

**Priorities**  
*(Priority Clarification)*

**Point of the Assignment:** To identify where your priorities are. 2) To identify what you are willing to sacrifice in order to maintain your priorities. 3) To help you apply your prioritization process to your everyday life so that you can achieve your goals.

Learning how to prioritize is often difficult because it usually involves sacrifice. People often want to avoid being in stressful situations such as losing a job or source of income, emergency evacuation orders, or other crisis because the need to sacrifice can be painful. However, they fail to realize that such situations provide us an opportunity to grow in that they usually force us to evaluate what is important to us, our priorities, and to consider what we are willing to sacrifice to maintain those priorities. As a student doing this assignment, you are lucky! ☺ You are not facing an actual hardship situation; instead you only need to **imagine** you are facing an emergency to help you focus. Do this by taking the following steps:

**Step 1: Values Clarification:**

Spend a few minutes reflecting on that which is most important to you. To help you with this process, imagine that you were told that you were to lose everything in your world because you are about to be stranded on a deserted island. *(The implication here is that while you will lose everything, you may have an opportunity to replace some things in your new environment such as food and shelter.)* Then you were told you could keep one thing. What would it be? Would it be a person? Would it be an object (food, shelter, clothing, cell phone, book, bible, etc.)? Would it be an idea? (Health, independence, education, security, spiritual life, etc.). List that item below:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

Now imagine that you were allowed to have a second thing. What would it be?

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Continue through your top five items.

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

**STEP 2: Sacrifice Clarification**

Now reverse the process and imagine you were told that you have too many distractions in your life and that something needs to go. What would it be? Just as before, it can be a person, thing or a concept *(distracting friend, cell phone, partying, independence, pride, toys, etc.)*. **(Note: These are new things -- NOT be the same items as above. This list represents what you are willing to give up so that you do NOT need to sacrifice the items above.)**

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1. \_\_\_\_\_

Now imagine that you were expected to give up a second thing. What would it be?

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Continue through your top five items.

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

The first list represents what is most important to your life. The second list represents those things that are not very important to you.

Long-Term Priority Setting is about **constantly keeping in the forefront of your mind what you have determined to be important**. When life gets full and you feel as if you are being pulled in too many different directions at once and don't know where to begin, then it is time to remember what you have determined to be your priorities/values. The only true secret to making difficult decisions is to always ask the following questions:

What is Priority Number 1? \_\_\_\_\_

What is Priority Number 2? \_\_\_\_\_

What is Priority Number 3? \_\_\_\_\_

What is Priority Number 4? \_\_\_\_\_

What is Priority Number 5? \_\_\_\_\_

Then remember not to let them get out of sync. In other words, do not let Priority #5 distract you from Priority #1. If it does, then Priority #5 needs to defer to Priority #1.

**Note: In order to succeed in achieving your educational goals, school needs to be in at least your top three priorities. If not, you will be unlikely to succeed at your goals. Now, identify what number did you rank school? \_\_\_\_\_. If it is lower than #3, then you should reassess your priority ranking system above or ask yourself if you really want an education.**

If you find that there aren't enough of your resources or you to go around, then you need to determine what you are willing to sacrifice. The list of things you are willing to give up should give you a clue of those things that are not very important to you. Again, do what you did with the priorities:

What is Sacrifice Item Number 1? \_\_\_\_\_

What is Sacrifice Item Number 2? \_\_\_\_\_

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What is Sacrifice Item Number 3? \_\_\_\_\_

What is Sacrifice Item Number 4? \_\_\_\_\_

What is Sacrifice Item Number 5? \_\_\_\_\_

**Temporary Prioritizing System:**

Sometimes prioritizing does not require that you actually permanently sacrifice items, but rather that you simply **delay or post-pone something** for one hour, one day, one month, one year, until the end of the semester, until you are through with school, or even until the kids are grown and self sufficient. In other words, learning to say, “Right now, I need to focus on \_\_\_\_\_, and this other item needs to wait until ...”

Your temporary prioritizing system should be consistent with your season of life. (*See “Discerning Seasons” assignment.*)

To help you do this, take a few minutes to think about a recent time when you had several things that needed your attention at the same time, and you had difficulty deciding where to put your energy. (*Hint: A good example would be a time when you knew you should be working on homework, but found yourself distracted by other things.*)

**STEP 1:** List those items that were competing for your attention. Identify whether it is a Covey’s Quadrant I (Urgent/Important), Quadrant II (Not Urgent/Important), Quadrant III (Urgent/Not Important) or Quadrant IV (Not Urgent/Not Important). Also be sure to mention what the consequences would be if you **DO NOT** drop everything and do it right now.

**Distraction                      Quadrant #      Possible Consequences of Delaying Action**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**STEP 2:** With these lists above, think about which of those items above you can put off for a while. (*List at least three different items below*):

I can deal with the following items later:

1. I will do this item in one hour (*or after finish homework*): \_\_\_\_\_
2. I will put off this item until tomorrow: \_\_\_\_\_
3. I will put off this item until next week: \_\_\_\_\_
4. I will put off this item until next month: \_\_\_\_\_
5. I will put off this item until the end of the semester (*my break time*): \_\_\_\_\_
6. I will put off this item until (*other more convenient time*): \_\_\_\_\_

**Test your understanding:**

**What is the main point of this assignment?**

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**Why were you expected to do this exercise?**

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**What type of person would need to do this exercise?**

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**How well do you fit the profile of the person for whom this assignment was created?**

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**Reflection:** (*Write down your response after completing this assignment.*)

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