

Living Life Upside Down
“Upside Down Priority”
(Part 2)

Intro: We’ve all heard the phrase; “Everything in moderation”. In other words, keep everything in balance...don’t get over committed / over zealous / over indulge in any area of your life. This is good advice most of the time.

- Counseling with one couple where the guy was literally obsessed with fishing and his boat. (explain)
- Eating junk food in moderation is a good idea. Going to Cold Stones once a week is probably not going to harm you. Stopping by every day after work is probably not a good idea. Once again...moderation is a good idea.

The problem with this statement is when we apply it to our relationship with God. Should we really follow God in moderation? Should I treat God like Cold Stone / fishing / hobby?

- Most Christians make their relationship with God only a part of their lives. Jesus taught no such thing. Following Jesus is our life. We are people of another Kingdom and giving ourselves to that Kingdom according to Jesus, is our #1 earthly priority above all else. That’s not moderation...that’s upside down living! Upside down priority!

*Matt. 6:33 “Seek the Kingdom of God **above all else**, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.” (NLT) Above all else means above all else! (Work / family / friends / leisure /...)* The Kingdom of God takes first place in our pursuits. BUT, what does that really look like? What does it mean to seek first the Kingdom, of God? (There are only 2 Kingdoms we can seek. We either seek after one or the other.) What does this upside down Kingdom lifestyle really look like?

- I want to give you 4 ways to understand this...4 ways God’s Kingdom priority is reflected in our lives.

I. Kingdom Priority Is Reflected In The Use Of Our Time

Matt. 7:13-14 “Don’t look for shortcuts to God. The market is flooded with surefire, easygoing formulas for a successful life that can be practiced in your spare time. Don’t fall for that stuff, even though crowds of people do. The way to life—to God!—is vigorous and requires total attention.”(Message)

1. If I didn’t spend any time studying God’s word / speaking every week / going to the office / counseling with people / leading the church / spending time praying / Weddings and funerals / Would it be tough to think of me as a Pastor?
2. Don’t you agree that how I spend my time reflects my priorities? Even reflects who I am? Of course! Jesus said the same thing when it comes to which kingdom we identify

ourselves with.

3. The Kingdom of God is a narrow path that leads to life that requires our total commitment and attention! It's not something that is practiced in our "spare time". How we spend our time reflects the priority we give to our pursuit of His Kingdom.
4. Now you may be thinking; "C'mon pastor Dale. What does God expect out of me anyway. Am I supposed to quit my job, be a missionary / pastor / or spend all my time reading the bible and praying? Let's be realistic? I have needs in this real world."
5. AND here in lies the problem. We give the Kingdom of God so little time because we are so busy trying to accumulate "everything we need". You see, in the worldly kingdom, that's how it works. You have to take all your time to provide for yourself.
- This is the biggest complaint from most believers. I have no time!
6. When you invest your time for God's Kingdom, God gives you everything you need. He promises that if you make His Kingdom your #1 priority, He takes care of you. If you don't...you take care of yourself.
7. Some of you are already thinking..."No way!" "That's crazy!" I told you it was upside down. So how does my time reflect I am giving priority to His Kingdom?
 - Time connecting relationally with Jesus. Are we investing time in the relationship? Relationships take time. If I didn't spend any time with my wife, she wouldn't feel very important. Are we spending time with Jesus? (prayer)
 - Time learning His Kingdom values. The values of God's Kingdom are very different than this world's. These values are discovered in His word. Do we spend any time trying to understand His word?
 - Time embracing a Kingdom lifestyle (Learning new behavior takes time and effort. He changes how you look at life / people / events / priorities - Allow Him to give you His worldview – set of glasses. New lifestyle takes time.
8. When I think I don't have time for these things, I am unproductive. Sometimes I get stressed / rushed and think, "I don't have time to pray – read- reflect" BUT if I do, God just gives me what I need. (Explain – message prep) He gives you everything you need!
- If you will give Him your time you will experience Him meeting every human need imaginable!
- Does the use of your time reflect a Kingdom priority?

II. Kingdom Priority Is Reflected In The Use Of Our Money

Matt. 6:19-21 "Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be." (NLT)

1. Jesus was the one who said the way we use our money reflects the priority of our hearts. Over 50% of all of Jesus' stories and parables had to do with money and

possessions. WHY? Because His Kingdom views wealth radically different than the world.

2. If we're going to be people pursuing His Kingdom, then we must view money and possessions from His Kingdom perspective? The reason people get so uncomfortable and even irritated when it comes to this topic is because they are usually still trapped in thinking like this earthly kingdom.
3. In this earthly kingdom, you have to protect and preserve what you have. There is a limited amount of resources to go around, so you better get yours while you can. This is earthly kingdom thinking.
4. God's Kingdom is entirely different. In His Kingdom, there is no limit to resources since they originate with God, therefore generosity is the valued character trait NOT accumulation and preservation.

Luke 6:38 "Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back." (NLT)

5. Jesus is not saying it's wrong to have a savings account or a 401K, BUT He is saying how we use our money and wealth reflects our heart condition and which Kingdom we are operating under.
6. Many of you are afraid to be generous because you believe you won't have enough. This reveals you're still stuck in this earthly kingdom. You want God to be generous to you first and then you'll be generous. This is backwards thinking. God wants you to trust Him. He wants you to choose a different Kingdom first.
7. Just look at what God did for us as a church corporately with our building project. As we choose to trust Him, God provided the resources. Did God worry about our economy? Of course not! God's Kingdom is NOT connected to this earthly kingdom.
 - What God did corporately God will do individually for you as well!
 - Some of you are stuck in this earthly kingdom thinking that generosity is practiced only when you have excess. You believe there is a limited amount of resources available to you. God's Kingdom knows no such limitations! His is a generous Kingdom with unlimited resources. Which Kingdom would you rather experience?
8. Are you ready to be Kingdom minded with your generosity? Are you ready to seek the Kingdom of God above all else with your wealth? It's upside down isn't it?
 - Have offering envelopes and talk about trusting God.

III. Kingdom Priority Is Reflected In Our Emotional Condition

Matt. 6:25 "That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing?" (NLT)

Matt. 6:31-32 "So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs." (NLT)

1. Stress and anxiety can be a very good indicator we are obsessing over the wrong kingdom. When I focus on this earthly kingdom, I know I have no control / no promises to cling to / lack the resources / it's unpredictable / I'm fearful...and according to Jesus, I'm behaving like an average unbeliever.
2. When I am focusing on God's Kingdom, it's completely different. I know He is in control / I have His promises to cling to / He has all the resources I need / the outcome is predictable because God can't ever be wrong / and I know He sees all my needs...therefore, I have peace.
3. As followers of Christ, our stress level will be connected to which kingdom we identify more with. One Kingdom is falling apart while the other Kingdom is advancing.
4. We can have peace when we focus on God's Kingdom because His Kingdom has predictable outcomes. We have His promises for his life and the next. We just looked at His promises concerning generosity.
5. Staying focused on God's Kingdom is like recording a sporting event (because you're at church) and then going home and watching it. BUT, before you watch it, you go online and see that your team already won. Then, you watch it. (explain)
- I've done this recently. Talk about pulling up old You Tube video of Portland Trail Blazers winning the NBA championship in 1977. I remember the stress I felt watching it in real time not knowing the outcome. It's really different now.
6. When we focus on God's Kingdom, it reminds us that the outcome has already been decided...the results will be predictable...His Kingdom will advance / His promises will prove to be true / and He wins in the end / God will always respond to us in love.
- This is why we can sometimes appear a bit crazy to other people. They're stressed out and we're at peace despite all that's going on.
7. This worldly kingdom will never give us these guarantees. Only God's Kingdom does. When I lose my peace and I am filled with stress and anxiety, it's a sure sign I am focusing on the wrong kingdom.
- Which Kingdom have you been focusing on? Our emotions are a great indicator.

IV. Kingdom Priority Is Reflected In Our Personal Transformation

Matt. 7:17, 20 "A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit....Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions." (NLT)

Rom. 12:2 "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think..." (NLT)

1. If we are truly giving priority to the Kingdom of God, our lives will change and be in the process of changing. God will be in the process of making us look like people who belong to His Kingdom.
2. This doesn't mean we embrace perfectionism / legalism. We're never going to be perfect this side of eternity. BUT, we do embrace the process of allowing Jesus to transform us into new people that reflect the character of His Kingdom.

3. Jesus Himself said it is our actions that identify which kingdom we're acting like. That's what the term "fruit" means. Our actions give us away...our actions demonstrate which kingdom we're identifying with.
4. So what's the "fruit" that should be observable you're asking? The most important question isn't whether or not you have the right fruit, it's do you have the right roots. Roots are more important than fruit. If your roots are healthy, you'll have good fruit.
5. We will never change the fruit of our lives until the roots are transformed. This is why most people's lives never really change. They're attempting to change their behavior without dealing with the root cause of it.
6. Therefore in order to give ourselves to Kingdom transformation, we have to understand root issues. I know of no better passage than Phil. 2.

Phil. 2:3-5 "Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had." (NLT)

7. Pride is what is valued in this earthly kingdom. Self promotion / self interests / image conscious / self-centered thinking and behavior. In God's Kingdom, humility has more power. Humility is what is valued. Humility is the root that produces Kingdom fruit. Humility is acting like Jesus! This is how people should act in the Kingdom of God.
- Talk about handout. The Heart God Revives
8. This is one of the best descriptions of the heart transformation that I believe Jesus wants to do in all of our lives. This describes the character of the people in God's Kingdom. It describes roots! (Read through first page)
- I want to encourage you to use it this week. Read and reflect on it every day. Talk about it in your home groups. Pray through it. Ask God to let these traits become the reality of your life! As we reflect these traits it shows we give priority to His Kingdom.

So you can see, seeking the Kingdom of God is not some part time, when I have time, try to fit it into my busy schedule type of commitment. It's above all else. It's not to be taken in moderation. It's upside down! But don't forget the promise that is attached to it..."He will give you everything you need."

If we will make His Kingdom our #1 pursuit, God will give you EVERYTHING you need.

- Everything means everything. Every human need you can think of and imagine will be provided for you as you give yourself to His Kingdom. God is concerned with every detail of your life and can't wait to show you how much He loves you by providing for you. He just waits for you to choose your loyalties. Which kingdom will you seek?