



“First things first!” my father used to say. While this usually meant doing what *he* wanted me to do rather than what I wanted to do, he had the vantage point of wisdom and experience. It was a valuable lesson which must be repeated every day, whether at home or at work. Where should we invest our resources of time and energy, our love and possessions? What matters most? What should my priorities be?

It used to be easier when our decisions were between two options: the good and the bad. There was usually someone there to help us choose. Today, the decisions are more difficult, more complex. As leaders, we must decide, often for ourselves, between the good and the best. Unless we are diligent in our work and dependent on our God, we will miss out on the best in our quest for the good.

What, then, is the *summum bonum*, the supreme good of humanity? Put another way, “What good will it be for a man,” Jesus asks, “if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?” (Matthew 16:26). For centuries, Christians have concluded that our chief end is “to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” Hours before His death, Jesus prayed to His Father, “I have brought You glory on earth by completing the work You gave me to do” (John 17:4).

John Maxwell asks three practical questions which help us determine our priorities: the work God gave us to do:

1. What is *required* of me? (What tasks must I assume in light of my work?)
2. What gives me the greatest *return*? (What produces the most results? Consider the 80/20 *Pareto Principle*.)
3. What gives me the greatest *reward*? (What is most fulfilling to me?)

There will always be too much to do than time will allow, and more opportunities than capable people to accomplish them. The Apostle Paul understood the conflict between the good and the best. “This *one* thing I do...” Paul says, not “These many things I *dabble* in!” So what is the one thing that truly matters today? Listen to your heavenly Father as *He* tells you what should be first!

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1. Which of the following is your higher priority? Did your answer change after reading the verses?

Worshipping God	or	Resolving conflict with a friend	Matthew 5:23-24
Meeting material needs	or	Meeting spiritual needs	Matthew 6:31-33
Discerning your needs	or	Discerning your friend’s needs	Matthew 7:3-5
Fulfilling family needs	or	Following Jesus	Matthew 8:21-22
Serving others	or	Being served by others	Matthew 20:25-28
Loving your neighbor	or	Loving your God	Matthew 22:36-40
Religious duty	or	Inner purity	Matthew 23:25-26

2. Under what circumstances would it be bad to do what is good?

Luke 10:38-42

Revelation 2:2-4

3. What should we pursue more than anything else? How will you do this today?

Jeremiah 9:22-23

“I have brought You glory on earth by completing the work You gave me to do.”

(John 17:4)