

What if We Had Our Priorities Straight?

Written by U.S Immigration News

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For many the end of every year always brings with it lots of stress and anxiety. It would seem that often times even our best efforts to try to make our Christmas and New Year celebrations a time of joy and festivities, are not enough to erase the pressures of the season. Shopping in crowded malls, maneuvering through traffic, trying to stretch dollars and maxing out credit cards to make the “season bright” for ourselves and our loved ones is stressful. Along the way, we lose our joy and the celebration seems way too short-lived in comparison to the amount of energy and time invested. A mixed-up priorities scale is the culprit for a lot of the stress we experience. The truth is that we overwork and overdo, trying to fulfill everyone’s expectation. In the end, very little is gained as the unfulfilled expectations remain.

We live in a high-paced fast-speed world. Work and “busy work” have crowded our days, and have become our top priorities. Even during those times when we should be able to sit back and relax and enjoy the moment, we can’t. We are too busy planning and thinking about the next thing we must do. As a result, we have unintentionally neglected the three most important elements of our priorities scale: God, ourselves, and family.

However, we have learned to play the compensation game well. When tragedy strikes or if things suddenly go wrong, we try to compensate by giving God our undivided attention. This is why in funeral services often the loudest mourners are the people who did not take the time to show the one who is now dead that they cared enough. It really doesn’t matter how long and loud we mourn we have eternally missed the opportunity to show that we cared.

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A resident of New York, I was awed by the sudden burst of spirituality that this city went through after the September 11 attacks. Churches were overflowing; people were praying at their work places; even in school where prayer is prohibited, teachers we encouraged to allow a few moments of spiritual reflection to help students cope with the tragedy. But, months later it was back to business as usual. It seems that unless we are struck by tragedy there is little time for peaceful meditation and gratitude.

The same happens within family. Often times because we allow life to get in the way, we fail to keep in touch with each other as we should. Not until there is a funeral or a wedding do we find ourselves obligated to reconnect. And even with those family members we live with, we only go through the motions required for having to share the same living space. Parents often feel that putting a roof over their children's heads, placing food on the table and getting clothes on their backs is enough. Yet, parents can provide all of this and children will still go astray and seek to find emotional connection they don't receive at home in gangs and crooked friends.

When it comes to taking care of self, we do the same. We do not eat for health and self-preservation but for sport. Exercise is just out of the question, there is simply no time. We allow our minds to be exposed to toxic people and entertainment. We become addicted to poisonous substances and habits as a way of escape. We have several jobs, sleep little, and have no meaningful human connections that can uplift us emotionally. We have become the proverbial rats spinning in the rat race. Life is often meaningless and pointless and when those few opportunities come around to relax, enjoy and celebrate with family and friends, we can't do it. So we spoil our own joy by running around buying things and doing things and going to activities that in the end we do not really enjoy.

Is it any wonder that we keep running around in the same circles of spiritual emptiness, physical

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lethargy, and emotional disconnect? We have created those circles for ourselves and we just keep moving from one deadly circle to another.

What if we were to try to refocus? One day at a time. What if we took the time to write a “To Do List” that is meaningful. Let’s write in activities that include the right order of priorities: GOD – SELF - OTHERS.

What activities can we do to connect with God more? Do we need to start reading the Bible? Do we need to go to church more? Do we need to join a Bible study group? Do we need to listen to God more through prayer?

What activities can we do to connect with ourselves more? Do we need to find the time to go out and exercise and get in shape? Do we need to invest in some “me time” and just sit back with a cup of tea, a good book and relax? Do we need to revisit that hobby that we loved doing but abandoned because there was no time?

What do activities do we need to connect with those closest to us more? Do we need to stop “talking at” our children and listen to them more? Do we need to invest in family time and really just enjoy being with each other? Do we need to work out schedules where all the family sits and has dinner together at least 3 times a week?

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It is possible to enjoy life and celebrate the good times when they come, but for this to happen we must make a conscious effort to re-prioritize. The people that really matter must always come first, everything else takes a second place. Perhaps if we begin to write that list today, by the time 2011 rolls around we could already be enjoying the benefits of a much more fulfilling life.

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