

I Can't Take On Another Thing! - the Importance of Priorities

By Paul J. Meyer

Are you constantly juggling an overflowing plate of activities or obligations? Finding it difficult to say "no" to others' requests or demands? If so, I believe I can help.

It all started for me when I was very young and my father took me to a foundry where patterns for making large machinery parts were manufactured. The one thing I immediately knew is I did not want to spend my whole life working there! I knew deep in my heart that I needed to find a career that was the perfect fit for me, and the foundry was definitely not a match.

The reason you could be in the wrong career, enmeshed in unsupportive relationships, or experiencing an overload of responsibilities and obligations is you have simply not identified your priorities in life. When your priorities in life are not clear, you end up taking multiple detours, adding more and more disjointed activities or relationships to your already full schedule.

I've learned that setting priorities frees me from unwise decisions, from saying "yes" when I need to say "no," and keeps me on a steady course toward my goals. If your priorities are clear, each request you receive will be weighed against your priority list to see if the request supports or subtracts from your goal. For instance, if one of your priorities is to spend time with your son by attending his soccer practice each week, you will automatically turn down other requests that interfere with that time frame.

Defining your priorities

Let me share with you my top priorities to help you begin to think about your own.

- **God:** I want to deepen my relationship with God and accomplish His will for my life.
- **My wife:** I intend to love, nurture, guide, serve, and provide for her.
- **My family:** I plan to love, train, encourage, and lead by example.
- **My personal health and fitness:** I want to stay in shape and eat the right foods.
- **Business:** I desire to be a good steward of what I have while delegating to capable individuals.

The challenge is to keep a balance between your priorities. For example, many fathers spend only a few minutes each day with their children although when questioned they would certainly say that time with them is a priority in their life. The problem is they simply aren't keeping a balance in their priorities... or not keeping them at all!

Paul J. Meyer, best-selling *New York Times* author and founder of the Success Motivation Institute has written two dozen full-length programs plus numerous books on attitude, motivation, goal setting, management, leadership, and time management. In his highly acclaimed book, *24 Keys That Bring Complete Success*, available at www.pauljmeyer.com, Paul shares the 24 keys that have made him the success he is today.

Priorities are habits and like any good habit, it takes time for them to become established in your conscious and subconscious mind. Once they are established, action naturally follows.

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Turning your priorities into reality

In order to keep your priorities, you must not only clearly define them, but also take the necessary action for them to become a reality. Here are the steps that I have found to be the most effective in making that happen:

1. Write down your priorities.
2. Commit to carry them out.
3. Post your priorities in a visible place.
4. Start with a small action that daily reinforces your priority.
5. Create a visible checklist or tracking system.
6. Refuse to go to bed each night without fulfilling your priority.
7. Find a partner that will hold you accountable.
8. Create pictures of your priority and concentrate on the benefits.
9. Choose to never make excuses and review regularly to see if you are on target.
10. Create a mission statement.

Creating a mission statement

A *mission statement* is a *written* statement that establishes the *why* behind what you decide to do. A mission statement helps insure that the priorities you select are the right ones. My parents always told me, "Do what you do for the right reasons and keep your priorities straight."

In order to write your mission statement, review the priorities you have identified and ask yourself, "Why do I have these priorities?" For example, if you want to help the poor, you will need to uncover the heart or motive behind your decision. Determining your motive will impress your priority more firmly upon your mind and aid you in staying faithful to your goal.

Your mission statement needs to be improved and fine-tuned as time passes. Use it as a way of keeping you focused, inspired, and consistent with your priorities and goals.

Once you have identified your priorities and established a clear mission statement, all your decisions will be based on the right criteria.

In other words when you say "yes" to something, you'll really mean it!

