

# Put First Things First

William James (1842 -1910) was a philosopher and psychologist who was the first educator to offer a psychology course in the United States. He was a leading thinker of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and has been labeled the “father of American psychology.”

James said that the art of being wise is the “art of knowing what to overlook.” The petty and the mundane steal much of our time. Too many of us are living for the wrong things, he said.

Dr. Tony Campolo – sociologist, author and pastor – tells about a sociological study in which 50 people over the age of 95 were asked one question: “If you could live your life over again, what would you do differently?”

It was an open-ended question, and a multiplicity of answers constantly reemerged and dominated the results of the study. These were three answers:

- If I had it to do over again, I would reflect more.
- If I had it to do over again, I would risk more.
- If I had it to do over again, I would do more things that would live on after I am dead.

A young concert violinist was asked the secret of her success. She replied, “Planned neglect.”

Then she explained. “When I was in school, there were many things that demanded my time. When I went to my room after breakfast, I made my bed, straightened the room, dusted the floor and did whatever else came to my attention. Then I hurried to my violin practice. I found I wasn’t progressing as I thought I should, so I reversed things. Until my practice period was completed, I deliberately neglected everything else. That program of planned neglect, I believe, accounted for my success.”

The lesson for us: Does this story strike a chord within? It does for me.

Put first things first today and neglect things that don’t really matter.

Jesus taught it. He said ...

*First things first. Your business is life, not death. And life is urgent. Announce God’s kingdom!* (Luke 9:60 MSG).

– Beecher Hunter