

FIRST LAY TALK

TALK #1

PRIORITY

The Walk to Emmaus 72-hour experience delivers one message that is communicated through the music, meals, clergy meditations, attitudes and actions of the team members, and the talks. You will deliver one of the fifteen talks. In reality, you will deliver one-fifteenth of the Emmaus talk—one message with fifteen presenters.

Prepare your talk using the outlines provided. As a good general rule, two-thirds of the talk will come from the outline and one-third would be the speaker's original insights and illustrations.

The Emmaus model sequences the talks in a defined order; each builds on the next to provide pilgrims 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 you will develop your talk. The abbreviated outline helps you see the progression of the main points. Neither outline is a script; you will add personal examples to give life to the content. 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. You will incorporate the suggestions offered after your preview. Then your presentation no longer belongs only to you but to the team God is forming to deliver the Emmaus message.

This presentation is allotted a maximum of twenty to twenty-five minutes. Please honor the time limit out of a spirit of cooperation, charity, stewardship of time, and consideration for the listeners.

Overview for Speaker

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

This talk helps highlights the significance of setting a priority for life and causes 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 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 sometimes help draw attention to human potential. Keep in mind that this is not a lecture on biology or anthropology; avoid getting bogged down in differences among minerals, plants, and animals. The talk reflects

on the human capacity to set priorities and the value of a priority that gives direction and meaning to life.

In discussing priorities, avoid mentioning God, Christ, salvation, or other theological words. The talk does 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 talks that follow will address the priority of a Christian.

This does not lessen the importance of the PRIORITY Talk. On the contrary, a good PRIORITY Talk can make the difference in opening participants' minds and hearts 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 speaks to participants' common sense and experience. 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.

Videos and recorded songs should not be part of the talk. Any projection during the talk should be kept simple.

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

EXPANDED OUTLINE

PRIORITY

Introduction (1–2 minutes)

Choose a brief, personal story or experience that relates 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. Relate the story to everyday 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. Insights

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

1. This talk invites you to identify your priority in life and to remind you of your 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 three primary classifications of the created order: mineral, plant, and animal. Human beings are members of the animal classification.
- 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 slaves to the forces of nature and instinct.
- C. We exercise this freedom in 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. The 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 consciously and wisely.
- E. We bring all 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 a desired goal, to stick with a chosen course of action, to remain unfettered by impulse or instinct, and to transcend the givens of an inherited situation.
- F. When persons see the possibilities (imagination), evaluate the options (intelligence), resolve to move toward a desired end (will), and set out to accomplish it (action), they exercise 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 a value, goal, relationship, or cause 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 you order the rest of your life, 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 by outside circumstances.

- C. Even if you have many priorities, one priority usually outweighs the rest.
- D. A priority consists of a dynamic interaction among values, beliefs, ideals, and commitment.

Values	+	Beliefs	+	Ideals	+	Commitment	=	Priority
(What I love and cherish)		(what I believe is true, right, and trustworthy)		(what I want for self, others, my dreams/hopes)		(what I am willing to do, act on, work toward)		

III. Qualities of an authentic priority

- A. *It is consciously chosen.* Everyone has some priority in practice. But the question is this: How have you set your priorities based on reflection and decisions about the kind of life you want to live? Or have you allowed others’ expectations, circumstances, convenience, or culture to set your priorities for you? 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.* You may take a new approach to life, be your true self, set your life in a worthwhile direction. 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.”
- E. *It is realistic.* A priority falls within the realm of possibility. An unrealistic priority will lead to frustration and disappointment in life.

IV. What is your priority?

- A. Many kinds of priorities exist—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, peace, oneself, others, one’s country, and many more.
- C. Your answers to the following questions will help you discover your priorities:
 1. What do you think about?
 2. How do you spend your money?
 3. How do you spend your time?

That is your priority!

ABBREVIATED OUTLINE

PRIORITY

Introduction (1–2 minutes)

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

I. Insights

- A. During the silence last night, you may have pondered your relationships, some concern, what you are doing with your life, or even why you are here this weekend. In so doing, you may have found yourself reflecting on what has been and is now important to you. What is your priority in life?
- B. One characteristic that distinguishes humankind from rocks, plants, and other animals is the degree of freedom we have to establish our own priorities.
- C. We exercise this freedom in 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. The 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 persons see the possibilities (imagination), evaluate the options (intelligence), resolve to move toward a desired end (will), and set out to accomplish it (action), they exercise the power and freedom to choose a priority.

II. What is a priority?

- A. Dictionary definitions:
 - 1. superiority in rank, position, or privilege
 - 2. a preferential rating.
 - 3. something given or meriting attention before competing alternatives.
- B. A priority is a value, goal, relationship, or cause of leading importance in your life: something for which you live, the shaping value, a commitment that has first claim on you and your resources.
- C. Generally, one priority outweighs the others.
- D. 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. Many kinds of priorities exist, and they change as we grow and change.
- B. How 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!