

Worthiness of God - Build our Lives on Him

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[0 : 00] the Olympics have just started. Who's watching the Olympics? Good. Who's planning to watch the Olympics but hasn't yet? Excellent. But thinking about athletics, thinking about running.

Paul talks about running the race, running the race for the prize at the end. So that's the image that we're going to start with this morning. What are you running for? In other words, what's important to you? What is that prize that you want in your life? What is it that you work for?

What things are important to you? Do you call them out? Family. Anything else? Health. Excellent. Did I hear another one? What else is important to you? We've got family, we've got health. Sorry. Friends. Did I hear one from over here as well? Work. Excellent. So there's food. Excellent. Food is important. Having food that we enjoy eating as well and actually that is nice to eat is important too. Anything else? What is important to you? We've covered a lot of things that I think. So family, friends, our relationships, where we spend our time, whether it's at work or volunteering. Fairness, being fair to each other so that we can include equality into that as well.

Treating everybody like they deserve to be treated, not like some people are in any way better than others. I need a volunteer. I need a volunteer who's good at building, good at holding things.

I think I'm looking in this corner. Excellent, Kate. Kate, can you come up to the front? Okay. I'm going to ask you to hold this for me and I'm going to ask you to attach things to it as well.

[2 : 01] When you do, I need you to attach them to these bits in the middle, okay? I want you to imagine this is our life. It's not quite a circle, but it's the best that we can get out of connects. But all of the things that are important to our life, so this is our life before we add in all the things that are important to us. Psychologists talk about the eight keys to happiness in life, eight areas of our life, most of which we've mentioned this morning, the eight things that are important to us to keep us happy. So we talked about our family, our friends, the relationships, the people that we have around us are important. If we don't have people around us, then it gets, life gets very, very difficult. So we've got our family and friends, but there's other relationships as well. There's our partners, whether that is husbands or wives or boyfriends, girlfriends, fiancés, but the romantic interest, the people that actually we choose to get close to.

Okay, but it gets harder because there's more to add on as well. There's where we work, the school that we go to. We spend, most of us who are at work or at school spend a huge number of our time. We spend almost a quarter of our week at work or at school, given that we spend about a third of our week asleep, or we are supposed to, that's a lot of time that we spend in one place with one group of people.

But then we have where we live. We spend a lot of our time at home, but our location thinks about our homes, our streets, our cities, the city with the area of Harnhill or South London, the city of London, the country that we live in, but also the world we live in, the environmental issues, taking care, not just taking care of our house, but taking care of the world that we live in as well. How are you doing?

We also have the things that help us relax, the fun, the hobbies, the holidays we go on, the things that we do just to switch off a little bit after work, whether it's watching TV or reading a book or playing games or going out for a walk or the once a year big holiday that we look forward to as well. Those things are important. We've also got our finances. Actually, we can't live in this world without money, or at least it's very hard to. We have to pay a mortgage or rent. We've got to pay bills. We've got to pay for food. We might have a car that we've got to upkeep. If we don't, we have to pay for the bus or for trains. There's all sorts of things. There's constant demands for money.

Managing our finances is important. One of the things said when I asked you what's important is health. Health and fitness, the food we eat, the exercise we do, the things we do to keep us healthy.

[5 : 13] That's not just physically healthy. That's to keep our minds healthy as well. Mental health is an important thing to talk about, and it's just as important as our physical health is. And lastly, we've got one more thing to add. That's you. You are an important part of your life. Shouldn't come as much of a surprise, but actually the things that you do for your own development, whether that is for your own relationship with God, whether that is for your own learning, maybe you are studying, maybe you are trying to pick up some skills. In the last few weeks, I've recently started with the free version of Duolingo, picking up some German that I learned back when I was at school, but the things that we do for our own development. Now, can you get, or can you keep all of those pointing into the centre for me? It's getting difficult, isn't it? But actually, I think we're missing a piece. We've got the, we've got our life around the outside. We've got these eight aspects, eight priorities, eight things that are important. But trying to hold it steady is nearly impossible when we're missing a piece. And this piece is God. Okay, if you, if you want to add that one in. But that piece at the middle, I'm going to try and go a bit slow so you've got time.

Actually, we've got someone to help as well. But as we add that piece into the middle, actually everything becomes a lot more stable. So when we have that piece in the middle joining everything together, it becomes so much easier to manage. And if something does fall out, it's a lot easier to put it back in to the middle than it is to try to hold them all in place ourselves. When we have God at the centre of our lives, managing everything that is important to us, everything that we need to have there becomes much, much easier. Jesus tells us it's important to live life God's way. If we can have our next reading on the screen. This is from Matthew 22. This is when Jesus is asked, what is the greatest commandment of all? What's the most important commandment for us to keep?

Jesus replied, love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all of your soul and with all of your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it. Love your neighbour as yourself. All of the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments. Love God with everything that you are. And love your neighbour as you love yourself. Live life God's way rather than our way. Put God at the centre of the life. In September, I believe we're starting a series working through Galatians. Galatians 5 is the fruits of the spirit. Well actually we are told how to live life God's way. The fruits of the spirit are love, joy, peace. I don't have these in order here.

But the fruits of the spirit are love, joy, peace, goodness, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, forbearance. Forbearance is patience. But forbearance is such an undying patience that it doesn't matter what is thrown against you. You will remain, you will keep hold of that patience. And self-control, controlling the way that we speak, the way that we behave. We're not always aware of the thoughts that go through our head. We're not always conscious to be able to stop them before the thoughts happen.

But we can always control what comes out of our mouth. We can always control what our hands do. That self-control of our words and our actions. In Matthew 25 40, Jesus says, whatever you did for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you also did to me.

[9 : 32] Jesus says that putting other people first is my way to live. Helping those who are in desperate need. The least of the people around us. And in Romans 12, Paul starts the letter by writing, therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. This is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is. His good, pleasing and perfect will. Actually, having God at the center means taking us out of the center. It means letting go. It means doing things God's way. It means making sacrifices, not just doing things the way everyone else does them.

So God is worth having in our lives because without them, life is hard. Without them, life is a mess. Life is still hard and life can still be messy with God there. But we can have that stability. We can hold everything together when God holds on to it for us. So live life God's way.

So we need to build our lives upon God. As we go through this summer, as we go through the, for the services that you're around for, because we know a lot of people will be away for different weeks. But even when you are away, when you are, when you are on holiday, wherever you are, thinking about how can we have God? How can we keep God at the center?

In a couple of minutes, we're going to have another video if we can be ready for that. But before we do, I want to give a few things that we can do to keep God there.

starting off easily. Actually, I'll start off by reading. We'll go to 1 Thessalonians. In 1 Thessalonians 5, verses 16 to 18, it says to rejoice always, to pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

[12 : 09] Pray continually. Always be praying. When we wake up, we can pray. When we sit down to read the Bible, we can pray. When we go to bed, we can pray. When we're at church, at church meetings, we can pray.

But while we're cooking, we can pray. When we drop something, we have to clean up the mess, we can pray. When we're watching TV, we can pray. Prayer doesn't have to be sat down, hands together, eyes closed.

Dear God, I need to give this to you right now. Prayer is supposed to be a conversation. As often as you would sit down with your family or your neighbor or work colleague, and you would just talk with them.

That's what prayer is about. Now, pray continually is be always ready to talk to God. Also, a conversation is two ways. Prayer isn't just about us saying to God, God, thank you for this and thank you for that and thank you for that.

Please help me for this and for that and for that. Actually, a part of that conversation is listening to what God says as well. How do we keep God at the center of our lives? Be constantly ready to talk and to listen with him.

[13 : 25] Be thankful. It's not always easy to be. It's not always easy to feel happy. But especially when times are hard, be thankful for the good things that we have.

Some more practical things that we can do. We've got this. This tells us so much about God. All we've got to do is open it and read.

That's what God asks us to do, is to read his word, to learn about him, learn about what he has to say to us. But also see what other people say about the Bible.

Listen to podcasts. Listen to sermons. Read Bible reading notes. Things that other people say that can help us to maybe understand a part of the Bible we never understood before.

Or learn something new that we never saw before. Talk with other Christians, whether it's our friends or our family or people at church, talking to other people who we know are trying to place God at the center of their lives.

[14 : 30] And maybe they're finding it just as difficult as we are. Worship music. Songs that help us to focus our attention and our mind on God.

Talked earlier about self-control. We can control the things we say, the things we do. When I was growing up, we used to have these bands that have WWJD written on them.

Some of you may remember them. It's what would Jesus do? But that thinking about actually if we want to live, if we want to build our lives upon God, if we want to live the way that Jesus does, in any given situation, we should be thinking, what would Jesus be doing in this situation?

The more we practice that, the more we do it, the easier it gets. And lastly, depending on God. When we need help, it's important to go to the doctors when we need it, to go to the hospital, to turn to our friends, to our family, to each other.

But it's more important to turn to God. That doesn't mean not seeking professional help when we need it. It means doing it as well as that professional help.

[15 : 40] It means first, third, and last thing we do is we depend upon God. The first thing we do is we say to God, God, I need you right now. Number two is maybe thinking about, okay, what practical help do I actually need?

Number three, say, God, can you please help me get these things into place that I need? Number four, respond to that practical help. Go and see the professional if you need to. Do the things that have been told to.

And number five, say, God, thank you for helping me to do all this. Now please help me stick with it. Some helpful tips for building our lives upon God. If we can have the video, please.

So what are you running for? Are you running for the prize, for the recognition from our friends and our family?

Are you running purely to get that promotion, purely to get that extra money? Are you running just to get another holiday?

[16 : 43] Or to be able to sit down and watch TV at the end of the day? Or are you running for God? Because God's given you that gift, that life that you have.

Over the next few weeks, we're going to explore more about God. More about why God is worth having at the centre of our lives.

This morning, we were looking at how can we have God at the centre of our lives. And sometimes that takes sacrifice.

That takes being prepared to say, actually, I can't do that because that conflicts with the commitment I've made to God. Being prepared to say, actually, I can't do this on my own.

Actually, I'm not strong enough to do this on my own. I need God there as well. But when we hold God at the centre of our lives, everything else can fit into place.

[17 : 52] When we were fitting this together, we tried fitting it, keeping these joiners here in the corners where they were naturally sitting. But actually, that doesn't work.

Sometimes we have to move things. We've got to be prepared to make changes for God to be at the centre of our life. So whether you're here for the next few Sundays over the summer series, or whether you're away on holiday, that's our challenge for you this summer.

Do you want God at the centre of your life? If you do, what are you prepared to change to make that happen? What are you prepared to do differently to live life God's way, rather than your way?