

# Stewardship: Pursuing His Priorities



We are about to embark on a journey together to explore the idea of stewardship in more detail over the next three weeks. Before we get too far along in this journey, we must understand first what it means to be a steward. When we think of stewardship, we need to recognize that God in His wisdom created us in His image to watch over all that He has entrusted to us. God has given us a distinct authority to act on his behalf and, at the same time to act completely dependent on Him being our master. As we steward all that He has given us, God will hold us accountable for how we manage the belongings He has put in our care.

Many of us, myself included, at times, have really made a mess of our lives by chasing the wrong priorities. We must ask ourselves - are we putting Christ first in our lives with the way we spend our time? Are we putting our focus and energy into the priorities He would have for us? How are we doing in the area of serving others or in loving our brothers, sisters, or neighbors? We often get our priorities out of balance and desire to be served or even worse be self-serving instead of following the model and example that Jesus showed us.

Remember God established our identity as stewards over the whole of creation. He is the one calling us rightly to take care of all that He has given us. The challenge for us here is obvious. We are all sinners and none of us can rightly accomplish stewardship this side of heaven. Only through His grace and the power given us through Jesus Christ we can grow as God's stewards.

I will begin our series today looking at how God calls us to pursue His priorities in our life. Pastor Dan next week will explore the possibilities that can flow from the gifts and talents the Lord has uniquely given each of us. In the last week of our series, Pastor Jonna will more closely examine the possessions God has given to us and help us better understand the purposefulness we should have in putting those possessions to good use and have a heart for giving.

Pathway to Priorities: Stepping Stones

- ❖ Perspective of His Priorities
- ❖ Presence to His Priorities
- ❖ Pursuit of His Priorities

In His book, Purpose Driven Life, Rick Warren tells us that “living in light of eternity changes our priorities.” As we reflect on what it truly means to steward our priorities, we need to move forward across three stepping-stones along the pathway: (1) Gain further Perspective of His Priorities, (2) Give honest Presence to His Priorities and (3) Go actively in Pursuit of His Priorities

### **Gaining Perspective of His Priorities**

We are taught by Christ in today’s passage in Luke to seek the Kingdom of God above all else. God calls us to make Jesus the Lord and King of our lives. God calls us to seek Him alone for understanding over how to best guide our plans, passions, possessions, and the people in our lives – our work, our play, our relationships – in short – anything we see as a priority, must be viewed in light of His priorities.

This truly hit home for me about 15 years ago. For years, I had managed to achieve the goals and priorities I had set for my life with reckless abandon. I did everything humanly possible to climb the corporate ladder, achieve new heights professionally. I worked 16-hour days, 6-days a week. All the while patting myself on the back for giving my family everything in life they could ever have imagined. Then, just after 9-11-2001 everything came tumbling down – all my success seemed for naught as I went into a season of hopelessness and joblessness.

After weeks of battling depression and feeling lost on how to move forward, I was sitting with my two daughters in our living room. One of my young daughters looked up at me and said Daddy the best thing about you losing your job is that we finally get to know you. We like our new daddy. My heart came crashing down and tears filled my eyes. For the first time, I realized I was chasing the wrong dream, pursuing the wrong priorities. For the first time, I fully understood these girls were God’s daughters and He simply gave me the gift to watch over them, steward them.

Most of us struggle to focus on the priorities that make a difference in our lives or have a significant impact on those around us. Our daily activities, duties, and responsibilities crowd our schedule so that we just cannot seem to do what God calls us to do. We take on what has become known as a tyranny of the urgent.

Yet, God knows us better than we know ourselves and He has made His will known to us. Since He is God our Creator, Sustainer, and Father, He knows what is best for our life now and our life to come. As we look to His Word, we should seek the priorities that God has established for us to become good stewards of the time he has given us.

**Philippians 1:9-11**

*<sup>9</sup> And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, <sup>10</sup> so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, <sup>11</sup> filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.*

Paul, the apostle, prays that we may discern what is most important in His eyes:

*<sup>9</sup> And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, <sup>10</sup> so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, <sup>11</sup> filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God. (**Philippians 1:9-11**)*

Paul teaches us here to “distinguish between the choices we have to make and decide what is best.”

We need to be able to look at the alternatives and choose what is most pleasing to God, what is best for our spiritual wellbeing, and what would be a blessing to others. With this known, we can better prioritize the numerous activities that compete for our attention.

When we seek Scriptural priorities, we discover those relationships, activities, and pursuits that should precede others. God desires us to prioritize all of the possible activities in life according to the tangible

priorities He has laid before us. What does God's Word say should be our priorities?

#### Perspective of His Priorities

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|------------------------|---|
| • The Kingdom of God   | • Matthew 6:33                            |
| • The Glory of God     | • 1 Corinthians 10:31                     |
| • Our Love for Him     | • Mark 12:30                              |
| • Our Love for Christ  | • Matthew 10:37, Colossians 1:18          |
| • Love for One Another | • 1 Peter 4:8, Colossians 3:14            |
| • Heaven Above         | • Colossians 3:1-2                        |
| • Fixed on Eternity    | • 2 Corinthians 4:18, Phillipians 3:13-14 |
| • Doing What is Good   | • Titus 3:8, 14                           |

While I cannot share each verse, the following scriptures help us to establish a good understanding of God's key priorities for us:

- **The Kingdom of God.** <sup>33</sup> *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.* (**Matthew 6:33**)
- **The Glory of God.** <sup>31</sup> *So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.* (**1 Corinthians 10:31**)
- **Our Love for Him.** <sup>30</sup> *Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.* (**Mark 12:30**)
- **Our Love for Christ.** <sup>37</sup> *"Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."* (**Matthew 10:37**). <sup>18</sup> *And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.* (**Colossians 1:18**)
- **Love for One Another.** <sup>8</sup> *Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.* (**1 Peter 4:8**)  
<sup>14</sup> *And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.* (**Colossians 3:14**)
- **Spiritual things from Heaven above.** <sup>1</sup> *Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.* <sup>2</sup> *Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.* (**Colossians 3:1-2**)
- **Fixed on Eternity.** <sup>18</sup> *So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.* (**2 Corinthians 4:18**)
- **Eternal goal of life in Christ.** <sup>13</sup> *Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,* <sup>14</sup> *I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.* (**Philippians 3:13-14**)
- **Doing What Is Good.** <sup>8</sup> *This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for*

*everyone... <sup>14</sup> Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives.*  
**(Titus 3:8,14).**

### ***Giving Honest Presence to His Priorities***

These passages show us where our priorities lie from God's perspective and give us His purpose for each of us. They contrast markedly from the kind of priorities that people in the world have. If we really do put Jesus Christ first in our life, if we exalt God above everyone else, if we consistently seek first the kingdom of God, and if we strive for love and every other spiritual fruit, then our life will reveal this perspective. Our life will give clear evidence that our perspective is radically different from those around us. We will walk in Christ-likeness and align our daily activities according to God's Word.

Sadly, many of us try to set our priorities and manage our time by cutting back or eliminating our spiritual pursuits. We begin to reduce our time in God's Word to a very insignificant portion of our day or even worse entirely stop reading our Bibles.

Ephesians 5:8-17 NIV

"Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

<sup>15</sup> Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

*"Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."*

*<sup>15</sup> Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. (Ephesians 5:8-17 NIV)*

Another area we start to neglect is the spiritual guidance of our families. As parents, we may not make a deliberate attempt to teach and train our children in the Scriptures and the ways of God. Family devotions, worship, and Bible teaching give way to other "family" activities. As married couples we reduce the amount of quality time we spend with each other.

We excuse our sins of omission with stinkin' thinkin' – telling ourselves that we have too many other things to do and there just isn't enough time to get it all done!

Presence to His Priorities

- Worship the Lord
- Prayer
- Quiet Time / Meditation on His Word
- Confession of Sinful Ways
- Spiritual Fellowship and Accountability
- Witnessing to Others
- Serving Others

While we may desire to have a rich fellowship with and worship our Lord, we tend to minimize our quiet time and time in prayer. We devote very little time to being in His Word, listening to His voice, or asking for His advice. All too often, we reduce the spiritual portions of our lives to the bare minimum. We may even pull away from spiritual fellowship with others.

When we start to recognize that communion with God through His written Word must be a daily priority. We will feel the importance of devoting ourselves to reading and learning about God and His truth. We see more fully His will for our life. We will want to be more consistent in our prayer life and delight in glorifying God. We will want to confess our sins, seek for God to work in our family members and friends, and request Him to be active in our own daily experiences.

We will want to meditate on God's truth, share the good news of salvation with others, and serve others through a multitude of good deeds. If our priorities are straight, we will give evidence of this in all that we do from day to day.

God will show us the ways that a husband should love, care for, nurture, and bless his wife. The ways a wife should help, serve, and bless her husband. He will guide parents to bless, teach, train, and provide for their children and see them as the gifts from God that they are. He will work in the hearts of our children to see the importance of loving and engaging with their family.

His Holy Spirit will have us look for opportunities to be a blessing to neighbors, friends, and our brothers and sisters in Christ. All of this takes time and somehow we need to find or make time for it. This can be a challenge!

## **Go Actively in Pursuit of His Priorities**

#### Pursuit of His Priorities – The Tradeoffs

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|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The Kingdom of God</li><li>▪ The Glory of God</li><li>▪ Our Love for Him</li><li>▪ Our Love for Christ</li><li>▪ Love for One Another</li><li>▪ Heaven Above</li><li>▪ Fixed on Eternity</li><li>▪ Doing What is Good</li></ul> | <p style="text-align: center;">CONSIDER GIVING LESS PRIORITY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Too much Television</li><li>▪ Fanatical Sports Involvement</li><li>▪ Abundance of Time on Hobbies</li><li>▪ Excessive Work Hours</li><li>▪ Overindulging in Social Media</li><li>▪ Unbalanced Sleeping</li></ul> |
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In light of this, how can we go actively in Pursuit of His priorities? What are some of the daily activities that consume our time and energy? Consider a few things that are not necessarily bad but when they begin to consume an excessive amount of our time they overtake God's priorities for our lives – too much television, fanatical sports involvement, abundance of time on hobbies, excessive work hours, overindulging in social media, and unbalanced sleep. All of these can be good for us in moderation.

Active pursuit happens when we try to keep in mind our priorities as we go through our day. When we make choices in light of those priorities. A good way to gain perspective is to sit down at a table and write out our priorities. Seeing all of this in print will help us to solidify our commitments before God and to make better use of our time.

We cannot let the enticements of the world sway us to change our priorities when we are facing tempting situations in life. We cannot yield to temptations of the flesh. Instead, we must pursue the priorities we have already committed ourselves to do and make our decisions surrounding the use of our time in light of these priorities.

Haggai 1:5-7 NIV

<sup>5</sup>Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. <sup>6</sup>You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it."<sup>7</sup>This is what the Lord Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways.

<sup>5</sup> Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. (**Haggai 1:5 NIV**)

Our time on earth is shockingly brief in light of everlasting life that looms before us. We are here for a day and then must face eternity! It is utterly

foolish to waste the precious gift of time that God has given to each of us. Let us be wise in light of the brevity of life and the fact that we will one-day stand before Jesus Christ and give an account for what we have done in our body, whether good or bad.

Sometimes in life, we have something of significance happen that reminds us of where our priorities should be. We get shaken by a car accident, a loved one passing away, or maybe a difficult and life-threatening health issue and we quickly refocus and realize where our priorities should be. Jesus tried to simplify things for us when asked about what the "greatest commandment" was and He simply said to love God first and love our neighbor as we ourselves have been loved by Him.

#### Pursuing His Priorities

*<sup>5</sup> Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise,<sup>16</sup> making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.*  
**(Ephesians 5:15-16)**

*<sup>22</sup> Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*  
**(2 Timothy 2:22)**

***<sup>5</sup> Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise,<sup>16</sup> making the most of every opportunity... (Ephesians 5:15-16).***

With God's help, each of us can be a wise, strong, and godly in our pursuit of the priorities that please and glorify Him. *"Fleeing the evil desires of youth and pursuing righteousness, faith, love and peace..."*  
**(2 Timothy 2:22)**

#### Pathway to Priorities: Steeping Stones

- ❖ Gain Perspective of His Priorities
- ❖ Give Presence to His Priorities
- ❖ Go in Pursuit of His Priorities

*"seek his kingdom, all other things will be added to us."*  
**(Luke 12:29-31)**

I do realize setting priorities is easier to say than to do. We can be thankful that we have a great God that never gives up on us and desires to give us

His insights every day. Have you sought His insights lately when it comes to setting priorities?

My challenge for each of us is to take the time to establish our priorities aligned to His priorities. We can go to His Word and gain perspective on His priorities, we can give presence to those priorities in our life, and we can actively pursue those priorities each day.

So can we take some time to get on our knees before the Lord and confess our foolishness? Can we ask God to expose those areas in our lives that we are wasting time and the valuable opportunities He has for us? Can we commit to seeking him to help us discover His view of life's priorities? Can we ask for His strength to do what we know we should do? In doing so, may we remember that when we "*seek his kingdom, all other things will be added to us.*" (Luke 12:29-31)