What Is Your Top Priority?
Bob Young
September 1, 2026

The word "priority" has been watered-down. People speak about priorities (plural). Some priority lists have a dozen or more items.

Some try to restore priority to its rightful position with the phrase "top priority!" But often, the one supreme objective, the top priority, still gets lost in the multitude of tasks. The result is lack of focus.

Priority refers to the most important thing that you must do or deal with before other things. Something comes first—importance, order, time. Something matters most, something comes first, something must be done before anything else. Top priority: the leading objective that comes before all other concerns.

I share a little history. In early 2010, I concluded a second ministry with the Main and Oklahoma Church. My identity as a full-time preaching minister ended after 40+ years of preaching almost every Sunday. I had ended ministry assignments before–always to begin another one. Looking back, 2010 was no different and yet was quite different. In 2007, I had retired from the university to devote full-time to mission work. The second tenure at Main and Oklahoma was unplanned. The church kindly allowed me to devote significant time to mission activities.

Now I look back over almost 20 years of mission work. This year I celebrate 60 years of ministry. I look back on 4 years in campus ministry, inner city ministry, and weekly preaching assignments during my undergraduate studies, 28 years of full-time ministry with six churches, 12 years with two universities. Throw in along the way six interim ministries and the opportunity to preach in hundreds of churches across the nation and throughout Latin America. Now Jan and I are working toward another ending. What makes this ending different is that I am not planning another beginning. I do not anticipate another full-time ministry assignment or involvement.

I do not consider myself an expert but I can make some claim to the adjective "experienced." I have preached full-time in the northern regions of the US and also in the south. I have preached in churches of all sizes–in special series in some of the largest congregations of the churches of Christ and also in some of the smallest.

Back to our subject: Top priority!

When all is said and done, what must be our top priority in ministry and preaching? After 60 years, my answer is "the ability to establish and stick to your priority." It is not easy to keep the first thing the first thing. We are easily distracted in the church and in ministry. We seek the wrong things for the wrong reasons with the wrong methods. We get things out of order. I heard from a former student recently–he has decades of preaching experience now. He is a counselor to other preachers. He thanked me for my continual encouragement to discover and preach the dream.

Many churches (and church leaders) have forgotten the goal. When we do not keep the goal before us, we easily deceive ourselves and consider ourselves successful. Without a clear focus on the goal, we have little possibility of accomplishing it. The church must constantly search for and employ new methods that touch the hearts of people in culturally consistent ways. But the church, and those who preach and lead, must never forget that the church is ultimately designed as a part of God's salvation plan. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. Telling the world about the Jesus we follow as King can involve no less. His purpose is our purpose if we are faithful disciples.

If we don't get much else right, let us get this right! **The goal is connecting people to Jesus so that they can be saved eternally.** Ultimately, the success or failure of our church activities–including our preaching–can be measured by no other standard.