

2026-10-26: God is the Center of My Life [St Reweis - Wesley Chapel, FL]

Visual Aid

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/z6k3uf1lj1kmq75jivurs/God-is-the-Center-of-My-Life.pptx?rlkey=snrxwrnvccgdwo2hndso9ipm&dl=0>

Salutation

It is a great blessing to be in St Reweis with my beloved fathers Abouna Matthew and Abouna Teji, Pason Mark and the blessed deacons and congregation of St Reweis.

Just two days ago we celebrated 16 years of Abouna Matthew's faithful priesthood, and as you may know, before he was ordained he used to serve in St Rebekah for several years. We grew up under his hand and learned from him especially the hymns and the deaconship and how to be a leader. May the Lord preserve your priesthood and keep you for us and benefit us by your prayers, Abouna

Introduction

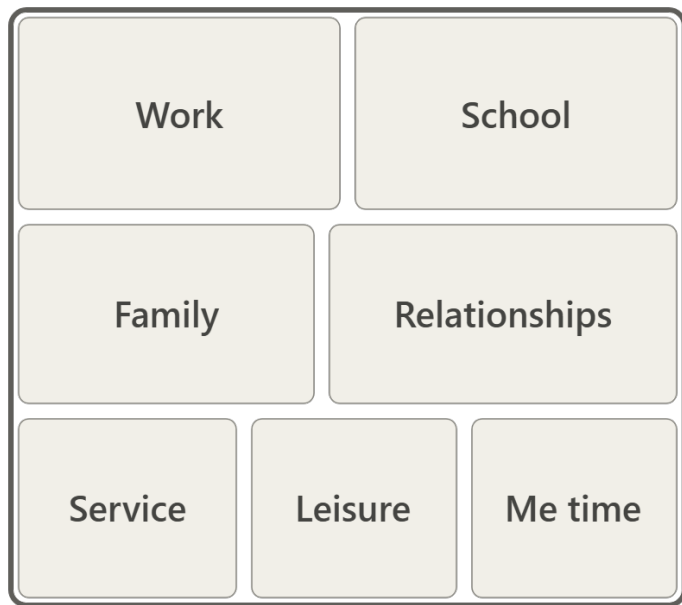
"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." (Colossians 3:1-3)

What does it mean to "set your mind on things above?"

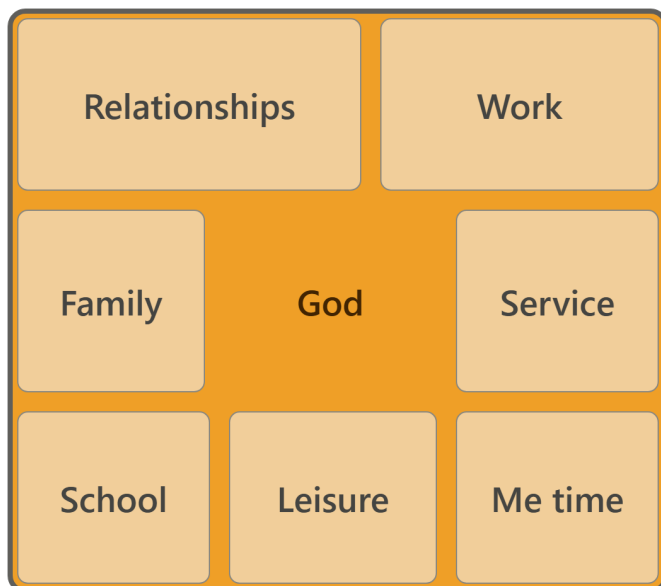
- I was talking to someone who said "I wish I could just leave my job and pray all day" - that is NOT what "set your mind on things above" means.
- St Antony, himself, who had gone into the desert and lived in a cave an ascetic life; who lived his life in prayer and fasting and scripture and meditation... got bored. And then the angel appeared to him wearing the monastic garbs and sat and weaved palms into baskets. Then the angel stood up to pray, and then returned to his work. And he kept repeating the process. Then, the angel said to him "Do this, and you will find rest for your soul."

We are living in the world with many responsibilities... work and career, school and education, service, relationship, family. On top of that, I want to have some leisure, some relaxation, I need time for myself. How do I fit all of this in 24 hours? How do I fit God in with all of this? Even harder,

how do I PRIORITIZE God in all of this?



Actually, this is a backwards way of thinking. And we need to change the way we think about it.

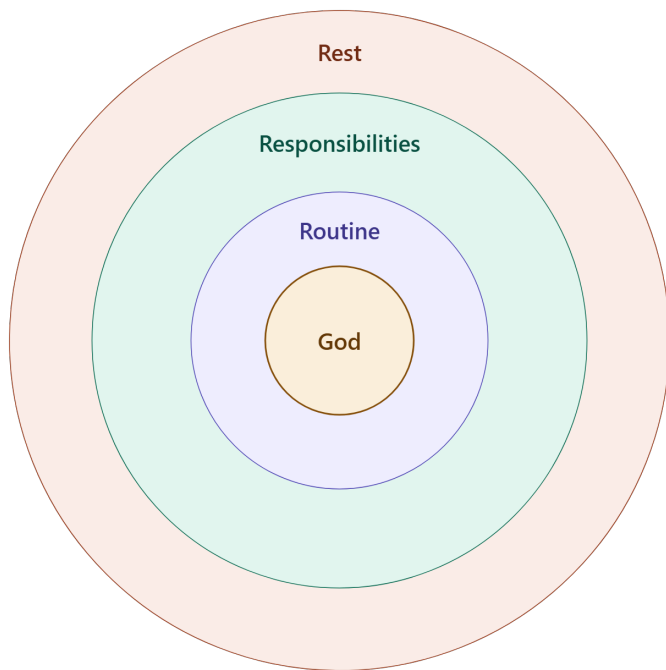


In the Christian life, God is at the center and not only that, but He permeates everything else. He is seen in my relationships, He is seen in my work, He is seen in my family, in my service, in my schooling, and in my leisure. Everywhere I go, everything I do, everyone I am with... God is there.

But how? How do I prioritize God in my life? How can God be the center of my life?

We will look at our life as three different levels, with three Rs...

- Routine: Time Set Apart for God
- Responsibilities: Time Offered to God
- Rest: Time Received from God



If you look at the Routine Circle, what's in the center? God.

If you look at the Responsibilities Circle what's in the center? God!

If you look at the Rest Circle, what's in the center? God.

Routine: Time Set Apart for God

The first R is Routine; time set-apart for God.

- See what King David said: "Seven times a day I praise You" (Psalm 119:164). Where did King David, the man of many responsibilities, king over all of Israel, find time to praise the Lord seven times per day?
- Because he had routine. And the Christian NEEDS to have routine in his life. And here we want to talk about prioritizing some time specifically for God. This routine is called the Spiritual Canon.
- There's a daily routine, a weekly routine and a monthly routine.
 - Daily
 - Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, Prostrations, Scripture
 - Set times.
 - Like when I come back from school or work, that's when I open the Scripture.
 - Or every day at 7pm I pray the 11th hour.
 - Or I do three metanoias as soon as I wake up.
 - This is maybe 10min in the morning, 10 in the afternoon and 10 in the evening.
 - Weekly
 - Sunday Morning is set apart for God. It's the Day of the Lord.

- Saturday evening is set apart for God. This is the time for Vespers and Praises.
- These days are set in stone.
 - If something comes up on Sunday morning or Saturday night, I don't even have to think about it - it's part of my routine. I'm busy. I have liturgy and I'm taking communion.
- Even if I go to liturgy another day of the week - that's extra. Sunday is the Day of the Lord.
- Part of my routine as a Christian is to go to Church on Sunday and receive the Eucharist.
- Fasting Wednesday and Friday
 - I know it's a fasting day - so I know I'm probably not going out to eat with my friends. I know I'm skipping breakfast and I'm bringing my lunch to work, etc.
- Monthly
 - Sitting with Abouna in confession. 15-20 minutes...
 - Sometimes people get a monthly car wash, but don't come wash themselves with the same frequency!
- Seriousness in Routine
 - HH Pope Shenouda used to say "the difference between us and the saints is seriousness"
 - The Lord said this about St John the Baptist also: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet." (Matthew 11:7-9)
 - Examples
 - Imagine if I come to the liturgy five minutes before communion and receive communion. Then I can say "I took communion this week" - what is this? Is God the center of my life? Is this seriousness? Is this setting time apart for God? Am I truly abiding in Him? Or am I using Him to appease my conscience?
 - Or the Church is somewhere I go if it's convenient, or if my schedule allows, or if I have nothing else going on
 - Sometimes, I try to do the MINIMUM. Many times in confession I hear "I pray throughout the day" - GREAT! St Paul says "Pray without ceasing!" but what does that really mean? It means "I don't pray with the Agpeya" or "I don't pray in the morning" or "I don't pray in the evening" but "I pray throughout the day"
- Necessity of routine
 - Why is routine necessary?
 - A good education requires commitment for days, weeks, months, years!
 - A career is built in days, weeks, months, years of commitment
 - A relationship is built in days, weeks, months, years of commitment
 - The same with a healthy spiritual life... it is built in days, weeks, months, and years of commitment

Responsibility: Time Offered to God

The second R is Responsibility; time offered to God

- Work and Career
- School and Education
- Service
- Family
- Relationship

Sometimes people see these responsibilities as being separate from God. This is what I do during the week, God is what I do on the weekends. There's this idea that there's something called "the God thing" and on a given week I may or may not do "the God thing." No, God is found in all of these things.

- Work and Career
 - Can God be the center of my life while I am at work? Of course!
 - Being honest in my work - not taking someone else's work as my own; not using AI where it's not appropriate; not trying to do "just the minimum requirements" but going above and beyond; not cheating on my timecard; not being dishonest in my work from home
- School and Education
- Service
 - When I serve in the Church, God is obviously involved.
 - But what about when I take shortcuts in service?
 - Or I try to do the minimum?
 - Or I'm not doing the best of my ability?
 - Or taking on too many services so that nothing is given 100%
 - I need to be faithful and serious in my service. God needs to be the center of MY life
- Family
 - Spend Time with Your Parents
 - Many youth spend a lot of time in the Church, which is good!
 - A lot of time in service... which is good!
 - And then the parents say "we never see our children"
 - Give time to your parents, sit with them, talk to them, ask them about their life and experiences, share your life with them, ask their advice, put your phone down and look at them
 - Be Present for Your Children
 - Listen to them when you would rather be doing something else
 - Go on a walk with them - no phones
 - Take them to a park
 - Try and learn their hobbies and be involved with them
 - Know the names of their friends, their teachers, what classes they are taking
- Relationship
 - Being honest and faithful with my wife - giving her the time that she deserves; giving her the listening ear; giving her love and showing her love and loving her in front of others; not keeping secrets from her; doing my role as a husband to lead her in the spiritual life and being a man saying "let's read the Bible together" - "come and pray

with me before we sleep" - "I'll pray for us before this meal."

- Being honest with my husband - not being lazy; not criticizing him in everything he does; being thankful for him and showing him my gratitude; submitting to him - especially when he is leading me in the way of godliness. Imagine a husband who wakes his wife for church and she says no or "I'm gonna sleep a little longer." Respecting him.
- Covering for my husband or wife, picking up the slack when they are exhausted

Making God the center of my life means that I'm faithful in my responsibilities.

Rest: Time Received from God

The third R is Rest; Time received from the Lord

- Rest here refers to sinless leisure time
- St Antony story
 - "A hunter in the desert saw Abba Anthony enjoying himself with the brethren and he was shocked. Wanting to show him that it was necessary sometimes to meet the needs of the brethren, the old man said to him, 'Put an arrow in your bow and shoot it.' So he did. The old man then said, 'Shoot another,' and he did so. Then the old man said, 'Shoot yet again,' and the hunter replied 'If I bend my bow so much I will break it.' Then the old man said to him, 'It is the same with the work of God. If we stretch the brethren beyond measure they will soon break. Sometimes it is necessary to come down to meet their needs.' When he heard these words the hunter was pierced by compunction and, greatly edified by the old man, he went away. As for the brethren, they went home strengthened." (Sayings of the Desert Fathers - Antony 13)
- A balance between labors and sinless leisure time is NECESSARY in the Spiritual Life
- Sinless
 - Lawful?
 - Edifying?
 - Controlling?
 - Stumbling Block?
- Leisure Time
 - Hobbies
 - Social Time and Hangouts
 - Hookah bar?
 - Drinks at a restaurant?
 - Music and dance concerts?
 - Sin...
 - Vacations
 - Vacation from what? From God? From the Church? Definitely not...
 - When I'm traveling, I search in advance for the nearest church and check their schedule
 - I'm going to a place that doesn't have a church? Then I'm going from Mon-Fri - not missing Vespers or Liturgy

- When I travel on vacation, I wake up for my spiritual canon every day
- Can you imagine that there are people who go to Egypt and don't attend a single liturgy, or don't visit a monastery? They are going to eat Shawarma and go to the beach and all that
 - Or go to Egypt and don't fast on Wed and Fri or go during the Apostles Fast and don't fast at all
 - Or go to a Cruise during the Great Fast...
- I'm going on a trip for 3-4 weeks but I serve a Sunday School Class
 - I'm checking on the kids while I'm gone
 - I'm offering to help remotely with an activity or with a homework or a phone call or a follow-up

Conclusion

- “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” (1 Corinthians 10:31)
- Whether in my routine, or in my responsibilities, or even in my rest, let me glorify God and keep Him as the center of my life

Revision #6

Created 2026-10-20 03:24:10 UTC by Fr.Maximus Wahba

Updated 2026-10-26 20:10:31 UTC by Fr.Maximus Wahba