

## Evergreen Baptist Church Men's Ministry

### Study Guide for Chapter 3 in *Hazards of Being a Man* “Misplaced Priorities”

For Tuesday, December 4, 2007, and Saturday\*, December 8, 2007

(\* Remember the New Saturday Start Time – 8:00 A.M. !!)

The following questions are designed to help you prepare for the Men's Meeting, even if you do not have the book.

1. The chapter starts with an excellent example of a man with misplaced priorities – more concerned about the proper care of his car than of his wife's emotional needs. Unfortunately, our society has no shortage of such men. Describe one example you have seen of a man who had scrambled his life priorities.

2. As Pastor Miller wrote, “There is nothing like a brush with death or impending death to align a person's priorities.” Put yourself in that place. If your doctor were to announce to you at your next check-up, “I'm sorry, but you have less than six weeks left to live,” what would you change about the way you live those weeks?

3. Jacob's experience with his daughter, Dinah, and the Shechemites (see Genesis 34:1-31), provided an excellent example of a man with mixed up priorities. Unfortunately, there is no shortage of such examples in the pages of Scripture. Let's take a look at two of them, the final two judges of Israel: Eli and Samuel. Eli's story is spread out over 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel chapters 1-4, but look particularly at these sections: 1:3; 1:12-18; 2:12-17, 22-36; 3:1-18; and 4:2-18. For Samuel's example, see 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 7:15-8:5.

- a. What seems to be Eli's misplaced priority? Look at 2:29, 3:13, and 4:18.
- b. How did Eli's sons magnify their father's warped priorities in their lives and priesthood? See 2:12-17 and 22.
- c. According to 2:23-25 and 3:14, how did Eli respond to the actions of Hophni and Phinehas? How do you think his skewed personal priorities may have been related to his dealings with his sons?
- d. How did Eli's priorities affect his spiritual perception and his effectiveness as High Priest? Read 1:12-16 and 3:1-9. Why would this be a result of his life choices?
- e. How did the nation of Israel, under Eli's leadership and example, seem to display a similar attitude towards God as the one Eli showed by his poor priorities? See 4:2-4.

- f. Samuel would follow Eli as the Judge of Israel. According to 7:15-8:5, what seems to have been his misplaced priority? How could that choice have been related to Eli's example since, after all, Samuel had been raised in Eli's home and had been trained for Judge under his mentorship?
  - g. How did Samuel's life and ministry decisions affect his sons, Joel and Abijah? In what ways was this similar to Eli's family? What differences were there between the effects in Samuel's family and Eli's?
  - h. What lessons have you learned about proper priorities from looking at the lives and ministries of these two men?
4. What is your reaction to these quotes from chapter 3? Do you agree or disagree with Pastor Miller's statement, and why?
- a. "It's not easy to live right side up in a culture that rewards upside-down priorities."
  - b. "How could a man [Jacob] neglect his priorities so obviously with such damaging consequences? And yet, perhaps on a smaller scale, we are each guilty of the same sin. We prioritize our spouse over our God.... We prioritize our kids over our wives.... We prioritize our jobs over our families and choose more money and more hours at work. We prioritize leisure over God and our families...."
  - c. "Men often confuse their identity with what they do for a living – their career or profession. .... The distinction is subtle: we mistake what we do for who we are. We confuse the 'what' with the 'who.'"
  - d. "Notice also that the two [greatest] commandments [as cited by Jesus] share in common a relational component: love God first; love people second. Relationships should be our priorities."
  - e. "According to the first and second greatest commandments, a Christian can never claim not to be a people person. We can acknowledge our weakness in building relationships, but we cannot use our weakness as an excuse."
  - f. "I was making a fundamental error of priorities. I was mistaking 'ministry' for my relationship with God. God, not ministry, should be my top priority. God comes before my family; but my family comes before ministry."
  - g. "However, the third priority – work – is not included in God's list. It is not a biblical priority. To include it on the list [which many men use for their priorities: 1. God, 2. my family, 3. my career] is to confuse the 'what' with the 'who.'"
  - h. "Objects should not appear on our priority list either. Cars, houses, and computers are gifts God has given to us, and we demonstrate that God is a priority by stewarding them properly."

- i. “Our first priority should be our relationship with God. The rest of the list should be composed of relationships listed in descending order of importance.”
- j. “My job is first of all a stewardship, so by doing it well I am loving God. It also provides for my family and pays the bills, so by doing it well I am loving my wife and children.”
- k. “Once we’ve created a priority list, it’s time to measure our life against it. What we’ve created is an ideal list of priorities, but it is not necessarily the real list of priorities – our real list of priorities is reflected by our life.”
- l. “[W]e should be able to list not only our priorities but also the competition each of our priorities will face.”
- m. “A man must make an effort to keep the top priorities at the top of the list and work equally as hard keeping the lower priorities at the bottom.”
- n. “Rest assured, our wives and children can list every priority on our list that ranks higher than they do.”
- o. “To a large degree we can measure our priorities not by what we do but by what we don’t do. Our top priorities will always cost us something. We will sacrifice otherwise desirable things or experiences for our true priorities. .... And the higher on your list, the more sacrifices you are certain to make.”

5. Finding a positive example in Scripture of a man who kept his priorities in order is extremely challenging. But that should be no surprise since it can be as equally challenging today. I would like to suggest Noah. Review his story in Genesis 5:32-9:29. Also look at the New Testament commentaries on Noah’s life and ministry such as: Matthew 24:37-39; Hebrews 11:7; 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 2:5

- a. How would you describe Noah’s relationship with God? What evidence does his life present to prove where that relationship rested on his personal priority list?
- b. How would you describe Noah’s relationship with his wife and family? What proof did you see in his life that supports your description? (Even notice that in the ugly incident briefly recorded in 9:21-24 Noah knew his sons well enough to know who the offending one was. What does that require?)
- c. According to what you read about him, how would you describe Noah’s other personal relationships?
- d. What sacrifices did Noah make in order to protect his priorities?
- e. In the negative examples we’ve studied, Jacob, Eli and Samuel, the misplaced priorities in the lives of these men had devastating results in their own experiences and in the lives

of many others. What affects did you observe coming from the priorities by which Noah lived?

- f. What did you learn from Noah's life story that will help you in the area of setting and living by proper priorities?

6. Again, Pastor Miller concludes the chapter with five excellent action points to practically help us in setting and maintaining proper priorities in our lives. Prayerfully consider each one as you examine this critical area in your life as a man desiring to live by God's priorities for him.

- a. "List your priorities according to God's guidelines: love God and love people. .... Don't forget your parent, siblings, and extended family. Next, consider the people you spend the most time with...."
- b. "Assess the last week of your life, and compare it to your priority list. .... Think about where you spent the most time. Consider also what and for whom you sacrificed this week. You will find that you spend time each day nurturing the relationships that are the most important to you."
- c. "Ask the people who appear on your list if they think your life reflects your priority list. Often this proves to be the hardest step for men. .... Ask [them] to name the sacrifices you have made for [them] over the last year."
- d. "Write down the measures you will take to protect your priorities. If your daily life fails to align with the list you've made, begin by stating what will be required to align your priorities. Include the competition you anticipate each priority will face."
- e. "Meet regularly with a pastor, mentor, or spiritual advisor to keep you in check. .... An objective eye can help you determine if you are staying the course or drifting."

7. Again there is a memory verse assignment. "[F]orgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13c-14) How does this verse relate to setting and achieving proper personal priorities? How will it help you to avoid the hazard of misplaced priorities?