

Use It or Lose It.

How Faithful Are You as a Steward in the Eight Areas of Opportunity Available to You?

While I was waiting in a dental office years ago I picked up volume one of *The Bible Story* by William S. Maxwell and read the chapter about Enoch walking with God. (Enoch was “translated” into heaven without dying. Gen. 5:24, Heb. 11:5) The chapter ended by revealing Enoch’s secret: he kept “in step” with God.

Learning under the yoke.

Jesus gave us the secret to walking with or keeping in step with Him in Matthew 11:28-30, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

The yoke was a small beam of wood carved to fit over the necks of two oxen plowing or pulling together. When a young, inexperienced ox was yoked to an experienced one, the yoke became a teaching instrument, transferring, as it were, the maturity of the older one to the younger.

God’s normal way of instructing us is by a method called *revelation*, which occurs when a particular thought or truth from the Bible comes alive to our hearts, a *word from the mouth of God*, giving us life, direction, insight, and motivation to do His will. Moses said there are secrets only God knows, but “those things which are *revealed* [revelation] *belong* to us . . . that we may *do* all the words of this law” (Dt. 8:3; 29:29).

Our ability to do His will doesn’t come from will-power but *revelation* (Rom. 9:16). The reason God said His revealed Word belongs to us is that we can’t do His will without it! In fact we can’t *live* spiritually without it, and Jesus used this point against Satan, quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, when he tempted Jesus to make bread out of stones (Mt. 4:4).

Whether a burden is difficult or easy depends on *how we see it*. Playing your favorite sport may take a huge amount of energy, but we call it *fun* compared to doing a little task we don’t *want* to do. *Revelation* is seeing things in our *spirit* from God’s viewpoint, which makes hard things *easy* and burdens *light*.

Just before Jesus mentioned taking His yoke to learn (revelation), He said He *reveals* things, not to the wise and prudent, but “to babes.” (Mt. 11:25-27) In that simple sentence Jesus gave us the key to revelation and to *His* own ability to do His Father’s will. For He told us “the Son can do *nothing* of Himself but what He *sees* [revelation] the Father do” (Jn. 5:19).

So the question is, how can I become like a babe, “as little children” (Mt. 18:3), so I can *live* and *do* by the revelation of His Word? Remember, “it is not of him who wills nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy” (Rom. 9:16). There’s no way we can impress or influence God into giving us what we need other than *to position ourselves for His mercy*.

And God mercifully shows us how to do it: Take *His yoke* with a “gentle and lowly” heart, listen and learn, and we’ll find *rest* instead of exhaustion, frustration, fear, anger, bondage, and burnout.

The problem with being *wise* and *prudent* is that we become *unteachable* when we think *we’ve* got it together. Plus it’s more difficult for us to *stoop under* the yoke and take on a humiliating or exasperating job or assignment, especially if there’s no recognition, compensation, gratification, or visible reward.

Yet a *humble attitude* and a *pure motive with faith* and *love provide the best learning environment* for “the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him” (Eph. 1:15-18, Col. 1:9). “The humble He guides in justice, and the humble He teaches His way” (Ps. 25:9). And “whoever humbles himself as this little *child* is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 18:4).

If this isn’t clear enough, read Luke 17:5-10, where

our role model for developing faith is not the master, but the *servant* (Greek, *doulas*, 1401, slave). God’s intent is not to give us a loser mentality, but a rather to develop our *motive* and *attitude* as “bondservants [*doulas*] of Christ, doing the will of God from the *heart*” (Eph. 6:6). Humility lightens the load! Pride—trying to impress and win approval from others—adds unnecessary stress!

The attitude of every believer, according to Paul, should be Philippians 2:5-8, known as the “self-emptying of Christ.” It was through His motive and attitude that He overcame Satan, who did the opposite (Is. 14:12-14, Ez. 28:11-19).

Jesus took five steps *down*: (1) no reputation, (2) became a servant (*doulas*), (3) became just like us, “subject to weakness,” (4) constantly humbled Himself until it led to His death, (5) died the death of a slave and criminal, rejected by man and even His Father, under a curse because of *our* sin (Is. 53, 2 Cor. 5:21, Gal. 3:13, Heb. 2:10-18; 5:2-8).

He did the hard part and then gave us the Holy Spirit to learn of Him under the *easy* side of the yoke.

How to rest while working.

So keeping in step with Him is about maintaining a humble, teachable, listening attitude without lagging behind or running ahead of Him. But as the self-emptying passage might suggest, it’s not as simple as it sounds. As a young pastor reading about great men of God who learned to rest in God by waiting for His timing, I struggled with how to “wait on God” and do “nothing of myself” without doing nothing at all.

One day as I read Psalm 123 I suddenly saw in my heart what God was after: “Unto You I lift up my eyes, O You who dwell in the heavens.” That’s seeking and waiting for God’s direction. But the second verse revealed *how* it takes place: “Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, until He has mercy on us.”

As I thought about this, I saw in my mind a man who hires a servant. The servant waits around, doing only what his boss tells him to do, who must stay constantly on top of him to keep him busy.

Finally, in exasperation, he fires him and hires a man with a lot of ambition. This guy really gets things done on his own without supervision. The boss feels great. Then he gives him a specific job to do and discovers a problem as frustrating as it was with the one he fired. This ambitious employee is too head-strong. First, it’s difficult to stop him for a different task if he’s hard at work on something he’s not finished with yet. And second, he wants to do things *his* way and argues with the boss over *how* it should be done.

After several attempts to work with him, the boss lets him go and finally hires someone with a true *servant’s heart*. It is someone who senses the *obvious* needs around him and *occupies* himself with them, but keeps a sensitive ear to any *specific* need his boss has.

I see this servant rising higher and higher in the company because he has found the secret of *keeping in step* with its purpose and with a sensitive ear for His boss’s voice, his *master’s heart* and *will*, *not his own*.

I’ve observed those wrong attitudes in myself and others. Sometimes we neglect *obvious* needs through lack of vision. Sometimes we just get “weary in well doing” (Gal. 6:9). Sometimes we’re driven by ambition beyond the *rest* of “abiding in the Vine,” insensitive to the inner prompting of the Holy Spirit (Heb. 4, Jn. 15).

Through Palm 123 it finally dawned on me that *life is all about stewardship*. A steward is a person (or servant) *in charge of something or someone assigned to him and for which or whom he is responsible*. And responsibility is about *faithfulness to the one who gave him the assignment*.

Jesus said, “Who then is that *faithful* and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household [stewardship], to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant [*doulas*] whom his master will find *so doing* when he comes. Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has.” (Lu.12:42-4)

It’s all about the kingdom of heaven, where each of us has been entrusted a “measure of faith,” grace “according to the measure of Christ’s gift” (Rom. 12:3, Eph. 4:7). Jesus compared it to servants issued varying amounts of money to

invest. They were rewarded with *authority* to the degree of their *faithfulness* with what *they’d* been given, not what other servants were given.

The most shocking thing about this parable in Matthew 25:14-29 and Luke 19:11-27 is what Jesus said about the servant who *failed to make use of this stewardship entrusted him*. The terms Jesus used are *wicked, lazy, and unprofitable!* Furthermore he was cast into “outer darkness” with “weeping and gnashing of teeth”!

It’s hard to imagine such a severe punishment meted out to someone who simply *neglected* the gifts and opportunities given him. I finally concluded it had to do with the servant’s attitude toward his master. He thought of him (representing God) as *hard and unmerciful* (Mt. 25:24).

So in *fear* he failed to *step out in faith*, believing God to follow him with “goodness and mercy” (Ps. 23:6). His “faith without works” revealed he didn’t have *genuine* faith in a loving, merciful God who carries the heavy end of the yoke while we learn of Him in childlike trust through success and failure (James 2:14-26).

Because I’ve also struggled with fear of failure and yet have watched God’s unfailing faithfulness even *through* my failures, I’ve listed eight areas where God has given us an *obvious* stewardship *while we wait for more specific* instructions.

Together they constitute God’s *training center* where our *faithfulness* in little things is *tested and developed for greater things* (Lu. 16:10). *This is the form of waiting that keeps us in touch and in tune with God’s voice when He speaks—if we keep in step!*

1. Our relationships: family, marriage, friends, enemies, people. The family is God’s primary proving ground for our joint heir-ship with Christ. The family is the womb or wellspring of the “issues” that drive us through our adult years until they are dealt with, reconciled, and healed through Christ.

If children honor their parents, they are promised long life. If parents love and train their children, they generally reap the benefits in later years. (Eph. 6:2-4, Pr. 22:6). But few families are that ideal, and most of us are left with relationship challenges and inner problems, like good and bad fruit from *family roots*.

If we see every relationship as a stewardship, an *opportunity* to see the restoring power of *grace* at work, we’re guaranteed the help of the Holy Spirit for guidance and *revelation* (Jn. 14:15-18).

Marriage is one of life’s most important stewardships, for it is a prototype of the Church, of our relationship to Christ as His Bride. To live together unmarried is sin because sin is “missing the mark” (Greek, *hamartano*, Strongs Concordance. #264). And the bull’s eye in that relationship is a life-time commitment to responsibility, “for better, for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us part.” (Mk. 10:5-9, 1 Cor. 7:1-16, Eph. 5:3-6, 22-33, Heb. 13:4, 1 Pet. 3:1-7)

If it is difficult, remember God is training us as sons to reign with His Son, to judge the world—even fallen angels. No wonder this job is reserved for *overcomers*, those who “do not become sluggish,” but “through faith and patience inherit the promises.” (Heb. 6:12; 2:3, 1 Cor. 6:2-3, 2 Tim. 2:12, Heb. 6:9-12, Rev. 2:26).

Another important stewardship of relationship is the responsibility we have toward both our friends and our enemies. Our friends not only need our encouragement, but our honesty with them, correcting them in love as the Spirit leads (Pr. 27:5-6, Mt. 7:5, Gal. 6:1). Our enemies need to see our love and wisdom in the face of their evil, and God needs to hear our prayers for them so He can deal with them appropriately (Pr. 24:17-18, Mt. 5:43-47, Rom. 12:18-21).

C.S. Lewis wrote, “The dullest and most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption [you would meet] only in a nightmare.

“All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities . . . that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play,

all politics.” (*The Weight of Glory*, p.28)

2. The local church. This stewardship is as primary as marriage and family, for it is *God’s* family. It takes the place of marriage for the unmarried, and it’s the beginning of the only “marriage” that will continue in eternity, *for it provides a place of intimacy with God and one another*. “Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!” (Rev. 19:9)

Our physical health depends to a great extent on it, much like honoring one’s parents provides long life. Because “discerning the Lord’s Body” goes beyond discerning (recognizing, perceiving, seeing) Christ in the Lord’s Supper (Holy Communion). It also applies to *discerning Christ in the members of His Body, the Church—our brothers and sisters in Christ*. (1 Cor. 10:16-17; 11:29-30, James 5:16)

When Paul speaks of “the fellowship of the *mystery*” regarding the Church in Ephesians 3, he refers to it as perhaps the most valuable thing ever revealed, “which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God” (v.9). In this chapter, he relates it to the Gentiles becoming one with the Jews—opposites in the flesh, but one in the Spirit.

But in his other teaching, the *mystery* is no less than “Christ in you, the hope of glory,” uniting *all* of us into “one Body” in Christ (Col. 1:26-27, 2 Cor. 5:17, Eph. 1:9-10; 3:3-10; 4:3-5).

He speaks of marriage as a *great mystery* “concerning Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:32). Most believers can quote 2 Corinthians 5:17 (“. . . if any man be in Christ he is a new creature . . .”), but few *understand* its full meaning— that “from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh” (v. 16).

When Mary emptied the flask of very expensive perfume on the feet of Jesus, anointing Him for His burial, Jesus placed this act on the highest level and connected it with the preaching of the Gospel throughout the world (Mk. 14:3-9).

How could this be? Because it is the mystery of the Kingdom—seeing the King in His *humiliation*, at a time when nobody else, including His own disciples, could see anything but “waste.” And it relates to the most difficult aspect of the Church today— beholding Christ in our weak brethren, the “uncomely” or “less honorable” members of His Body, the Church (1 Cor. 12:22-24).

How shocking it will be when we see them in their glorified bodies to realize how lightly we esteemed them in their “lowly body,” “the body of [their] humiliation” (Php. 3:21, J.B. Phillips).

As stewards of this mystery we are responsible to esteem our Christian brothers and sisters *highly*, “better than” ourselves, not through inferiority, but through genuine humility, the mind of Christ (1 Thes. 5:13, Php. 2:3-8).

What an assignment!

3. The needy around us. From time to time someone tells me he feels called to the ministry and wants to know how to get started. My usual answer is to begin by developing faithfulness (as a steward) in his or her local church. Out of that his *character* will be tried and tested and his *vision* will develop until he begins to sense God’s further direction for his life.

I’ve found there are enough needs available through the local church to be “full time” in ministry *without a ministry title*. From nursing homes and hospitals to jails and prisons, even college campuses, the needs are abundant and increasing. These are some of the richest mission fields right here within a few miles of most homes and churches.

Most of us may not end up in jail, but many or most of us will end up in a nursing home or living under the care of one of our children, and with nothing left but memories and pictures. Yet these are real people like us in the final stage before promotion to glory or *terror*. If we understood the mystery I’ve referred to, we might realize they are perhaps in the most important stage of their lives—the point of their *deepest humiliation and need*.

It is possible that during these lonely days when most forms of pleasure have long ceased, and all that’s left is *waiting*, our ministry might be more meaningful to them

than ever before. *Yet it is sadly ironic that though we're all headed there, it is probably the least valued of all ministry opportunities.*

Another desperate need is our “at-risk youth” in juvenile detention centers and in our neighborhoods. We live at a time when irresponsible kids are raising their own renegade kids. And the vicious cycle continues, producing crime and violence. We can criticize and worry, or we can look for opportunities for outreach and involvement, beginning with prayer.

Teaching a class in Sunday school is a good way to help, plus it can give you a Bible college education, if you take it seriously. Or on Saturdays gather the kids in your neighborhood to your home for stories and rap sessions or games. When you see these kids later as young adults, you'll be glad you invested in their lives.

The needy all around us provide another of life's awesome opportunities for stewardship, especially through the help of the local church. Jesus will separate the sheep from the goats on judgment day by *how we responded to them*. I find it *one of the scariest things Jesus ever said, and all I can say is that I hope He wasn't serious, or a lot of us will be in deep trouble.* (Mt. 25:31-46)

4. Our job. Here is another stewardship through which God proves and develops us. Jesus spoke *specifically* about how our responsibility here relates to our reward later (Mt. 25:14f, Lu. 19:11f; 16:10). And since He always emphasized the spiritual, it behooves us to see our secular employment in light of eternity.

Studies have found that people who go to the top in their profession or trade, as in athletic competition, put more time into it than they have to. Those who stay at the bottom, go from job to job, or are jobless, are those who attempt to get the most money out of their job while putting the least effort into it.

Some spend a lifetime trying to “milk the system” for every government handout available, from lawsuits to exaggerated “disability” pensions. It's like a weight lifter cheating on the weights during his practice to make it easier, not realizing he's only cheating himself from winning in real competition. What an *obvious* stewardship “making a living” is, as well as a significant *test of our integrity*.

Joseph learned the authority to “bind” Pharaoh's princes and “teach his elders wisdom” while humbly serving Potiphar as a slave and then serving the warden in a dungeon on a false rape charge. For many years. “Until the time that his word came to pass, the word of the Lord tested him.” (Ps. 105:19-22, Gen. 39-41).

Moses, “learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians . . . mighty in words and deeds” at age 40, spent his next 40 years faithfully caring for a hard-headed wife and her father's sheep. There in that desert, not in Pharaoh's palace, followed by yet a third 40 years shepherding “stiff-necked” and “rebellious” people, God groomed him into one of the greatest spiritual leaders the world has ever known. (Ex. 3:1; 4:26, Acts 7:22)

David learned the lessons he'd need for ruling a nation not at Hebrew University, but faithfully tending his dad's sheep (a job for the *least* among his brothers), then serving under a demon-oppressed, jealous king who wanted to kill him, and finally, tending 600 dysfunctional human sheep and training them into a mighty army. And one time even *they* wanted to kill him. (1 Sam. 16:14; 18:7-10; 22:2; 30:6)

When Jesus prayed all night before selecting his disciples, God led him away from religious experts whose integrity had boiled down to fleecing instead of feeding the sheep, to simple hard-working men who did their jobs with honesty and integrity. With one exception—Judas (Jn. 6:70-71; 12:6).

But like the servants in Psalm 123 who looked to the hand of their masters and didn't make an idol out of their careers, they dropped everything and changed their loyalty to the ultimate Master. Through this little band of teachable and faithful men with a heart like David, God “turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6).

And to a host of saints who are learning integrity and diligence doing that which is “another man's” (Lu. 16:12),

God will “give power over the nations” to “rule them with a rod of iron.” And through them make known His wisdom to the powers of darkness (Satan and his angels) now attempting to destroy this planet. (Rev. 2:26-27, Eph. 3:10)

Is it worth cutting corners and shoddy workmanship?

5. Personal assets—knowledge, education, money, talents, spiritual gifts. Another sad irony is that while knowledge and wealth are crucial for the Kingdom of God, He can't use the majority of people who have a lot of it. “For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called” (1 Cor. 1:26).

Jesus told His disciples that it was virtually impossible “for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God” (Mk. 10:24). But He added, “With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.”

Most of us have a stewardship in these two areas, whether we accept it or not. We have accumulated some education and a few material assets. One day as I worried over someone's abuse of what I'd been entrusted with, it occurred to me there's a way to bring my material things to heaven. I needed to exchange my material “currency” for heavenly currency in the same way one changes American dollars for the currency of the country he's entering.

To convert the assets God has given us on earth into heavenly assets, we need to simply yield it all to Him and allow Him to both direct us in the use of it and to test us in the stewardship of it. (Lu. 16:11-12; 19:17, Mt. 25:21, Heb. 3:2)

The same with knowledge. Paul and Peter, two opposites when it came to education, both wrote that knowledge is basic to spiritual fruitfulness, obedience, strength, maturity, grace, and in fact “all things that pertain to life and godliness.” How do we get this knowledge? By *taking His yoke and learning of Him*. Mere head-knowledge won't cut it! It takes heart-revelation from a position of *servings!* (Eph. 1:17f, Col. 1:9-11, 2 Pet. 1:2-4, Mt. 11:29)

Hosea said, “My people are destroyed for *lack of knowledge*” (Hos. 4:6a). The whole world is rising or falling based on the kind of knowledge they have, and we—God's people—are *stewards* of this priceless commodity. What are we doing to get it, and what are we doing with what we have of it?

But many believers have, in addition, gifts of the Spirit and other ministry-related gifts and abilities. Yet it's easy to neglect this stewardship through having been offended, through discouragement, or most commonly, lack of motivation and passion, or simply a negative attitude, like the servant in Matthew 25 above.

Even Pastor Timothy needed to be reminded twice to “not neglect” but “stir up the gift” that had been given him, and to “meditate” on and “give [himself] entirely to” the various areas of his ministry, that his “progress may be evident to all.” “For in doing this you will *save both* yourself and those who hear you.” What a responsibility! (1 Tim. 4:14-16, 2 Tim. 1:6, Lu. 12:43)

6. Our bodies. My dad was a health nut and the rest of us kids, led by our mother, made a big joke of his “crazy” eating rules, which simply eliminated junk food! But Mother died at 47 and I suffered unbearably with sinus trouble through my teen years until I decided to experiment with Dad's health ideas. They worked! My sinus agony ended. But what began as faithful stewardship of my body became an obsession with health books and fads. Eventually I began to experience health problems as a direct result of my health idolatry and failure to depend on God. I had gotten *out of step* with my Creator.

Diet and health have finally made it to network news and are now a common subject in many or most Christian magazines and TV programs. There's no more excuse for abusing our bodies for sheer pleasure, living to eat instead of eating to live (1 Cor. 9:25-27). But the other extreme is just as dangerous, replacing simple trust in God for healing and health with “the tree of knowledge” about “good and evil” foods. God's view on health and diet is *not what you eat, but what eats you*, which is confirmed abundantly by medical science (Mt. 15:17-20).

The fear of God,¹ the written Word,² wisely spoken

words,³ humility,⁴ caring for the needy and for one another,⁵ and God's many promises for healing, are spiritual remedies for health that carry us into eternity. (Pr. 3:8, 4:4, 10). “(Pr. 4:22), “(Pr. 12:18; 15:4, 16:24, 18:21), “(Pr. 22:4), “(Is. 58:7-8, 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 11:29-32, Jas. 5:16), “(Ex. 15:26, Dt. 7:15, Ps. 103:3, Mt. 10:7-8, Lu. 9:1-2; 10:9, Acts 4:9; 5:16; 8:7, 19:12, Jas. 5:13-16, 1 Pet. 2:24, etc) [Jas=James].

Actually, the only *biblical* emphasis on the physical body is to discipline it, keep it under subjection to my spirit *by the power of the Holy Spirit* (1 Cor. 9:27, Gal. 5:16-25), which may definitely include a change in eating habits *when our motive is for the glory of God* (1 Cor 6:20, 1 Tim. 4:8).

If we keep in step with this simple stewardship of our bodies, which are actually *His* property, “the temple[s] of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19), the reward is obvious. Like the lady who said, “If I'd known I was going to live this long, I would have taken better care of my health,” our *earthen vessels* can be long-lasting and durable vehicles for *the Treasure* we bring to the hungry and needy God sends us to.

For I find that men and women of God with healing ministries, but who abuse their bodies, often suffer the consequences without the miracles of healing they minister to others. Faithfulness in stewardship in one area doesn't exempt us from faithfulness in another.

7. Our daily cross. Jesus said, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Lu. 9:23). In the physical world, weakness, tribulation, and affliction are seen as liabilities, a curse instead of a blessing. In the world of sports handicaps are assigned to equalize the competition and challenge superior athletes.

In the spirit world they are the path to God's strength and victory (Rom. 8:35-37, 1 Cor. 1:26-31; 4:9-13, 2 Cor. 1:8-10; 4:7-18; 6:4-10; 11:24-30; 12:7-10; 13:4, 1 Pet. 4:1-2, Rev. 3:7-10). God's purpose in them is to deliver us from reliance on the confines of the physical world and challenge us in the realm of faith, where “*all things are possible* to him who believes” (Mk. 9:23; also 10:27).

One day we'll give account of how we handled them, especially when we see the vast multitudes of people with every conceivable hardship—fire, sword, beatings, torture, imprisonment, stonings, abandonment, homelessness, persecution, dishonor, weakness, rejection, sickness, sleeplessness, hunger, thirst, and death (1 Cor. 4:9-13; 15:30-32, 2 Cor. 6:4-10; 11:23-30, Php. 2:25-28, Heb. 11:33-39)—and how they *overcame* them through the blood of Jesus, their faith-filled testimony, and their surrender to God (Rev. 12:11).

Our faith, through His grace, connects the Cross of Christ with *our* cross, our light affliction, and fills it with purpose, power, and resurrection life through us to others (2 Cor. 4:7-18; 13:4, Php. 3:10).

Paul, established it as a *way of life*, for God had told him His grace was all he needed, and that His strength is made perfect in *weakness*. Paul learned to boast, *not in his successes*, but in his *infirmities*, because through *them* the *power of Christ* rested upon him. In fact he learned to “take *pleasure* in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake.” For when he was weak in himself, he was strong in Christ. (2 Cor. 12:9-10)

“But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world (Gal. 6:14). How many of us actually *walk* in the revelation of this privilege?

8. Our time. Time, like relationships, is the other end of the stewardship spectrum. Everything in between is about these two. And time is the bottom line, for there's no way to hear God's voice and keep in step with Him in all these opportunities unless we spend *time* in His Presence and Word.

Most of us feel endless time pressure and never have enough to go around. But Jesus said if we seek *Him* first, all these *things* will be added to us (Mt. 6:33). More than one great man of God has said, “I'm too busy *not* to spend quality time with God.”

After 2000 years we remember Martha for being

“worried and troubled about many things,” and Mary for having “chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her” (Lu. 10:41-42).

The footnote under Psalm 90:11 of my *Spirit Filled Life Bible* says, “[God's] anger is a divine response to the irresponsible use of time by men.” Wow! Moses response is, “So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (v.12).

If “wisdom is the principle thing,” “is more precious than rubies, and all the things [we] may desire cannot compare with her,” then I can understand God's anger toward us when we fail to take the time it takes to *hear* His wisdom. (Pr. 4:7; 3:15)

“Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoever finds me finds life, and obtains favor from the Lord. But he who sins against me wrongs his own soul; all those who hate me love death.” (Pr. 8:34-36).

If the value of a gem stone is determined by its rarity, as with the ruby, then consider the value of time—one infinitesimal “vapor” in an endless, infinite eternity. With this comparison, *one moment in time* is absolutely *priceless!* No question.

Jail and prison inmates, have through the amazing grace of God, ended up in one of the most favorable opportunities of a lifetime: they have *time* to work on their issues and relationships and watch God convert them into compassion and wisdom.

Most of them are squandering this priceless advantage, creating more stress for the sincere around them. But those with “ears to hear” are taking advantage of it and seeing even this frustration as a *stewardship* from God to learn of Him, lead others to Christ, disciple them, and learn relationship skills in the process.

What a surprise when we see many of these hidden but faithful men and women tower above us in their eternal reward. Instead of criticizing them, let's be good stewards of *our time* and *pray* for them, as being “heirs together of the grace of life” (1 Pet. 3:7).

Though we know very little about Enoch, the most important thing we know about him is that in the tiny speck of his allotted time, *he made the best possible use of it*. He *laid hold* of that for which God had *laid hold of him* (Php. 3:12).

Only the seventh from Adam, he walked right out of Adam's fall back into Paradise, without the abundant assets we have today: the Bible, the Finished Work of Christ, the Church—the Body of Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. But he'd found the secret: he kept in step with God.

Scriptures from NKJV

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