

Rethink Your Priorities

My world was totally rocked in 2001 when I started doing ministry in developing countries. I thought I was going to these places to help needy people. What I soon discovered was that these “poor” people had a lot more to give me. This prompted me to do a major overhaul of my values and priorities. And each time I fly to another continent, I go through yet another process of re-evaluation.

These people often don’t even have access to clean water or reliable electricity. They are just thankful to have enough rice and beans on the table. Yet as I have built friendships with Christian leaders in the developing world. God has totally messed with my suburban values.

My friend Raja, who rescues baby girls from trash cans in southeastern India after they have been thrown away, runs an orphanage for dozens of kids yet lives on a miniscule salary.

Lydia, a Christian lady I met in Kenya, runs a charitable school in Nairobi’s largest slum and cares for numerous special-needs children—even though the school cannot cover her own living expenses.

Oto, a pastor I work with in Guatemala, feeds more than 100 needy children every day—but he has no health insurance or retirement plan, and he has never been able to afford a vacation.

Biju, another friend from Mumbai, India, has the biggest

smile of anyone I know. He and his wife, Secunda, feed hundreds of children who live on the edges of the world's largest garbage dump. Yet they live in a two-bedroom apartment with their two children in a high-rise building in one of the world's most crowded cities.

Moses, a pastor in Kampala, Uganda, has a 200-member church that meets under a canopy in a slum area. His wife, mother, sister-in-law and several children live in his tiny apartment. Yet he invited me and three friends to his home during my visit, and we enjoyed a dinner of chicken and rice. It was one of the most memorable meals I've ever had.

In these situations I looked at Raja, Lydia, Oto, Biju and Moses and realized that they are rich in all the right ways.

These people do not have a lot of material comforts, but they do have shelter, food, close friendships, a close family and—most of all—spiritual fulfillment. And they had overflowing joy and love. So what if they did not have the finest furniture, expensive appliances, or the latest entertainment systems? So what if they could not afford to see the latest 3-D Hollywood films or buy the newest iPhone?

So much of the world is struggling while we Americans—even in times of economic recession—live at a level of unimaginable abundance. I'm not trying to lay a guilt trip on anyone. I don't think it's wrong to own a garage door opener or a nice car or house. But I think we should let reality sink in.

The disparities we see between life in the sophisticated Western world and the Third World should cause us to question our convoluted values. Maybe we aren't as rich as we think we are. Maybe it's time to rethink our priorities.

Of course, God wants us to enjoy the life He gives us on earth. He wants to bless us in material ways. He gives us the power to make wealth so we can bless others (see Deut. 8:18). He wants us to be physically fit so we can glorify Him in our bodies. He blesses us with sex in the context of marriage, and He gives us occupations so that we can honor Him through our work. But these gifts from God can become idols in our lives if we pursue them apart from God.

If you build your life God's way, honoring His principles, you will have true success in the end. But if you build your life selfishly, using Satan's shoddy construction materials and following the world's building codes, you will prove yourself a failure even if you have enjoyed all the world's wealth and applause during your short time on earth.

This is why Jesus Himself asked this question in Mark 8:36: "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?" (NASB). We should pray that the Holy Spirit would sear this haunting question into our minds each day as we grow closer and closer to eternity.

Adapted from *10 Lies Men Believe* by J. Lee Grady, copyright 2011, published by Charisma House. Lee

Grady has seen firsthand how men are struggling in their marriages, families, friendships and careers because of wrong mind-sets absorbed from their culture. In this book he exposes those lies and offers practical answers to every man struggling to discover his true purpose and identity.

PRAYER POWER FOR THE WEEK OF 4/18/2011

This week as you remember the events of Good Friday and celebrate Easter, rethink your priorities and set them in God's right order. Ask for opportunities to share His love with the many who are lost, distraught, frightened and without hope. Thank Him again for the ultimate sacrifice of His Son, and for directing your steps to be a blessing. Continue to pray for Israel, the Middle East, and the nations suffering from natural and political disasters. Pray that God would give President Obama, and other leaders of the free world, workable solutions to the challenges ahead. Pray for a great harvest of souls this week so that God's kingdom would continue to advance at home and abroad. Deut. 8:18; Mark 8:36