



# FIRST-THINGS

## NOURISHMENT FIRST THINGS—part 6 FACILITATOR GUIDE

### FOCUSING ON PRIORITIES

Aerosol cans often warn “CAUTION: contents under PRESSURE.”

Do you think you need that label on you?

What kind of things bring pressure in your life? [Work, unruly kids, the news, slow drivers, dealing with the virus, worried about paying the bills, worried about adult children and grandchildren, etc.]

What do you do to handle the pressure?

In the midst of such pressures, there is one thing that will determine the course of your life:

YOUR PRIORITIES.

Your priorities determine how you SPEND YOUR TIME, WITH WHOM you spend your time, and HOW YOU MAKE DECISIONS.

Your priorities keep you from being battered around by the waves of pressure and help you to steer a clear course toward the proper destination.

What are some of the priorities you have set regarding your family?

What are some of the priorities you have set regarding your own self?

Your priorities regarding **GOD** is most crucial in guiding you in making choices that are grounded in faith rather than snap decisions that are made under pressure. If your priorities are clear, then you can respond to challenges in a way that lines up with what you value.

**What happens to someone who has undefined priorities? [Their choices may be haphazard when under pressure. ]**

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## **THE PRIORITIES OF DAVID**

King David was a man who knew what it meant to live under pressure. As the king of Israel, he knew the pressures of leadership. The higher and more responsible the leadership position, the greater are the pressures. David knew the pressure of problems!

During his reign, his son, Absalom, led a rebellion against him. David and his loyal followers had to flee for their lives. During that time David spent a short while in the northeastern portion of the wilderness of Judah before he crossed over the Jordan River. In that barren land, fleeing for his life from his own son, feeling disgraced and rejected, with an uncertain future, David penned Psalm 63.

### **Psalm 63: 1-11—**

- 1 God, You are my God; I eagerly seek You. I thirst for You; my body faints for You in a land that is dry, desolate, and without water.
- 2 So I gaze on You in the sanctuary to see Your strength and Your glory.
- 3 My lips will glorify You because Your faithful love is better than life.
- 4 So I will bless You as long as I live; at Your name, I will lift up my hands.
- 5 You satisfy me as with rich food; my mouth will praise You with joyful lips.
- 6 When I think of You as I lie on my bed, I meditate on You during the night watches
- 7 because You are my helper; I will rejoice in the shadow of Your wings.
- 8 I follow close to You; Your right hand holds on to me.
- 9 But those who intend to destroy my life will go into the depths of the earth.
- 10 They will be given over to the power of the sword; they will become a meal for jackals.
- 11 But the king will rejoice in God; all who swear by Him will boast, for the mouths of liars will be shut.

**What kind of pressure does history tell us that David was under? [Pressures of leadership (identity/job); pressures of conflict with his son (family); and pressures of enemies that threaten his life (criticism).]**

**From this psalm what can you determine was David's number one priority? [God]**

**Who was David's target audience for this psalm? [God alone.]**

**In this entire conversation, how many times does David ask to be rescued from his trouble? [Zero times. ]**

**What is David's focus instead of his problems? [He focuses on God's goodness, on His majesty, and voicing what he knows for sure that God is going to do to his enemies. The psalm shows us that David's priority was to seek the Lord. Likewise, seeking after God should be our most important priority.]**

**How does his example teach us to pray when we are having problems? [Praise God while we are going through difficult times. We are shown in the Scriptures that focussing on God's goodness is the way God moves on our part and strengthens our faith.]**

**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**—Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

**James 1:2-4**—Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

**Hebrews 13:15**—Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that openly profess his name.

**Acts 16:25-26**—About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose.

**David declared (in verse 1) that he eagerly sought God. What does it mean to “seek for God?”**

**TO SEEK AFTER GOD MEANS ALWAYS TO DESIRE MORE OF HIM**

**What things in your life would you really like to have more of? [Money, time, vacations, etc.]**

A young man ran after Socrates, calling, “Socrates, Socrates, can I be your disciple?” Socrates ignored him and walked out into the water. The man followed him and repeated the question. Socrates turned and without a word grabbed the young man and dunked him under the water and held him down until he knew that he couldn't take it any longer. The man came up gasping for air. Socrates replied, “When you desire the truth as much as you seek air, you can be my disciple.”

**What are some of the things you do to show how much you desire to know more about God?**

**COMPLACENCY is a deadly foe of all SPIRITUAL GROWTH.**

**How is the previous statement true? [It takes an intentional concentration to focus on God rather than your problems, wants, and desires. You have to put in time building your intimate relationship with God. ]**

**What are some things you like to eat but really aren't good for you?**

The fact is, it is easy to fill your life with things other than God. They might be enjoyable, but only God can nourish and satisfy our souls.

As David poured his heart out to God, he declared: "*Your faithful love is better than life.*" May we all come to know God's love as deeply as this!

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## **PRAYER TIME**

- Give God thanks for all that you are going through in your life currently. Especially acknowledge God's work in your life through the most difficult of situations.
- Take a moment to express to God who He is to you—His greatness, His character, and how your heart feels when you think about Him.
- Ask God to help you determine what priorities you need to have and make your decisions accordingly.
- Pray for strength to endure the hard trials of life with the heart of David. Focus on God and His will for your life. If He doesn't answer your prayers the way you hope, hang on and wait for God to do something better!