children and those we influence to be discerning in this world of the “anything goes” value system.

We have a whole generation behind us watching how we spend our time and energy. When we are bossed around by daily urgencies or a full email inbox, or our stress levels rise as the day goes on, we have opportunities to demonstrate to our kids and those we influence that our hope is in Jesus.

This week take some time to intentionally prioritize people over things. Remember *Matthew 22:39*? It's the second greatest commandment “Love your neighbor as yourself.” People are much more valuable than any monetary or material item on this earth. If we believe this, then let’s act in obedience. Let’s say “yes” to people over things this week. This simple yet deliberate choice is a way to show those around you that you value what God values. Our choice today can be a ripple effect into tomorrow.

Stop now and think of people God has placed in your path. Take a moment to pray and consider who you want to provide a little encouragement to today.

❖ Write this person's name here:

❖ Write a couple ideas of how you can make them a priority (write a letter, send a text, set aside a time to be just with them, pray for them etc.)

**Journal**

As you look back over this last week, consider the three priorities we’ve been studying: God first, truth over opinion, and people above things.
❖ Which of these came easiest for you? Why?

❖ Which of these three priorities was the hardest for you? Why?

**Explore**
Go deeper into God's Word by reading additional verses on priorities:

- 2 Corinthians 4:18
- Ecclesiastes 9:10
- Ephesians 5:16-17

Check out the following pursueGOD resources online at pursueGOD.org:

- You Lost Me
- Women’s Basics
- God Values Relationships
- Transfer Your Values to your Kids
- Christian basics: 5 values for every christian