

# PRIORITIES

## Clear Priorities Show You What to Do and Where to Go

*“People who reach their potential and fulfill their dreams determine and act on their priorities daily.”*  
– John C. Maxwell

### LESSON ON VIDEO

*Directions: The following fill-in-the-blank section corresponds with a short video from John Maxwell. Watch the video and follow along with the outline. Click [Here](#) to watch the video for this lesson.*

#### Three Insights on Priorities

1. Working \_\_\_\_\_ has return than working \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Being \_\_\_\_\_ beats being \_\_\_\_\_.

#### Proactive People

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ ahead  
Pick up the \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ problems  
\_\_\_\_\_ the moment.  
\_\_\_\_\_ the schedule.  
\_\_\_\_\_ time in people.

#### Reactive People

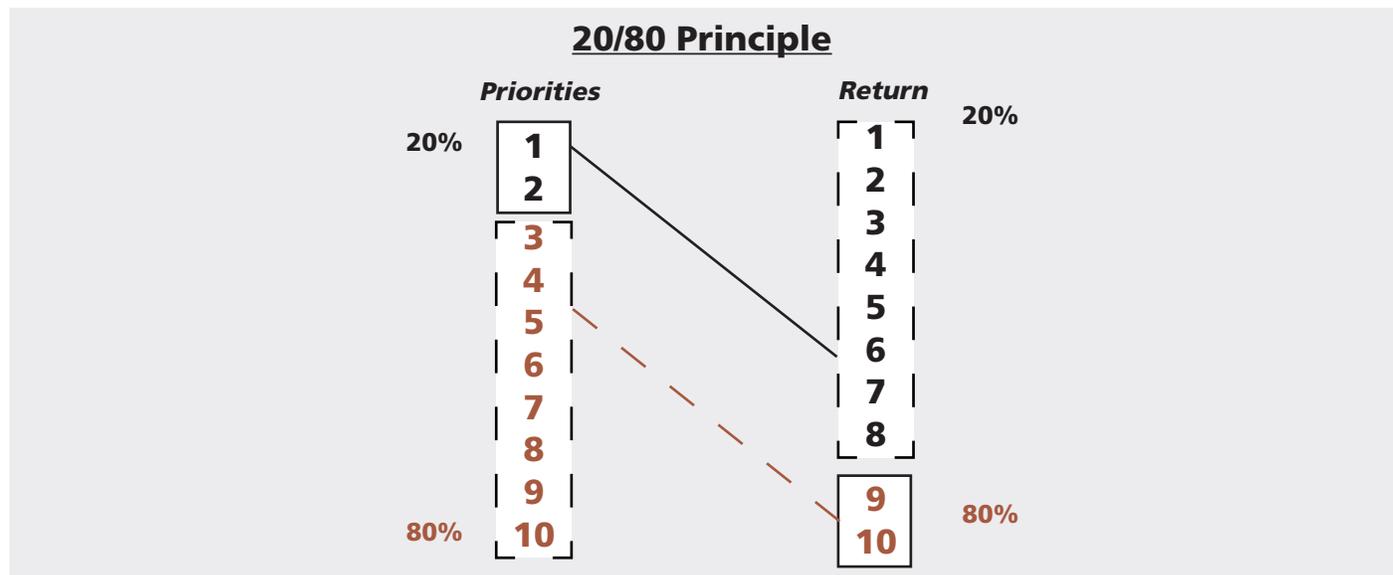
\_\_\_\_\_  
Live in the \_\_\_\_\_  
Wait for others to \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ problems  
\_\_\_\_\_ the “right” moment.  
Let \_\_\_\_\_ control their time.  
\_\_\_\_\_ time with people.

## LESSON ON VIDEO continued

3. Nobody can have it \_\_\_\_\_.

The \_\_\_\_\_ is always the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_

**The Pareto Principle:** 20% of your priorities will give you 80% of your production, if you spend your time, energy, money and personnel on the top 20% of your priorities.



You Can Take Charge of Your Life and Accomplish the Things You Desire to Do,  
When You Take Charge of Your Priorities.

*What action step did you commit to last week? What were the results?*

### INSIGHT

*Directions: Take turns reading the paragraphs below. As you read, underline the ideas that capture your attention.*

When you approach your day, how do you determine what to do first? Do you have a strategy? Only a focus on priorities will enable you to decide what is really important. Everyone who wants to accomplish something of value has a full calendar. The question is not “will my calendar be full?” but rather, “what will fill my calendar?”

If you don’t have a plan in place for achieving what’s most important to you, you’ll spend all of your time reacting to what is important to someone else.

So what is the secret to living according to priorities?

**Don’t Confuse Activity with Accomplishment.** Being busy isn’t the same as being productive. If you spend every minute of your work day doing things that don’t matter, that won’t help you.

By deciding on your priorities ahead of time, you are able to plan your activities wisely. When you identify the most important areas you should focus on, you can direct your energy toward them. That may require you to say no to some things. Good. Sometimes you need to say no to good things, so that you can say yes to great things.

**Put First Things First.** Author Robert J. McKain writes, “The reason most major goals are not achieved is that we spend our time doing second things first.” When you know your priorities, it allows you to put first things first. One tool you can use is the Pareto Principle. This principle, which is also known as the 80-20 rule, states that you should spend 80 percent of your time and attention on the top 20 percent of your tasks. In other words, if you have ten items to do, you should put them in priority order and spend nearly all of your time on the top two items. This leads to the highest level of productivity.

**Identify Your Priorities Based on Requirement, Return, and Reward.** In your work, you should try to focus your time and effort in three main areas: 1) Tasks that are required of you by your employer that no one else can do. You must do these to fulfill your job responsibilities. 2) Tasks that yield a high return for your effort because they use your greatest strengths and talents. This is your sweet spot. And 3) tasks that are highly rewarding to you on a personal level. Your ultimate goal should be to work most of the time in only these three areas.

John says, “If the requirements of my job are the same as the strengths that give me the highest return, and doing those things brings me great pleasure, then I will be successful.”

## BENEFITS

**When you have clearly defined priorities, you experience the following benefits:**

1. You experience high satisfaction when you accomplish a task.
2. You get to spend the best of your energy on the most important tasks.
3. You know which things should come first and can act on them.
4. You don't waste time on things that are non-essential.
5. You can focus on what matters the most.
6. You develop the power to say no to what doesn't align with your priorities.

## STEPS TO FOLLOW

- 1. Journal Your Time.** For one week, keep a journal that documents how you spend your time. Hour by hour, write down everything you do, no matter how small or inconsequential it seems. At the end of the week, identify tasks that are time-wasters, tasks that don't align with your priorities, and areas where you were on target. Also identify priorities that did not get the time they should have gotten from you. If you become aware of how you spend your time, you can begin focusing more of it on things that are a priority. Adjust how you spend your time the next week.
- 2. Shift to Strengths.** Make a list of three or four things you do well. What percentage of your time do you spend doing those things? What percentage of your resources is dedicated to your areas of strength? Devise a plan to make changes allowing you to dedicate 80 percent of your time to your strengths. If you can't, it may be time to reassess your job or career.
- 3. Make Today Your Masterpiece.** As you approach your day, plan it according to your priorities. Look at your calendar and your to-do list before the day begins, to determine how you will spend your time. Then do what you can to make the day the best you possibly can.

## REFLECT AND RESPOND

*Choose something you underlined that is important to you. Take a moment to tell everyone what you chose and why it is important to you.*

## EVALUATION AND ACTION

Complete the self-evaluation section below.

Rate how well you demonstrate this quality in your life on a scale of 1-10.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Why did you give yourself this rating?

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What benefits would you receive by improving your rating?

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Who do you know that exemplifies this quality? What do you admire most about that person?

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What specific action can you take immediately that will improve your rating?

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Take a minute to share your responses to the self-evaluation section, including the step you will take to improve in this area. Everyone is asked to participate.