

SPIRITUAL formation and stewardship

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Practicing stewardship is a vital aspect of spiritual formation. By stewardship, I am referring to much more than just our giving. Part of our growth as followers of Jesus is learning our role and carrying out our responsibilities as stewards in His Kingdom. I believe we are stewards entrusted with spiritual gifts and material goods for the purpose of glorifying God, serving others and making known the eternal gospel! As the theme of this issue is spiritual formation, I want to suggest an outline for practicing stewardship which could contribute to personal spiritual formation in this vital area.

(1) Discern your gifts.

In 2 Timothy 1:6, Paul challenged Timothy to “fan into flame” the gift God had given him. How has God gifted you? If you are not sure, take a spiritual gifts test. I encourage my students to use the tool found at www.thecallonline.com, a website of Focus on the Family. This is one of many great tools for helping you discover your giftedness. It has helped my wife and me understand one another and work well together.

(2) Assess your activities.

Carve out some time for solitude with the Lord regarding your giftedness. Are your gifts smoldering or stoked? Paul reminds us that the gifts of the Spirit are given for “the common good” in 1 Corinthians 12:7. How are you employing your gifts to edify the body of Christ? Often a mentor or close friend can help you identify areas for potential growth.

(3) Take inventory of your goods!

Most people don’t realize how much stuff they have until they list it. Don’t just include your bank account(s), put down your house(s), your car(s) and any other assets you may have. You don’t need an accountant for this exercise but you may need a few sheets of paper. Now take a moment to give thanks for the things which God has provided for you to enjoy and share (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

(4) Fast and pray about how your stuff may have a hold on you.

In Luke 16:13b, Jesus said plainly, “You cannot serve God and mammon.” Jesus knew that for many people, their possessions possessed them. In what way may this be true for you? Fasting and prayer can serve as a refreshing retreat from our materialistic society and help you evaluate your relationship with your stuff from a Kingdom perspective.

(5) Intentionally allocate the resources in your stewardship!

To ensure you are found faithful in your stewardship (1 Cor 4:2), consider using the Stewardship Portfolio below to map out a plan for investing for eternal returns. Rather than

merely exhorting you to serve with your gifts and tithe your goods, this tool helps you strategically offer yourself to God as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2), amounting to far more than giving a percentage of your time and money.

Practicing Stewardship

I have come to the conclusion that if I ever think I have “arrived” when it comes to my stewardship, I may at that moment be like the steward scorned for burying his talents (cf. Luke 19 or Matthew 25). Stewardship is a process, not a destination. By taking these steps and using a tool such as the stewardship portfolio, my prayer for each of us is that we will be formed spiritually and found faithful in using our gifts and giving our goods to make known the grace of God!

THE STEWARDSHIP PORTFOLIO*

This tool can help you allocate your gifts and goods to participate in the work of evangelism, discipleship and mercy in your Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Complete the chart as an individual or if you are married, fill it in with your spouse. Sample ministries are listed to help you get rolling. *Inspired by the book *Eternity Portfolio* by Alan Gotthardt and conversations with Todd Harper of *Generous Giving*.

	Evangelism	Discipleship	Mercy
Jerusalem	YOUR LOCAL CHURCH		
Judea & Samaria	MINISTRIES IN YOUR REGION		
Ends of the Earth	MINISTRIES AROUND THE WORLD		