

## A successful year begins with succinct priorities

Contributed by REV. DR. WALTER T. RICHARDSON  
Sunday, 13 January 2013  
Last Updated Sunday, 13 January 2013

You must keep this ordinance at the appointed time year after year. — Exodus 13:10. Several years ago I found a book in the bargain section of a bookstore and the title caught my attention. The price was perfect and it was a rather thin book, so I bought it without even reading the introduction. It was entitled Perilous Pursuits.

Once I got home, I read the book from start to finish without stopping and now I re-read it at least twice a year but always at the beginning of a new year. I just finished reading it again as I prepare for 2013.

Joe Stowell, the author, quotes the oft-referenced Westminster Shorter Catechism which concludes “man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” He then raises the question, “Why are we so consumed with glorifying ourselves and seeking enjoyment in and for ourselves apart from Him?”

Perhaps this is the reason we often find life so disappointing, disruptive, dangerous and displeasing. So maybe the best thing for us to do is constantly review our journey and revamp and revise any actions or even thoughts that contradict what we know may not be important for our purpose for living.

A wonderful way to begin each year, and every new season, is by setting priorities. So take time today or spend some time over the next week or so to sit down and figure out what you want your priorities to be — at work and in life.

What’s most important to you? What goals are most important? What do you want your life to look like? Who is most important? Reflect on these things and then write down your top two or three priorities. Know that you can’t practically deal with more than two or three anyway and if you keep things simple, it’ll allow you to truly focus on these priorities. However, I say emphatically the first priority has to be about God.

In the Hebrew

Scriptures, Moses is commanded by the Lord to consecrate the first born, the first fruits and the first part of the day. There seems to be scriptural proof that when we devote our first things to the Lord, those things that we are blessed with that come behind are blessed as well. A pattern has been set. Those who seek personal significance and do not make spiritual priorities important are typically unable to serve, unavailable to sacrifice, unwilling to suffer and unable to surrender.

The

self-significance addiction is aided and abetted by a phenomenally powerful trio of surging inner energies called pleasure, pride and passion. And the only medicine for such an addiction is for one to seek personal purity and a powerful partnership with Him. What a powerful corrective to a dangerous current cultural trend where finding one's self is applauded as the highest virtue.

Jesus leaves a wonderful

lesson in His first public sermon, recorded in Matthew 6:33, when He says, "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." Joy is possible, satisfaction is attainable and prosperity is promised when we advance His kingdom.

To paraphrase Mother Theresa, let us more and more insist on raising funds of love, of kindness, of understanding, of peace — first. Money will come if we seek first the Kingdom of God; the rest will be given. Mark Twain said, "The secret of getting ahead is getting started. The secret of getting started is breaking your complex overwhelming tasks into small manageable tasks, and then starting on the first one." I pray for a productive and prosperous year for each of you.

Walter

T. Richardson is pastor-emeritus of Sweet Home Missionary Baptist Church in South Miami-Dade County and chairman of the Miami-Dade Community Relations Board. He may be contacted at [wtrichardson@Bellsouth.net](mailto:wtrichardson@Bellsouth.net). Website: [WTRMinistries.com](http://WTRMinistries.com)