

Philosophy: A Lesson of Priorities

A philosophy professor entered his class and put some items on the table in front of him. When the class began, without saying a word, he picked up a very large and empty mayonnaise jar and began to fill it with small rocks. When he couldn't fit any more rocks in the jar, he stopped and asked the students if the jar was full. They all said that it was.



So the professor then picked up some pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar lightly and the pebbles rolled into the open areas between the rocks. He then asked the students again if the jar was full. Hesitantly, they said that it was.

The professor then picked up some sand and poured it into the jar. Of course the sand filled all the empty spaces between the rocks and the pebbles. He asked, once again, if the jar was full. The students responded with a unanimous "Yes!".



The professor then took a glass of wine from under the table and poured it into the jar, filling the empty spaces between the grains of sand. All of the students laughed.

"Now," said the professor, "I want you to recognize that this jar represents your life:

Firstly, the rocks represent the really important things - your family, your health, your friends, your job, your passions. Things that, if everything else were lost and only they remained, your life would still be full.

Then the pebbles represent other important things in your life, like your house, your pets and your car. Things that are important, but not vital to your life.

Lastly, the sand represents everything else - the small things. Things like watching TV, eating pizza, painting your bedroom and playing with your dog."

"Now", the professor continued, "if you fill the jar with sand first, there would be no room for the pebbles nor the rocks. The same rule applies to life. If you spend all your time and energy on the small things, you would not have time for the things that are important. So you must pay attention to the things that are critical for your happiness - play with your children, get regular medical check-ups, take your partner out to dinner, have a drink with your best friend, play golf. There will always be time later to clean the sofa and fix your bicycle. In other words, take care of the rocks first, the things that are really important. Get your priorities right."

Then one of the students asked the professor what the wine represents. The professor smiled and said, "No matter how full your life seems, there's always room for a glass of wine!"