

WEEK 2: *Stewarding Time and Talent*

Hook

Main Point: God is glorified through the stewardship of time and talent.

Hosting Thanksgiving dinner for a large group of people is not the kind of event that comes together in an instant. If you, as one person, were responsible for making a big Thanksgiving dinner possible, you would need to be willing to invest your time, talents and giftings into hosting a major event. Cleaning, decorating, cooking and hosting all require stewarding your time in a sacrificial way. Cooking, in particular, may require a special skill set in order that the food to be on the table and warm when the guests sit down to eat. Lastly, hosting the event may require using unique giftings such as hospitality, administration and leadership. Thankfully, Thanksgiving is usually a cooperative process, in which different family members and friends combine their different skill sets and giftings.

Transition: Our relationship with the Lord requires an investment of time. We must consciously choose to steward our time, talents and giftings in such a way that He is glorified, and the Church is served. We do not have to have unlimited time, or every talent or gifting in order to serve the Church well, but we should steward those with which we have been entrusted in a way that makes God known.

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Book

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Talking point 1: To reflect the Lord in our daily lives, we must dedicate time to the Lord.

There is a simple principle that says, “you make time for what you care about.” Even in the craziest seasons of life, people find time for the hobbies and relationships that matter most to them. How we dedicate our time informs others about our priorities. When we dedicate our time to the Lord, it begins to shape our heart, behavior and attitude. Since we are made in His image (Genesis 1:27), and therefore reflect Him physically, we should also strive to reflect Him in every facet of life. Reflecting the Lord in all things requires time and effort, and it begins with knowing His Word.

Q: Where have you been prioritizing your time and effort recently?

Read: Psalm 1:1–6

According to the psalmist, the righteous man is dedicated to the Lord and disassociated from sinners. In verse 6, we learn that the result for the righteous man is life, and for the wicked man is death. The passage reminds us that dedication to the Lord is not a part-time job, but rather a lifetime commitment. Bearing fruit and growing strong like the tree planted by the water requires consistent meditation on the words of the Lord. Meditation is not an easy discipline to master because it requires time, and more specifically, it requires time without distractions.

Q: What are practical examples of what meditation might look like?

Meditation can look like a personal quiet time involving reading, prayer, memorization and journaling. No specific method is right or wrong, as long as the purpose stays the same: allocating a focused time on God’s Word for the sake of growing closer to Him in order to reflect Him better day to day.

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18; Ephesians 5:15–20

The apostle Paul challenges his audiences to steward their time well. To the church in Thessalonica, he commands constant prayer, rejoicing and thanksgiving. He tells the church in Ephesus to evaluate how they use their time, warning them against wastefully using up the limited time we have on passions that are rebellious against God. Not everything we care about or dedicate time to is sinful, but anything that we idolize or place ahead of our time with the Lord is. James stresses in his letter that our time is limited, so everything we do must be for the glory of God (James 4:13–15). Our stewardship of time goes beyond our quiet time with the

Lord, though. How much time are we using for discipling our children, fostering Gospel conversations with coworkers, or serving in our local church? Each person has been gifted with unique abilities and talents at which they excel. When Paul challenges the Ephesians to be filled with the Spirit (v. 18) and make the best use of time (v. 16) he is asking them to bear fruit through their works (vv. 8–14). The personal time we dedicate to the Lord should result in public time dedicated to the Lord through discipling, evangelizing and serving.

Q: What can you do this week to better steward personal time dedicated to the Lord?

Q: What can you do this week to better steward public time dedicated to the Lord?

Talking Point 2: To reflect the Lord in our daily lives, we must dedicate talents to the Lord.

In the days of Moses, God sought to dwell directly among His people, so He entrusted Moses with a major undertaking: the construction of a portable sanctuary called a tabernacle. Moses proceeded to call on the people of Israel to use their talents, abilities and possessions to make the tabernacle a reality.

Read: Exodus 35:20–29

While many of the people provided for the tabernacle through the offering of special materials and jewelry, others provided through their skill set. Men with a skill in craftsmanship were required for construction, as were woman with a skill for spinning yarn and goats' hair. This passage paints the picture of a community of people who trusted in the Lord, executing a common vision for the purpose of God's glory. The construction of the tabernacle took time and effort from the people, but it also took the appropriate heart posture. Throughout the passage, it is clear that the people of God desired to build the tabernacle because they did so with a "willing heart" (v. 22), and they completed it as a "freewill offering to the Lord" (v. 29). Later in the chapter, we learn that God picked a man named Bezalel to oversee the construction, as he himself was a masterful craftsman. Bezalel used his talents to build a dwelling place for the Lord, including everything that existed within the tabernacle, such as the ark of the covenant. The construction continued to completion at the end of Exodus 39, and in Exodus 40 the tabernacle was erected, and the glory of God filled its space.

Though it may seem that we have talents that may be useless for the advancement of God's kingdom, there are instances in Scripture that suggest otherwise. For example, David used his ability to play the lyre for God's glory when he was put in service of the God-appointed king, Saul. When Saul was tormented by a harmful spirit, David played the lyre in an effort to calm him (1 Samuel 16:14–23). Also, in Acts 18, we learn that Paul is a tentmaker. While he didn't build tents such as the tabernacle of Exodus 35, he used his skill set with tents to stay self-sufficient. Even though Paul encouraged churches to financially support their leaders (1 Timothy 5:17; Galatians 6:6), he often chose independence from that system so as not to be a burden (2 Corinthians 12:14; 1 Thessalonians 2:9) on a church that was just getting on its feet.

Q: How have you seen the Lord use talents in your life, or the life of your friends and family, for his glory?

The Lord can use any of our talents or skill sets for His glory. There are even a wide variety of talents that can be used directly for the edification of the church. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but musicians, photographers, handymen, computer engineers, and grill masters all have a specific ability that can be leveraged in service to the church. Even for a skillset that does not pertain specifically to the church, that skillset often enables a platform through which God can be glorified and made known.

Q: How can you steward your talents and abilities to make God known?

Talking Point 3: To reflect the Lord in our daily lives, we must dedicate our spiritual gifts to serving one another.

Encourage your group to take a spiritual gifts survey in the week ahead. Lifeway Christian Resources has a great one that is printable.

Q: Do you know your spiritual gifts?

Read: 1 Corinthians 12:4–6, 14–20

Throughout the New Testament epistles, a number of gifts are described as being from the Spirit, including, but not limited to, hospitality (1 Peter 4:9), administration, teaching, knowledge, wisdom (1 Corinthians 12:28), mercy, giving and leadership (Romans 12:8). These gifts are distinct from talents and learned skill sets. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12 that there are a variety of gifts, but they are all from God, entrusted to us. In verses 14–20, Paul explains the importance of the diversity of gifts within the church. The whole body cannot function if everyone has the same gift. If all are teachers, but there is no hospitality or mercy, there is also no church. Not only is it important that everyone have different gifts, but it is also important that everyone utilizes their gifts. There is a role for everyone and their unique gift(s) within the body of the church.

Read: 1 Peter 4:8–11

Peter's intention in this passage is to challenge his audience to steward their gifts well, remembering that the gifting is not only *from* the Lord, but it is also to be used *for* the Lord. Often, the spiritual gifts that we have are natural to us, and they show up in the way we interact with neighbors or manage employees, but when it is time to use those gifts in a classroom full of kids on Sunday morning, or by stepping into a LifeGroup leadership role, we put those gifts to the side and keep them for ourselves. But if the gift came from the Lord, then it should be used for the Lord. Peter commands that they be used to serve one another (v. 10), even stating that the Lord has provided us with the strength to serve (v. 11).

The good works and fruit-bearing that we are called to as believers in Christ begins with the utilization of our time, talents and gifts. As James reminds us, faith without works is dead (James 2:17). Stewarding our gifts means going beyond what is convenient and comfortable because we recognize that the purpose of our gifts is for something much greater than ourselves – the advancement of God’s Church.

Q: What are practical examples of how you can steward your gifts for the glory of God?

Q: How does your stewardship of gifts relate to your stewardship of time and talent?

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Took

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Challenge your group to find a place to serve in the church according to their gifts. Some options include:

- Parking Team – Casey Burt (cburt@prestonwood.org)
- Special Friends Ministry – Nichole Huggins (nhuggins@prestonwood.org)
- Kids Ministry – Kathy Kovalchuk (kkovalchuk@prestonwood.org)
 - Preschool Ministry (K & under) – Lauren Young (lyoung@prestonwood.org)
 - Elementary Ministry (grades 1–3) – Rebekah Inman (rinman@prestonwood.org)
 - Preteen Ministry (grades 4–6) – Heath Marcom (hmarcom@prestonwood.org)
- Student Ministry (grades 7–12) – Anthony Vargas (avargas@prestonwood.org)
- Greeters & Ushers – Damon Simpson (dsimpson@prestonwood.org)
- Marriage Ministry – James McKinney (jmckinney@prestonwood.org)
- Women’s Ministry – Tasha Calvert (tcalvert@prestonwood.org)
- Decision Encouragers – Parker Jones (parkerjones@prestonwood.org)
- Prestonwood Pregnancy Center (ppc@prestonwood.org)

Serving in the church requires time, and it may require learned abilities and skill sets, but as Peter mentioned, the Lord supplies us with the strength and the gifts to serve. We just have to steward them well and choose to use them for His glory.

Challenge: What are you building? Last week, we discussed the legacy that is created through proper stewardship. Stewarding our time, gifts and talents for the sake of the church and the glory of God impacts our legacy as well.