

Do you know your place?

I've had a hard time starting this study, *Everyday Practices/Eternal Priorities*. Last week I decided it was time to scrap the idea. Then God reminded me of how much growth I need in this area and why I wanted to start the series in the first place.

Will you commit to this series? Will you commit to not just skim over the lesson, but to internalize it and let God change you? It won't be easy; the road to growth is usually pretty rocky. I certainly don't look forward to exposing my shame and embarrassment! But, I know a rocky road forward is better than a smooth road to nowhere. I'm going to commit because I want my heart and my life to expand and grow with the love and joy available through Christ.

Grateful for a God that keeps us growing,
Jennifer

I Want My Place

This weekend, my husband decided to help me out and do some laundry. As I have explained to him more times than I can count, his help with laundry isn't helpful. In other areas I appreciate his help; he is great with the bathrooms, the floors, the windows. . . just not the laundry.

Instead of saying thank you and being grateful that he was making sure the kids had clean jeans, I decided to spout my opinion on his laundry skills. Just saying it once wasn't enough though. I kept going on and on. I wanted to make sure he understood why my opinion on laundry was so important, why my opinions on anything were so important, and why *I* was so important.

The argument (mainly one-sided) ended when I had to take my son to a birthday party and my daughter to a movie. After I dropped off my son, I had to call home with some pick-up details. I told my husband that I knew I was wrong because it didn't really matter how he did the laundry and that I knew I needed to say I was sorry. I also told him I just wasn't going to do it. Yes, this story is full of wrong turns. And, keep in mind that we're talking about laundry here, not anything that actually matters.

In trying to process my frustration during the 20-minute drive to the movie, I realized I had been annoyed by my life for a couple of months. I struggled with God in the car, telling Him that I was tired of being the one who met everyone's needs and I wanted to have equal time in getting my needs met. I wanted MY place in this world, a place where people catered to ME and made sure MY clothes were clean and MY paperwork was filled out and MY coffee was made. A home where someone cooked for ME and cleaned up after ME and for goodness sakes, listened to ME.

As I got caught up in my righteous demands with God, I realized this attitude started when my youngest entered school this fall. My kids were off and I was ready to do more: more speaking and more writing. I was ready to take on the world and I was ready for the rest of my family to take on house-running duties. I was ready for my place – and had apparently decided my place was not taking care of everyone else.

As God tried to speak to me, I kept arguing with Him about the injustice. When I finally got over myself enough to listen, He spoke very softly to my soul. He gave me His words from Matthew 20, "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as ransom for many."

God gently reminded me that in His economy less is more. It is far greater to be a humble servant to others than the most powerful king. It is better to serve my family than be served by my family. I'm not supposed to demand equal rights in my marriage, I'm supposed to love in my marriage and give all He has given me to give. I am to count it a joy to stretch myself taking care of my family.

I don't know how I got so off track. I knew the eternal priority was to serve in the name of Christ. To be less so He can be more. I knew the eternal priority was to find peace in my place in life. I knew the eternal priority was to have my needs met by God and not others.

I knew all that, yet my everyday practices showed anything but eternal priorities. I took my eyes of Christ and put them squarely on me.

What about you? Where are your eyes focused? Are you looking at what others should be doing for you, or are you focused on what you can be doing for others? Are you looking for your husband, children, friends, books, movies, TV, food, alcohol or drugs to meet your needs? Or, are you turning to Christ to meet your needs? (I gained ten pounds in the past two months trying to meet my imagined needs with food instead of Christ!)

The eternal priority is to be a humble servant, putting others before ourselves in the name of Christ. Do your everyday practices reflect it?

****Know that it is not God's will for you to be abused by anyone. If you are in an abusive relationship, please contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233).*

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Dig Deeper

Grab your notebook and Bible and get ready to explore! Take your time to wander through these questions over the next two weeks and let God speak to you.

1. Pray, asking God to open your eyes and heart to His truth.
2. What changes did you make as a result of the last lesson?
3. Read and reflect on Matthew 20:20-28 and Mark 10:35-45.
 - a. According to Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45, why did Jesus come to earth?
 - b. According to John 1:1, who is Jesus (the Word refers to Jesus)?
 - c. In 1 Timothy 6:15 and Revelation 19:16, God is called the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Contemplate and describe how Jesus might have ruled over the earth.
 - d. What does it mean to you that our God, who is infinitely more powerful than any ruler on earth, came to serve?
 - e. How does that knowledge change your thinking?
 - f. What will you do as a result?
 - g. What words do you have to share with God about this?
4. Read and reflect on Matthew 5:1-12 and Luke 6:17-26.
 - a. Based on these verses and the verses in question 3, how would you describe God's economy?
 - b. In the original Greek, the word translated "meek" in Matthew 5:5 means gentle, humble, considerate. Why do you think those people are "blessed" (happy in the Greek)?
 - c. Reread Matthew 5:12. How does this verse fit in with our theme of everyday practices / eternal priorities?
5.
 - a. Do you believe serving others is an eternal priority?
 - b. What do you need to change in your life so your everyday practices will reflect this eternal priority?
 - c. Be ready in two weeks to record the adjustments you have made at living out this eternal priority.

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On the journey as a willing servant,
Jennifer