



# PWOC

Protestant Women of the Chapel

Materials:

- glass quart jar
- 2-3 2" rocks
- 5-7 stones
- uncooked rice
- jelly beans or mini-marshmallows

## WORKSHOP: PRIORITIES

Compiled by Beth Mills

### LEADER'S GUIDE

**RELEVANCE:** A leader must be prepared to stay on course. We stay the course by setting key priorities and exercising self-discipline.

*Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. (1 Cor. 9:24; NKJV) We will discuss and explore ways to keep focused so that we "obtain the prize."*

**CONTEXT:** This topic is appropriate for any PWOC audience, but may be especially useful for those taking on new leadership roles (i.e. new board, new Bible study facilitators). Keep in mind that our ladies hold many, many leadership positions beyond PWOC. They are leaders in their homes, their chapels, their units and their jobs. For that reason, this topic could be very appropriate for a morning devotion for the entire PWOC body.

**TIME:** 45 minutes

**HOOK YOUR AUDIENCE:** (5 minutes)

*A HOOK that applies directly to the participants' lives will help to capture their interest and attention. Getting your group talking and interacting early in your lesson will pay dividends.*



*This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 444 Castro Street, Suite 900, Mountain View, California, 94041.*

*Hold a 2-minute discussion:*

**Turn to a neighbor and fill in the blank:**

**"If I had more time I would \_\_\_\_\_."**

**You can fill this blank with as much as you'd like. You'll have the opportunity to share some of your responses with the whole group.**

*Take a few minutes to allow people to share their responses.*

*One truth to highlight here is that even if we had more than 24 hours per day, we would likely fill them beyond capacity. We don't need more time; we need more focus with the time we've been given.*

*Listening tends to be one of the weaker ways we take in information. Some people are great auditory learners, but most need to have visual helps, some movement/ involvement, or another sensory stimulus in order to be fully engaged. Consider using visual aids for lengthy listening portions. Watch body language—are you losing them? How can you bring them back? Do you need another HOOK than can quickly recapture their attention? Could some of the information take the form of a discussion with a partner or small group? What tools will you give them to take in this information?*

**MAKE YOUR POINT:** (5 minutes)

**In 1 Corinthians, Paul writes this: "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it." Running was one of the most popular events of the Olympic Games. The place prepared for the race was called the stadium, an oblong area with a straight wall across the starting end and a rounded, entirely closed end which marked the end of the racing field. It was at this end that the judge sat holding the prize for the winner. The eyes of the competitors remained fixed on him. The runners knew that the moment they allowed distractions to divert their attention from the goal, their speed slackened and they were in danger of being overtaken.**

**In our own leadership race, we must also keep our eyes on the goal so we can run straight and true, but it's so easy to become distracted by the many tasks on our to-do lists. We often feel pulled in many directions at once. Everyone and everything demands our time. The only way we can truly succeed is to submit**



*This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 444 Castro Street, Suite 900, Mountain View, California, 94041.*

everything to God and allow His Spirit to guide our steps. Psalm 37:23-24 (NASB) says, "The steps of a man are established by the Lord, and He delights in his way. When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong, because the Lord is the One who holds his hand." Notice it says, "When he falls" rather than "Ifhe falls". We aren't perfect, and we're not always going to get it right. We're sure to fall along the way; it's par for the course. But God promises we won't be hurled headlong, or left sprawling in the dirt! And, even more comforting, He is the One who holds our hand.

John 15:5 (NIV) says: "I am the vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me, you can do nothing." This verse establishes an essential priority for the believer – *abiding* with Christ. Staying connected to Jesus first and foremost and humbly following His lead, keeps us doing what He has created us for, with just the characteristics He would use if He were doing it in our place. Yet many of us face a huge temptation to focus on what *others* want us to do, added onto what we must necessarily do to care for our families and manage our households, rather than on what God has *called* us to do. God's name is 'I AM,' and we are to reflect His image. How are we to reflect the image of the great "I AM" when we are running with an "I DO" mentality? Allowing God to order our steps and align our priorities, keeps us from spiritual, physical or emotional burnout.

Spending time in prayer, worship, and Bible study are essential for your physical and spiritual health, your endurance and excellence in leadership. Prayer is the place where God will bring order to your day, give you creative ideas, and give you peace and wisdom to face whatever you may face in a given day. According to Andrew Murray, "Time spent in prayer will yield more than that given to work....Prayer opens the way for God Himself to do His work in us and through us." You may be saying about now, "Yes, I believe what you're saying, but I'm so busy with everything, I don't have that kind of time to spend in prayer and study. I have kids to get to school (or to homeschool), groceries to buy, soccer practice, dance, guitar lessons, dishes, laundry..." and your list goes on.



**ILLUSTRATE YOUR POINT:** (10 minutes)

**Let's do an experiment. Here we have a jar, some rice, some small stones, and a few big rocks. Do you think all these will fit in this small jar? If the jar represents one day in your life, let's say the rice represents all the little things you have to do each day to keep your family up and running.**

*Ask the women to call out some of the errands and things they do each day while you pour the rice into the jar.*

**The stones are a bit more important- let's say these are projects related to your leadership responsibilities, special projects for and with your family, your unit, or your chapel or church.**

*Ask the women to call out examples of special projects, leadership responsibilities, etc. while you put the stones in the jar.*

**Finally, we have the rocks, which are the most important, time spent with God in prayer and Bible study, one or two things the Lord has impressed upon you to get done that day.**

*If you've measured your rice and stones correctly prior to this demonstration, there should be no more room left in the jar for the large stones.*

**Now let's dump this all out and follow God's design for setting priorities. First we put in time spent with God in prayer and Bible study, followed by the one or two things He has impressed upon us to get done today. Now, the stones for projects and the rice can be put in together, and it all fits in the time frame we've been given. God has given us all the time we need, and He has helped us prioritize our activities to make it all work.**

**What are your thoughts?**

*Allow women to share some of their thoughts. Build on what they offer by asking open-ended questions which will cause them to go deeper in their thinking. Maybe ask a question like: "Does my value in God's eyes go up when my priorities are straight?" (no) "Then what's the point? Why does He care about my personal schedule?" Let them grapple a little bit with the "why." A shallow response to this lesson would be, "I really should read my Bible and pray more." A deeper response would be, "I am invited into a daily partnership with God who cares deeply about my life and my well-being." Help them discover that deeper response by guiding their discussion- Guiding a discussion is like guiding a child to the area of the beach where you see a beautiful shell. Rather than picking it up and handing it to the child, you let her find it for herself. The joy of discovery creates satisfaction and ownership in learning.*



*This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 444 Castro Street, Suite 900, Mountain View, California, 94041.*

## **ENGAGE YOUR LEARNERS:** (10 minutes)

**Please read the following information. Mark what you most want to remember:**

*In his book *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard Foster points out that, "If the Lord is to be Lord, worship must have priority in our lives. The first commandment of Jesus is 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'" (Mark 12:30). He goes on to say, "The divine priority is worship first, service second. Our lives are to be punctuated with praise, thanksgiving and adoration. Service flows out of worship. Service as a substitute for worship is idolatry and rooted in pride. Activity may be the enemy of adoration."*

*Galileo was a man who believed and taught something contrary to beliefs and practices in his day. He believed that the sun, not the earth, was the center of our solar system and that all the planets revolved around it. Placing God, the Son, at the center of our lives, and allowing everything we do to revolve around our relationship with Him, is counter to our culture. Our culture says, "Make decisions based on what's best for me, **my** likes, **my** desires. Yes, God is a part of my life, but **I** am the center." This makes God an appendage to our lives rather than the epicenter. Over and over again, we see God calling us in His Word to abide in Him. We live in God and serve out of the overflow of this primary relationship.*

### **How do we do life that revolves around the Son?**

**When writing down your "to-do list" in the morning, ask God to set the agenda and guide you through the day. Bring your "to-do list" before the Lord in prayer and ask Him to direct your steps. There may be another item that needs to be added, or perhaps something that can be taken off the list. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in prioritizing your day. He delights in doing just that. Every so often, He calls us to toss the whole list and do something else with our day, which can be quite unnerving, but can also be exciting! It is very satisfying to be "on-mission" for God. He is faithful in making up the time and tasks that we set aside for Him.**

**Author Sharon James, in her book *Building an Effective Women's Ministry*, recommends: "Make a habit of praying about new opportunities before giving an answer. Even if it's something you can easily do, ask God to confirm it in your heart. If you are married, discuss it with your husband. Consider whether the task lines up with your family's priorities." Many women feel guilty saying "no" when asked to help in a ministry at church. Consequently, they say "yes" to many good things. However, good things aren't always God's best. When you are making decisions according to your priorities, there is a magnificent freedom to say "no."**

**H. Dale Burke encourages the leader toward an authentic spiritual life by filtering decisions through a "Compelling Vision," that is, "What will be said about me at my**



*This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 444 Castro Street, Suite 900, Mountain View, California, 94041.*



**80th Birthday party?" This approach helps to keep things in perspective, doesn't it? Run the race in such a way as to obtain the prize!**

**Hebrews 12 reminds us that we do not run this relay of faith alone. A highly skilled athlete benefits from the coaching and camaraderie of the team. And as workers for Christ within PWOC and our community, we benefit from the camaraderie and skills of the team in which God has placed us. Teamwork – this concept of passionately loving, obeying and serving God in community--can help us keep our perspective as we share the workload with others, contributing our unique strengths and letting others do the same.**

**Just as an athlete must constantly focus on the goal, so we must focus on Christ, so as not to get short-sighted in our day-to-day (month-to-month, year-to-year!) living. We want to serve well; we want to lead well. We can meet this goal by attending to our daily relationship with Christ, allowing our service to be an overflow of His abiding love.**

*Ask your participants what stood out to them and how it relates to their lives. Use open-ended questions to help them think bigger and deeper.*

**APPLY IT TO LIFE:** (15 minutes)

**Work with a partner. Each of you will create a representation of how the hours are spent in your typical day by arranging jelly beans or miniature marshmallows on the chart below. Each jelly bean/marshmallow represents 30 minutes of time and may be split in two to represent 15 minute segments. Fill in the blanks with other daily activities you may have. After you are done with your chart, answer the follow-up questions with your partner.**

Sleep	Meals	Hygiene	PWOC Leadership Responsibilities	Housework Errands	Prayer Worship Bible Study			



- 1. What did you discover?**
- 2. Considering what you've learned about priorities today, are there any changes you'd like to make to your daily routine?**
- 3. What are some practical steps you can take to make those changes?**

*Pull the group back together. Walk them through the questions below, pausing for a moment after reading each one to give your participants the chance to jot down their answers.*

- 1. One thing I'd like to remember from this teaching on priorities is:**
- 2. How will I ensure my work *for* God does not replace my relationship *with* God?**
- 3. What are some of the personal benefits you have noticed when you apply and walk out your priorities?**
- 4. From what I've learned today, what can I do to avoid spiritual burnout and to lead from the overflow of God's grace and love?**

*Close in Prayer*



*This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 444 Castro Street, Suite 900, Mountain View, California, 94041.*