

The Rhythm of Stewardship

1 Peter 4:1-11; Matt. 6:19-21; 9.1.13

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This is the last sermon in our series *Rhythms: Cultivating the Disciplines of Grace*. We looked at: The Rhythm of the Word, The Rhythm of Prayer, The Rhythm of Community, and today we are going to look at The Rhythm of Stewardship.

- The goal of this series is to clarify God’s role and your role in the process of sanctification, becoming a mature following of Christ. If you are going to grow in godliness you must prioritize the word, prayer, and Christian community, but you must also steward your life in three critical areas. You must steward your time, your talents and gifts, and your treasure.

What does it mean to steward your life?

- College Football Kickoff
 - You have 60 minutes. The clock is ticking. Every play matters. Every play counts. Coaches and players are all accountable. National Championships are at stake. You leverage every resource on your team for the sake of winning.
- Stewardship is about leveraging every aspect of your life for the sake of advancing the kingdom of God. The clock is ticking. Every day counts. You will one day give an account. Eternity is at stake. What will you do with your life?

How do you steward your life for the sake of the gospel in a world that is predominantly opposed to it.

Read 1 Peter 4:1-11

1. Steward your Time (1 Peter 4:1-9).

A. Prepare yourself to suffer like Christ (4:1-2).

- “Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh...”
 - Christ’s suffering on the cross is an example for Christians (3:18; 2:21-24).
- “Arm yourselves”:
 - This military language is similar to Eph. 6:10-20 and indicates that discipline is needed to live the Christian life.
- “...with the same way of thinking (referring to Christ)”
 - Like soldiers prepare themselves for battle, believers should prepare themselves with the intention to suffer.
- “...for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.”
 - When believers are willing to suffer, they give evidence that they have broken from a life of sin. They have ceased to participate in the acts of unbelievers and even endure criticism that comes from that decision. What’s revealed is a passion for a new way of life, a life remarkably different from the lives of unbelievers.
- The purpose: “...so as to live for the rest of the time...for the will of God.”
 - Why arm yourself with the intention to suffer? So that you live the remainder of your life carrying out God’s will. When you decide to reorientate your life around the will of God, you will face persecution and suffering.

B. Embrace these realities about time (4:3-7).

- God owns you and your time.
 - Christ has bought you and because of this, all of your time is God’s time.
- Time lost can’t be regained.
 - You’ve already wasted years of your life living like the Gentiles (4:3).
- You will give an account to God for your time (4:4-6; see also Rom. 14:12; Matt. 12:36).
 - Will you live for the praise of men now or the praise of God for all eternity?

- 4:6: From a human perspective, believers seem to gain no benefit (because they die), but from God's perspective, they live according to the Spirit; death is not the last word.
- You are not guaranteed tomorrow
 - The imminence of the end should function as a stimulus to action in this world.
 - "7. Resolved, never to do anything, which I should be afraid to do, if it were the last hour of my life." (Resolutions of Jonathan Edwards).

C. Implement these keys to stewarding your time (*Biblical Productivity* by C. J. Mahaney):

- Determine your God-given roles in life.
 - Christian
 - Husband (wife; single man; single woman)
 - Father (mom, grandfather, grand mother, child)
 - Church Member
 - Community Group Member/Leader
 - Elder/Pastor
 - Student
 - This is a matter of prioritizing your life. When these priorities get out of order in your life, they are reflected in how you spend your time.
- Determine specific, theologically informed goals (reference 1 Peter 4:7-9)
 - What is the will of God for each of these roles?
 - Christian
 - Gospel (Pursue God): Word and Prayer
 - Community (Participate in the local church)
 - Mission (Make disciples)
 - Husband, Father, Church Member, Community Group Member, Pastor, Student
 - (Christian) husband, (Christian) father, (Christian) worker, etc.
 - Love, serve, and surprise
 - How can I see Gospel, Community and Mission cultivated in spouse, kids, etc.?
- Align your schedule around these goals. (Take action).
 - Biblical productivity and stewardship of time is not complete until you've acted upon and implemented what God has called you to do. Does your schedule reflect the list of prioritized roles and goals that you have in life?
 - Word and Prayer? Corporate Worship? Community Group? Discipling Relationships? Engagement of unbelievers around you? Dates with your spouse? Investment in your kids? Members' meetings? Care for other members?
 - If you find the above items lacking in your life, you need to rearrange your priorities to better align with God's will for your life.
 - Example: my kids and sports
 - If it's in my control, I don't let others structure my week, I structure my week from theological informed goals.
 - I want my kids to be great at sports, but more than that, I want them to love Jesus and his church.
 - I love to hear of students scheduling their classes each semester around Community Group life.
- "Godliness is the result of a disciplined spiritual life. But at the heart of a disciplined spiritual life is the Discipline of time" (Whitney, 131).

2. Steward your Talents and Gifts (1 Peter 4:10-11).

- Everyone has spiritual gifts, though they may differ
 - Peter divides gifts into two categories: speaking and serving (though all gifts involve serving and edifying others).
 - Speaking: apostleship, prophecy, teaching, exhortation, etc.
 - Serving: giving, leading, mercy, helping, etc.
 - Outside of studying Scripture, the best way to discover your gift is through serving. How will you know if you have the gift of teaching if you never teach? On the other hand, it may be through serving in a particular ministry that you realize what your gift is *not*.
- Gifts are the result of God's grace.
 - You "received" them so you can't boast about the gift you have.
 - Gifts are given not so you can congratulate each other, they are given so that you can serve, help, and strengthen others in the faith.
- You are responsible to steward your gifts.
 - Since these are God's gifts, you have a responsibility to use them for his purposes, to serve, help and strengthen others in the faith.
- Gifts are to be used to glorify God.
 - We do this by:
 - Speaking the very words of God (2 Tim. 4:1-5).
 - Serving in the strength that God provides.
 - Serving with gratitude, gladness, humility, excellence, and hard work.
- Will you serve in a regular, ongoing ministry in our church? Redemption Hill Church will not be all that God wants it to be unless everyone owns their share and serves with excellence.
- Transition to the Boys and Girls Club
 - Set up and tear down every Sunday (we need MEN to step up)
 - 300 chairs, Large stage, Audio and Visual Equipment, Pipe and Drapes, Parking and Directional Signs in Medford Square
 - Sound (we need people who will commit to learning a new system and serving well)
 - First Impressions (do you love greeting people?)
 - Transformation Station (one month a year)
- A lot of these things are behind the scenes stuff. No one is going to have a clue you set the signs out (God does), no one has a clue who runs the sound or Media presentation (God does), some require you to arrive early (7am) or to stay late (12:30/1pm).
- Can you commit to serving 9/15, 9/22, and 9/29? If so, mark that on your connection card (Display example). We will train you on Saturday, Set. 7 from 7-9am.
- "That's why serving must become a Spiritual Discipline... Two of the deadliest of our sins—sloth and pride—loathe serving" (Whitney, 117).

3. Steward your Treasure (Matt. 6:19-21).

Why am I talking about money? You're just a pastor and all you care about is money and what people give. No, I care about your soul and that's why we're talking about money.

Read Matthew 6:19-21

A. How you spend your money reveals your heart.

- In the same way that your schedule reflects your priorities in life, the way you spend your money reflects your priorities in life, what you really delight in. Your checkbook and credit and debit card statements are pretty indicators of what you treasure in life.
- When Jesus becomes the greatest treasure of your life, your money habits start reflecting that. You start reorienting your money to reflect kingdom values. This is similar to the way your use of time and scheduling changes.
- God owns everything that you have. You're just his money manager. He wants to be supreme and glorified in every dollar that you spend. Your job is to seek out how he wants his money spent.
- Let me put this into perspective for you, how much you actually will steward in a lifetime.
 - An individual works 40 years from age 25 – 65 averaging \$34,101 a year will make \$1,364,040 in a lifetime.
 - A Family who has a combined income for 40 years from age 25 – 65 averaging \$70,102 will make \$2,804,080 in a lifetime
- How are you going to steward this money? You will give an account to the owner one day (God).
- Practical application: as a schedule is important for implementing goals for my God-given roles in life, a budget is important for making sure that your money goes where God wants it to go.
 - For the past two years, Leigh and I have agreed together on a monthly and annual budget and we pinky swear that we're going to stick to it. This has been one of the most freeing things we have ever done.

B. Your heart follows where you spend your money.

- Let me pose two scenarios:
 - What would my heart do if I went and bought season tickets for the Boston Celtics?
 - What would my heart do if I supported a missionary to India?
- Your use of money can be a means by which God's grace grips your life
 - You want a heart for missions, give to missions.
 - You want a greater heart for church planting, support Todd Burus.
 - You want a greater heart for the church, give to the church.
- Giving is the only antidote to materialism (store up treasures in heaven).

Common Giving Mistakes and Excuses

1. Give God his 10% and do whatever you want with the rest.
 - God is as much concerned with the 90% as he is the 10%. He owns it all.
 - "Jesus did not merely tithe his blood, He gave all of it. Our responsibility is not to give up our 10% and go on our self-serving ways, but to pour out our entire lives, recklessly, for Him and for others, just as He did for us" (J. D. Greear).
 - Jesus' radical generosity toward us should be to us a model and a motivation for radical generosity with others. No person who has experienced the extravagant love of Christ can be stingy with his resources.
2. Stewardship is a lot more than money. I give my time, talents and gifts. I serve on Sundays and host and lead a Community Group.
 - Stewardship is more than money, but it is never less than money.
3. I'm so deep in debt that I can't give.
 - I believe this is one of the main reasons Christians don't giving. I think more and more Christians need to be challenged in the area of debt. In America today, debt has just become a way of life but I'm not convinced that this should be the case.
 - Prioritize getting out of debt. Get financial counseling (connection card).

- Prioritize giving. Generosity should always be a part of your life. Dave Ramsey encourages people to give before they start Baby Step 1.
4. I don't make enough to give.
- Giving is not about how much you make.

Concluding Principles for Giving. Your giving should be:

- Systematic and Intentional (deliberately on a regular basis): 1 Cor. 16:1; 2 Cor. 8:4; Phil. 4:16
 - Does your giving depend on whether you're at church or not?
 - Leigh and I decide what we give monthly and we put this in our budget. If you aren't intentional about prioritizing giving, it won't happen.
- Proportional (as you have been prospered): 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 8:2-3
 - For most of us, 10% is a great starting point, but others, that's way to little.
 - God's doesn't prosper us to raise our standard of living, but to raise our standard of giving. God is more concerned about your heart than a specific number. If you heart is right, the giving will be right.
- Sacrificial/Generous: 2 Cor. 8:2-3; Phil. 4:17-18
 - Giving is hard and costly. It requires trust and faith in God's provision. What are you willing to cut back on in order to give this way? Eating out? Selling a car? Downsizing a house?
- Motivated by love, equality (meet needs), to be a blessing: 1 Cor. 9:14-15; 2 Cor. 8:12-14.
- Cheerful (not begrudgingly): 2 Cor. 9:7
- Voluntary (out of your free will): 2 Cor. 8:2-3, 8; 9:7; Phil. 4:18

Our 2013 Vision as a church won't be fulfilled unless our people cultivate the Rhythms of Grace:

- Become increasingly dependent on the Spirit through the Word and Prayer.
- Live as gospel family.
- Exercise great generosity with our time, talents, and treasure.
- Serve Intentionally. Give Sacrificially.
- How will you discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness and help own this vision today?