

Based on What Criterion, Should We Set Our Priorities in Life?

Everyone's Priorities in Life Determine Her Value

What are your priorities in life? If you were to write a list of your priorities in life and innermost desires, what or who would be at the top of your list? How about other items? Can you say according to what standards and criteria you have prioritized your list? Do you think that determining the priorities in life has its own framework and limits? Or is it subjective and a matter of taste?

Planning and prioritizing desires are among the most difficult tasks in the world, especially if we do not know their principles and rules and do not have a clear framework for them. Each of us has an inner set of talents and interests which we want to develop and we wish to be the best in everything, and this arises from our desire for infinity and perfectionism. This feeling leads us to frequent planning and goal setting to determine our priorities in life. However, since most of us do not know ourselves as a "human being" and do not have a true definition of ourselves, we usually set our priorities based on our inanimate, vegetative, animal, or intellectual dimensions, not our true self. Since many of our passionate desires are not compatible with our human and divine dignity, we lose our interest in them or leave them half-finished after a while. Even if we try or achieve them, we would come to the conclusion that they were not worth the time we spent and they were not such a big deal! A case in point is the old notebooks inside our closets, which were once loaded with our dreamiest wishes and loftiest ideals. But now that we look at them after years, they make us laugh

at our thoughts. That is because we feel our thoughts were so limited and our priorities in life were really childish back then!

Is Setting Priorities in Life a Matter of Taste?

Many modern scholars and psychologists consider setting priorities in life as a personal affair and a matter of taste. They believe that everyone should determine her priorities and adjust her [love hierarchy](#) according to her value system and the type of her talents and interests. This way of thinking stems from the same wrong humanology that we talked about in the basic course, and it is very dangerous. That is because it makes us choose priorities and dedicate our lives to things that are not really priorities and are not in line with the purpose of our creation. In fact, this way of setting priorities is a kind of misdirecting people.

If being a "human being" has a specific definition, which it has, and if the human has a specific goal in the world of creation, which he has, so her priorities in life cannot be anything or anyone, and she cannot waste her precious life on any worthless or limited goal that expires and perishes in this world. Accordingly, the first priority of all of us and the beloved who is worth living for should be something that is compatible with our true self and the purpose of our creation. It must be something which, upon attainment, can guarantee our world and hereafter thoroughly. But what is this precious beloved, and on what basis should we set up our priorities and desires?

Setting Priorities Based on the Mathematics of Human Existence

The human being is not an ordinary creature; rather, we are eternal, complex, and multifaceted beings, and only God, our Creator, knows us precisely and is aware of all the dimensions of our existence. Considering this, we should ask God Himself what our priorities in life are. We should not consult the individuals or schools whose entire information about the human being is only limited to our physical dimension and worldly life. However, how does God introduce priorities in life?

Quran, as the [charter of creation](#) and a book designed on the basis of the mathematics of the human soul, provides us with a key rule and formula about identifying our priorities in life. This rule is stated in verse 24 of Surah *At-Tawbah* as follows:

Say, 'If your parents, and your children, and your siblings, and your spouses, and your relatives, and the wealth you have acquired, and a business you worry about, and homes you love, are more dear to you than God, and His Messenger, and the struggle in His cause, then wait until God executes His judgment.' God does not guide the sinful people.

This rule is a wonderful guideline for engineering and prioritizing our beloveds, and it simultaneously introduces two categories of beloveds that a person's heart can have a tendency toward. The first group are the earthly and fake beloveds and the second group are the real and authentic beloveds. According to this rule, only an individual who has three beloveds at the top of her beloveds and priorities can have a sound heart and a human inward self:

- God
- The Household of Prophet Muhammad (PBUT)

- *Jihad* (Struggle in the way of God)

Outside of this framework, if any other beloved- including inanimate beloveds such as money and wealth, vegetative beloveds such as beauty and physical strength, animal beloveds such as family and social status, and intellectual beloveds such as science and knowledge- becomes our top priority, we will lose our balance and become engaged in *Fisq*. "*Fasiq*" means someone whose personality has turned upside down and who has lost her inward human self.

According to this benchmark, as much as it is unnatural for a sheep to eat meat and a cat to eat grass, one who loves inanimate, vegetative, animal, and intellectual beloveds more than God, the Household of the Prophet, and *Jihad* is unbalanced and unnatural. The verse mentioned above is the most reliable instruction for planning and achieving material and spiritual success because it is designed in accordance with the structure of the soul and the purpose of human creation, and all the criteria of happiness in this world and the hereafter are included in it.

Every Person's Priorities Determine Her Value

As we stated before, the whole character and value of a human being depends on the beloveds of her heart. It depends on what things or people her heart beats for, what issues fuel her longings and dreams, and where her imagination flies in solitude.

The heart is honest and never lies to its owner. We cannot love someone or something and hide this love. On the other hand, we cannot hate someone or

something and hide this hatred. When we are around others, it is common for us to put on a mask and present a different picture of ourselves, but in solitude and when we are face-to-face with our own truth, all our love and hatred pour out and our inner inward state reveals itself. As a result, each of us can exactly weigh our self-worth by looking at ourselves and what we are attached to.

A person whose whole dream is to have a car with the most high-tech features is as valuable as that car. A person whose dream is to become a doctor or an engineer and secure prestigious academic positions is equated in value to those positions. And the one whose deepest desire is to become like God and to gain His satisfaction is as valuable as God Himself!

Managing the heart and regulating its love hierarchy is so important that our loves and hatreds, called [Tawalla and Tabarra](#) in *Furu al-Deen* (branches of religion), are considered as one of the most important indicators that determine whether people are religious or not. Furthermore, it is even stated that religion is nothing but love and hatred.¹

The system of punishment and reward in the hereafter is also set based on the heart, not on the appearance of deeds. With this in mind, in order to succeed in our planning and goal setting, before doing anything else, we must first determine the top priority of our lives and the main beloveds of our hearts, and then prioritize our other desires and interests.

According to the rule introduced in the Quran, it does not matter how much each of us has succeeded in attaining inanimate, vegetative, animal, and intellectual

¹. "The essence of religion is nothing but love and hatred." (*Tafsir Furat Kufi*, p. 430)

perfections, or how many religious and holy deeds we perform. What is important is who or what dominates our heart.

The one who is happy when the four-*rak'ah*² prayer becomes a two-*rak'ah* prayer while traveling, the one who fasts with hatred and reads the Quran reluctantly, the one who observes *hijab* out of obligation and performs the *Hajj* pilgrimage to compete with others, the one who fears investing in religious causes and lacks courage for *Jihad* in the way of God, the one who does not miss God and his heavenly family, i.e., the Household of the Prophet (PBUT), and the one who hates mosques, shrines, saying *zikh*, and reciting supplications, the one who dresses himself like clergymen with the intention of supremacy and excellence, not to be close to God, and in a word, the one whose heart is busy with low-level perfections or sacred religious appearances and forms instead of being devoted to God does not have a human inward self and is suffering from inversion of personality and *Fisq*. We will talk more about the concept of *Fisq* in the future.

In this lesson, we came to understand that it is our supra-rational desires and priorities which determine our true value.

². *Rak'ah* is an integral component of the Islamic prayer, *Salah*. It represents a unit or cycle of specific movements and recitations that comprise a portion of the overall prayer. Each *Rak'ah* follows a defined sequence of bodily postures and spoken or recited prayers, and the number of *Rak'ahs* varies depending on the time of day and the specific prayer being performed.