

# **Developing and Maintaining Healthy Priorities**

**Specifically Written for Married Women With  
Younger Children**

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1) **How Can Married Women in Cross-Cultural Ministry Who Have Younger Children Develop and Maintain Healthy Priorities?** Figuring out how to develop and live out healthy priorities can be confusing for a married woman in cross-cultural ministry, especially when she has young children. If you are one of these blessed women, you may have found that you now have many “circles” (of position, responsibility, relationship, and/or influence) and many priorities (God, husband, family, team, neighborhood, church, ministry).

**a) You may have responded in one of the following ways:**

- i) Jumping in and getting lots of ministry done
- ii) Focusing mainly on your family
- iii) Trying to focus fully on both family and other ministry
- iv) Trying to balance family and other ministry.

**b) Some of the feelings you may have had include:**

- i) Feeling like you need to apologize for focusing on your family and therefore not getting more outside ministry done
- ii) Feeling guilty that you’re not more involved in outside ministry
- iii) Feeling overwhelmed by all the needs and (perceived) expectations
- iv) Feeling confused and/or fatigued
- v) Wondering if you’re doing all God wants you to for your family
- vi) Wondering if it’s okay to take care of yourself and/or your family
- vii) Wondering how long you can last before you burn out.

**c) Some questions you may be asking include:**

- i) What am I called to?
- ii) How does my calling work out in my day-to-day life?
- iii) Is it okay to have balance? If so, how?
- iv) How do I figure out my role as a wife/mother/"m"?
- v) How do I figure out, biblically, what my priorities should be?

**d) Application questions for meditation and discussion:**

- i) What circles (of position, responsibility, relationship, and/or influence) do I have?
- ii) What are my priorities?
- iii) How have I responded to my situation?
- iv) How do I feel about this?
- v) What are my questions?

**2) What Biblical Principles Can Help You Develop Healthy Priorities?**

**a) The greatest two commandments.**

- i) **Love God.** *Matthew 22:37-38 "Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment.*
- ii) **Love others.** *Matthew 22:39 "And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"*

b) **Making disciples (including your children).**

Be a witness *to* and together *with* your family.

i) **Make disciples of the nations.** *Matthew*

*28:18-20* "Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore **go and make disciples of all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'"

ii) **Make disciples of your children.** *Titus 1:6*

"An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, **a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.**"

c) **Micro-team (your family) and Macro-team (the larger team).**

i) **Your family is a micro-team.** *Matthew*

*19:4-6* "'Haven't you read,' he replied, 'that at the beginning the Creator `made them male and female,' and said, `For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and **the two will become one flesh**' ? So **they are no longer two, but one**. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.'"

ii) **You also belong to one or more larger macro-teams.**

*1 Cor 12: 14,19,20* "Now the body is not made up of one part but of many....If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, **there are many parts, but one body.**"

d) **Being a light (to and together with your family).**

i) **Being a light in your home.** *Deut 6:4-9*  
*“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. **Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.**”*

ii) **Being a light to the people around you.** *Matthew 5:14-16* **“You are the light of the world.** *A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, **let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.**”*

iii) **Being a light through your lives.**

(1) *Titus 2:3-5* **“Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to **love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject****

**to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.**

- (2) 1 Timothy 2:1-4 “I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone-- for kings and all those in authority, that we may **live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.** This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”
- (3) Colossians 3:23-24 “**Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men,** since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”

**e) Application questions for meditation and discussion.**

- i) What principles am I presently applying?
- ii) What principles would I like to grow in applying?

**3) What is Your Calling?**

**a) What does your pre-determined calling include?** (These are obvious from scripture.)

- i) Follower of God
  - ii) Wife
  - iii) Mother
  - iv) Other:
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- b) **What are the additional elements of your vision and calling? And what general time-frame are these additional elements for?**
- i) Additional elements of your vision and calling may include long-range elements, such as to cross-cultural work and/or to a specific area of ministry.
  - ii) It may also include shorter-range elements.
- c) **Application questions for meditation and discussion.**
- i) **How well do I know my general calling, and how well am I presently living it out?**
    - (1) In what realistic ways would I like to grow in this?
    - (2) What specific changes would I like to make, to help me grow in these areas?
    - (3) When would I like to make these changes by?
    - (4) Who would I like to ask to hold me accountable?
  
  - ii) **How well do I know my specific calling, and how well am I presently living it out?**
    - (1) How much time per week is realistic to give toward my specific calling(s)?
    - (2) Given this amount of time,
      - (a) What realistic ways would I like to grow in this?
      - (b) What specific changes would I like to make to help me grow in these areas?
      - (c) When would I like to make these changes by?
      - (d) Who would I like to ask to hold me accountable?



#### 4) What are Healthy Priorities?

a) **First healthy priority: loving and following God** (Matt 22:37-38). This includes loving Him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

b) **Second healthy priority: loving others as you love yourself** (Matt 22:39). This includes loving *your self, husband, family, and others outside the home.*

#### c) Hand diagram illustration.

##### i) **4 Pillars.**

(1) **Pillar #1. Loving and following God.**

(Represented by the index finger.)

(2) **Ministry within the home.**

(Represented by the other three fingers.)

(1) **Pillar #2.** Love and care for ***yourself*** (food, rest, exercise, energizing activities, etc.).

(2) **Pillar #3.** Love and help your ***husband.***

(3) **Pillar #4.** Love and care for your ***family*** (including sharing God's love with and discipling your children).

##### ii) **Ministry outside the home.** Loving ***others.***

(Represented by the thumb.)

(1) Can be extremely *powerful* when used together with the fingers. (Represented by the hand grasping something.)

(2) Is meant to *interweave* with the four pillars above, but *not overtake* them. (Represented by the thumb moving back and forth among the fingers.)

- (a) Part of this interweaving includes:
  - (1) *Teaching* your children to love and be a light to those around them
  - (2) *Doing* ministry *with* your children.
- (3) Is best looked at *together* with the whole family's ministry and calling
  - (a) Micro-team – your nuclear family is a micro-team. The ministry your family does, both individually and together, is all a part of your micro-team's ministry.
  - (b) Macro-team – You also belong to a broader team or teams. Your macro-team's ministry includes what you, as a team, do both individually and together.
- (4) Will vary in *amount of time and energy invested*, depending on your season of life. (For example, it takes significant time and energy to care for younger children, which leaves less time for ministry outside the family.)
- (5) Will look different depending on your specific calling.

**iii) A Diagram not a Decree.**

- (1) A *diagram*. Pillars are basic priorities to have in place for the long-haul. They:
  - (a) Help a structure stand
  - (b) Can be strengthened by making general goals for each of the pillar areas, and periodically evaluating these goals.

- (2) *Not a decree.*
  - (a) Pillars are meant to facilitate what God is doing, not restrict it.
  - (b) If your goals are held too rigidly you may have “walls” instead of healthy boundaries.

**d) Application questions for meditation and discussion.**

**i) Are my pillars in place?**

- (1) Am I living out my calling in each of these areas? If not, what action steps does God want me to pursue?
- (2) Do I have clear goals in place for each of the pillars? If not, what action steps does God want me to pursue to create these?
- (3) Are my walk with God, husband, and family thriving? If not, what action steps does God want me to pursue to facilitate these?
- (4) Am I thriving personally? If not, what action steps does God want me to pursue?

**ii) What outside ministry are we as a family called to, for this season?**

- (1) What is my specific part in this? How much time per week is it realistic for me to invest in this?
- (2) How can I facilitate and maximize my children’s involvement in this?
- (3) How can I come alongside my husband in this?

5) **What Biblical Principles Are Involved in Balancing My Priorities?**

- a) **Work with all your heart.** *Colossians 3:23-24*  
***“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”***
- b) **Accomplish the good works prepared ahead of time for you.** *Eph 2:10* ***“For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”***
- c) **Desire a peaceful and quiet life.** *1 Timothy 2:1-4* ***“I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone-- for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”***
- d) **Don't be surprised by trials or suffering.** *1 Peter 4:12-16* ***“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.”***

**e) Expect and ask God to give you strength, joy, and peace in whatever He gives you to do.**

- i) *Phil 4:4-9* “**Rejoice** in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the **peace** of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me--put it into practice. And the God of **peace** will be with you.”
- ii) *Isaiah 41:10* “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. **I will strengthen you** and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

**f) Do your part and don't try to do God's.**

*Exekiel 34:31* “**You my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, are people, and I am your God, declares the Sovereign LORD.**”

**g) Application questions for meditation and discussion.**

- i) **Do I generally have healthy balance in my life?**
  - (1) Do I have a healthy balance of the 4 pillars and outside ministry?
  - (2) Am I living out healthy priorities with healthy balance? If not, what action steps does God want me to pursue?
  - (3) Am I doing my part and leaving God's part with Him? If not, what action steps does God want me to pursue?

- 6) **How Can I Put This All Together to Develop Healthy Priorities and Live With Healthy Balance?** Following are some steps that may help you process this.
- a) **Review the application questions in each of the previous sections.**
  - b) **Work through the following application questions to create SMART goals.** (SMART goals are “Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Results-oriented, and Time-based.”)
    - i) **Ask questions.** Given my callings and my season in life:
      - (1) Do I have healthy priorities in place? If not, how does God want me to grow in this?
      - (2) Do I have healthy balance in my life? If not, how does God want me to grow in this?
      - (3) Do I have SMART goals for living out my healthy priorities out with healthy balance on a day-to-day basis? If not, do I know how to create these? If not, do I know who I can ask for help with this?
    - ii) **Develop SMART goals, getting help as needed. Get input as part of the development process.**
      - (1) Get your husband’s input.
      - (2) If you’re part of an organizational team, also ask your team leader for input on team and ministry-related items.
      - (3) Get others’ input as desired.
  - c) **Begin to use your SMART goals.**

7) **Once I've Developed Healthy Priorities and Am Beginning to Live With Healthy Balance, How Can I Maintain This?**

- a) **Periodically evaluate how you're doing.**
- i) *Choose* how frequently you'd like to evaluate how you're doing. *Do* this and *ask* someone to hold you accountable.
  - ii) *Celebrate* your successes and *brainstorm* how to overcome areas you feel weak in.
  - iii) *Modify* your goals as needed.
- b) **When you enter a new season, re-evaluate your priorities.**
- i) Some of this may happen with your *yearly goal-setting*.
  - ii) Other parts may be more appropriate to re-evaluate when you make new *longer-range planning goals*, such as five-year goals. (Making longer-range goals can be very useful. Decide if you'd like to do this. If so, make a plan and ask someone to hold you accountable.)

8) **Are There Any Loose Ends I Might Want To Process?**

- a) **Which of your questions are now answered?**
- i) *Thank God* for these answers!
- b) **What are your remaining questions?**
- i) *How* can you move ahead toward answering these?
  - ii) *Who* might be able to help you process these?
- c) **Are there any feelings that it would be good to process?**
- i) If so, *how* can you move ahead toward processing these?
  - ii) *Who* might be able to help you process these?
- d) **Are there any other follow-up steps you'd like to pursue?**
- i) If so, *how* can you move ahead toward pursuing these?
  - ii) *Who* might be able to help you with these?

