



FIRST LAY TALK

TALK #1 PRIORITY

Overview of All Talks

One message is delivered during The Walk to Emmaus 72-hour experience; it is communicated throughout the music, meals, clergy meditations, attitudes and actions of the team members, and the talks. You have been selected to deliver one of the 15 talks. In reality, you will deliver 1/15 of the Emmaus talk—one message, fifteen presenters.

Prepare your talk using the outlines provided. In general, 2/3 of your presentation will come from the outlines; the remaining 1/3 will come from your original insights and personal experience.

The talks are sequenced in a defined order; each builds on the next to provide pilgrims with the complete message of Emmaus. Do not try to cover more than your assigned topic. The expanded outline intends to provide a solid understanding of the material from which your talk will be developed. The abbreviated outline helps you see the progression of the main points. *Neither outline is a script*; you will need to add personal examples to give life to the content and make it real to the hearers. Use visual aids to help convey the main points.

The Holy Spirit, as well as feedback from the team after your talk preview, will provide additional guidance for your unique presentation of this talk. Once you incorporate the suggestions offered after your preview, your presentation no longer belongs just to you but to the team God is forming to deliver the Emmaus message.

This presentation is allotted a maximum of 20 to 25 minutes. Please honor the time limit out of a spirit of cooperation, charity, good stewardship of time, and consideration for the hearers.

Overview for Speaker

The PRIORITY talk, while based on the Bible and on God, does not mention either. The talk aims to present information that will challenge pilgrims to come to understand that Jesus Christ is their priority in life.

The purposes of this talk are to show the importance of setting a priority for one's life and to cause pilgrims to reflect on their priorities. The talk will raise their awareness of what they have allowed to occupy the center of their lives and will help them begin to reconsider what they want their priority to be.

Set the stage by pointing out one thing that distinguishes human beings from the rest of creation—our freedom to decide, to respond creatively to our life situations, to set priorities for our lives. Lighthearted comparisons between the human capacity to establish priorities and the lesser freedom of rocks, plants, or other animals to do so are sometimes helpful in drawing attention to the human potential. Remember that this is not a lecture on biology or anthropology, so avoid getting bogged down in spelling out differences between minerals, plants, and animals. The talk is about the human capacity for setting priorities and the importance of every person having a priority that will give direction and meaning to life.

In discussing priorities, avoid mentioning God, Christ, salvation, or the usual theological words. This is because the talk should not even imply what the participants' priorities ought to be. This talk does not give answers; it raises a question: *What is your priority?* The priority of a Christian will be addressed in the talks to follow.

This does not make the talk on priority less important than other talks. On the contrary, a good PRIORITY talk can make the difference in opening participants' minds and hearts at the outset of the weekend to the possibility of setting a new priority. The PRIORITY talk prepares the soil for pilgrims to receive the message of the Emmaus weekend and the call to reestablish Jesus Christ as the center.

The talk should be reasonable, speaking to the common sense and experience of the participants. A helpful way to illustrate the points of this talk may be a story, anecdote, or personal experience. Keep the talk light and humorous, as it will set the tone for the day.

This talk is scheduled for Friday at 9:15 a.m.

Expanded Outline: PRIORITY

Introduction (1-2 minutes)

Choose a story or experience from your life that is brief, personal, and related to the main point of this talk. If you cannot think of an appropriate introduction, consult the Lay Director or Spiritual Director for assistance. A good introduction will engage the hearts, minds, and attention of pilgrims and move them into the theme of this talk. For example, you might do the following:

Option 1: Tell about a time when you did not have a clear focus and then realized that you needed to make a conscious decision to change things for the better. Make the story relate to ordinary life; do not mention God or the Bible.

Option 2: Go immediately to the content below.

My name is _____, and the title of this talk is PRIORITY.

I. Initial Questions and Insights

A. During the silence last night, you may have pondered your relationships, some need or concern, what you are doing with your life, or even what you are doing here this weekend. In so doing, you may have found yourself reflecting on what has been and is now important to you.

1. The purpose of this talk is to invite you to identify your priority in life and to remind you that you have the power to establish the priorities that will direct your life.
2. Consider this question for a moment: What is your priority in life?

B. School children learn that the created order is organized into three primary divisions: the mineral kingdom, the plant kingdom, and the animal kingdom. Human beings are members of the animal kingdom.

One characteristic that distinguishes humankind from rocks, plants, and animals is the degree of freedom we have to make decisions about our lives and about the ends for which we will live. In other words, human beings alone have the capacity to establish their own priorities. We are not created to be slaves to the forces of nature and instinct.

C. This freedom is our capacity to respond creatively and purposefully to our environment, circumstances, and limited time on earth; the capacity to rise above mere instinctual responses; the power to exercise some control over our lives.

- D. This freedom to set our priorities is our greatest power. If we want to realize our potential as human beings, we owe it to ourselves to use this power and to use it consciously and wisely.
- E. We need to bring all of our human capacities to the service of this freedom.
 - 1. *Imagination*—the capacity to envision possibilities and alternatives, dream dreams, to have ideals, and long for a better life.
 - 2. *Intelligence*—the ability to think, reason, evaluate, and plan.
 - 3. *Will*—the resolve to seek after a desired goal, to stick with a chosen course of action, to not be bound by impulse or instinct, and to transcend the givens of an inherited situation.
- F. When one sees the possibilities (imagination), evaluates the options (intelligence), resolves to move toward a desired end (will), and sets out to accomplish it (action), one is exercising the power and freedom to choose a priority.

II. What is a priority?

- A. Webster's *New Collegiate Dictionary* defines *priority* like this:
 - 1. Superiority in rank, position, or privilege.
 - 2. A preferential rating.
 - 3. Something given or meriting attention before competing alternatives.
- B. In simple terms, a priority is something (a value, goal, relationship, cause, etc.) of leading importance in your life.
 - 1. A priority is what you live for, what gives focus to your life.
 - 2. A priority is the shaping value around which the rest of your life tends to be ordered, for better or for worse.
 - 3. A priority is whatever has first claim on your time, energy, and resources.
 - 4. A priority is something you consistently prefer to (or feel you must) do, have, work toward, think about, or spend money on, above other possibilities.
 - 5. A priority is either consciously chosen or set for us by outside circumstances.
- C. Even if you have many priorities, one priority usually takes precedence over the others.

- D. A priority consists of a dynamic interaction among values, beliefs, ideals, and commitment.

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \text{Values} & + & \text{Beliefs} & + & \text{Ideals} & + & \text{Commitment} & = & \text{Priority} \\ \text{(what I love} & & \text{(what I believe is} & & \text{(what I want for} & & \text{(what I am willing} & & \\ \text{and cherish)} & & \text{true, right, and} & & \text{self, others,} & & \text{to do, act on, work} & & \\ & & \text{trustworthy)} & & \text{my dreams/hopes)} & & \text{toward)} & & \end{array}$$

III. Qualities of an Authentic Priority

- A. *It is consciously chosen.* Everyone has some priority in practice. But the question is: Have you set your own priorities on the basis of reflection and decision about what kind of life you want to have lived? Or have you let your priorities be set for you by expectations of others, circumstances, convenience, or culture? Choosing (or not choosing) an authentic priority for yourself will greatly influence the quality of your life.
- B. *It gives your life purpose, direction, and meaning.* A person with priorities can grow; a life with priorities can move one toward wholeness and fulfillment. A life without priorities is aimless and may feel useless.
- C. *It gives you enthusiasm, energy, and motivation.* A life without priorities can lead to listlessness and even depression. If a priority does not motivate you to grow and reach for your goals, it is not much of a priority.
- D. *It frees you from the forces of circumstance, expectation, and habit* to take a new relationship to life, to be your true self, to go somewhere with your life. A priority is like a sailboat's rudder and keel, which keep the boat on course. The Greek philosopher Archimedes once said, "Give me a place to stand on, and I will move the earth."¹
- E. *It is realistic.* A priority must be attainable. An unrealistic priority will lead to frustration and disappointment in life.

IV. What is your priority?

- A. There are many kinds of priorities—as many kinds as there are people. Priorities change as people grow and change.
- B. You can set your own priority, or you can let others determine your priority for you. Some examples of priority are wealth, recognition, happiness, perfection, peace, one-self, others, one's country, and many more.
- C. Discover what your priorities are by asking yourself these questions:
1. What do you think about?
 2. How do you spend your money?

3. How do you spend your time?

That is your priority!

1. E. J. Dijksterhuis, *Archimedes*, trans. C. Dikshoorn (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), 15.

Abbreviated Outline:

PRIORITY

Introduction (1-2 minutes)

My name is _____, and the title of this talk is PRIORITY.

I. Initial Questions and Insights

- A. During the silence last night, you may have reflected on your priorities—what has been and is now important to you. The purpose of this talk is to raise this question and remind you that you can set your own priorities. What is your priority in life?
- B. One of the characteristics that distinguishes humankind from rocks, plants, and other animals is the degree of freedom we have to establish our own priorities.
- C. This freedom is our capacity to respond creatively and purposefully to our environment, circumstances, and our limited time on earth; the capacity to rise above mere instinctual commands; the power to exercise some control over our lives.
- D. This freedom to set priorities is our greatest power. We owe it to ourselves to use this power consciously and wisely—if we want to realize our potential as human beings.
- E. In order to do so, we need to bring all of our human capacities to the service of this freedom: (1) imagination, (2) intelligence, and (3) will.
- F. When one sees the possibilities (imagination), evaluates the options (intelligence), resolves to move toward a desired end (will), and sets out to accomplish it (action), one is exercising the power and freedom to choose a priority.

II. What is a priority?

- A. Dictionary definitions:
 - superiority in rank, position, or privilege
 - a preferential rating
 - something given or meriting attention before competing alternatives
- B. A priority is something of leading importance in your life; something for which you live; the shaping value; something that has first claim on you and your resources.
- C. A priority is something everyone has in practice.

- D. Generally, one priority takes precedence over the others.
- E. A priority consists of an interaction among:

Values + Beliefs + Ideals + Commitment = A Priority

III. Qualities of an Authentic Priority

- A. A priority is consciously chosen.
- B. It gives your life purpose, direction, and meaning.
- C. It gives you enthusiasm, energy, and motivation.
- D. It frees you from the forces of circumstance, expectation, and habit.
- E. It is realistic.

IV. What is your priority?

- A. There are many kinds of priorities. Priorities change as we grow and change.
- B. Have you set your own priorities, or have you let them be set for you?
- C. Discover your priorities by asking yourself these three questions:
 - 1. What do you think about?
 - 2. How do you spend your money?
 - 3. How do you spend your time?

That is your priority!