

Beach In A Bottle (Putting God First) (Priorities)

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. Mark 12:30

The Basic Bible Truth

The first commandment given to Israel in Exodus is to love the Lord their God. He must come first in every aspect of our lives. To do anything other than that is unacceptable. Nothing can come before Him. As we will discover that as we practice that truth, all of the other things that we may think important, will either fall away into obscurity and never be missed, or they will quite amazingly still fit into our lives, but in second or third place.

The Object

A Large Mouth Clear Jar

A Large Rock

A Small Box Of Gravel

A Small Box Of Sand

A Couple Of Liters Of Water

A Couple Of Cards With Prices Written On Them



This is presented as a high-pressure late night infomercial. The item offered for sale is the amazing “Beach in a Bottle”. No longer does anyone have to wait for vacation to enjoy the beach. Not if they own the “Beach in a Bottle”. I generally show them how this amazing product is packaged at the factory. We start with the big rock, placing it firmly and carefully into the jar. Then we pour in the gravel, filling it with as much as will fit. Then we fill it again, with sand. And then we fill it again with water. All of this to

allow you as the consumer the most “bang for your buck.” Watch one of these infomercials and work on your salesman patter. You can offer it at a reduced price today only—and look, we don’t stop there. We’ll give you two “Beach in a Bottle” kits for the price of one. And all you do is pay separate shipping and handling. You know the drill.

The Lesson

I present the amazing “Beach in a Bottle” infomercial, creating as much excitement as possible, just like the late night people. I offer the great deals at the end, and finish my presentation. I then stop and ask them to consider something very seriously. Where do they place God in their everyday lives...First?...Or Last? We then go through the presentation again, but this time I explain things in detail.

The large glass jar represents each of our lives. We have limitless options with which to fill our time. God created every human being with a free will. We have the opportunity to make choices and go any direction we want in life. We have only one life, though, and once time has passed us by, we cannot reclaim it and have a “do over.” Our best solution is to do it right early on. Priorities matter a great deal. We order our lives with our priorities, and it would be chaos if we didn’t. The Bible spells out for us very clearly, that God’s way is always the best way and that if we will follow His manual that He has given us for life, we will do well. And it follows then that we must read that manual if we are to know how to operate and maintain our lives as God recommends.

The big rock represents God. If the rock is not the first item placed in the jar, it will never fit. Likewise, in our lives, if God is not our first consideration, He may never make the cut at all. And that decision must be made each day. It is too easy to get up in the morning and just simply get caught up in the fast pace of the day and forget God is even there to help take some of the load of the day off of our shoulders. He has invited us to *cast all of our cares upon Him*. What an offer! For many people, a regular early morning time with God in His Word and prayer makes for a great day. I spend my time with Him in the evening. The Bible does not stipulate when during the day it should happen, but it should and must happen. If we call Him our friend, then we need to develop a relationship with Him, and those take time. Friends will not remain very close if there is no communication between them. They become merely acquaintances very quickly, and from there lose touch as well.

The gravel represents family. God created the family early on, and it is a basic part of human life. To ignore family is to put our lives out of the perfect order that God has directed for us. It begins when we as children are commanded to *obey our parents in the Lord*. It is of note to consider that the only story included in the Bible about the early years of Jesus as a child, centers on His obedience to His parents. The value of family continues as most of us grow up and begin to have families of our own. Raising our children in a Godly home is paramount. God chose Abraham to become the father of a nation called Israel. That was a great honor, and we look back at him with respect. It is interesting to note that God tells us in the Word why he was chosen for this challenge. God says specifically that He chose him because He knew that Abraham would be sure to tell his offspring what he had experienced. And that he would guide them along the path of life so that they would be in a position to share the same truth with their children. That is a legacy!

The sand represents friends and those we meet in life. They are to have a place of respect in our lives. Jesus modeled this idea perfectly. Beginning in the Old Testament, God informed Israel that His Messiah would come as a servant. The book of Mark points out more often than any of the other Gospels that Jesus was a man who had come to help people. We as Christians should model His behavior. But putting others before ourselves can be difficult. Our selfishness tends to rise to the occasion and push us to consider our own wants and desires first. Jesus dramatically touched the lives of probably thousands of people during His ministry here on earth. We may not have the healing touch that Jesus had, but we have

the ability to become involved in the lives of those around us and maybe even some that may just be walking by.

And then there is the water. That represents the stuff we would like to do with our lives. The truth is, as our walk with God matures, we have less and less desire for “me” time. Serving God fully is quite gratifying. Somehow I just can’t imagine Jesus playing golf just because He wanted an afternoon off from being Messiah. The Scripture says that He was a servant. He always thought about others and their needs first. The lives of the ten lepers would have been dramatically different if Jesus had been elsewhere restoring His first oxcart back to brand new condition. If any of these things is placed into the jar in the incorrect order, chaos results. But when placed correctly, it is always amazing how much room remains for the “me” stuff in life.

Living life God’s way is taught by the Bible. It works well. We just need to follow the instructions carefully: God first, family second, others third and ourselves, always last.

Scripture taken from the Holy Bible, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.