

## **The Disciplines of a Godly Life: STEWARDSHIP-2**

This week I was driving my family across central Florida. The terrain of that area is pretty monotonous for a couple of hours between the coasts. As we topped one hill something new confronted all the pairs of eyes watching out the windows...acres and acres and acres of mobile homes were lined up as far as we could see. The fenced entrance said "Pre-owned Mobile Home Liquidators".

One of the children said what does "Pre-owned Mobile Homes" mean? Bonnie quietly said, "It means that many of the senior citizens in Florida that lived in them have died and now they are for sale." And they were – thousands of them as far as we could see.

Those acres of "previous owner deceased mobile homes" reminded me of one of the most amazing facets of pastoring Christ's church. As a pastor I often get the joy of standing by people as they prepare to face death. For many it is a precious time of helping them get ready. And do you know where to turn to find one of the most practical places in all God's Word for getting ready? Psalm 116. As you turn there may I take your minds with me back to Florida?

There are over 16 million people who live in Florida.  
Over 4 million are in their "Golden Years".  
Over 170,000 died in 2002.  
How much did those 170,000 people leave behind? EVERYTHING.

Florida has over 9 million deeded pieces of property worth \$1.1 Trillion dollars in 2002.  
About 40% of that property value is in the hands of those 55 and older (who make up 26% of the population).  
So 40% of \$1.1 Trillion dollars divided by 2.2 million households means the average golden years property owner of Florida's coastal properties has \$12.5 million dollars of wealth! And this vast amount of wealth is owned by people who are getting older and older.

Here is the question before we read the 116<sup>th</sup> Psalm, how hard is it to die when you have so much wealth? Remember what we learned a few weeks ago?

- People who lay up treasures on earth spend their life backing away from their treasures. To them, death is loss.
- People who lay up treasures in heaven look forward to eternity; they are moving daily toward their treasures. To them, death is gain.
- Those who spend their life moving away from their treasures have more and more reasons to despair. Those who spend their life moving toward their treasures have more and more reasons to rejoice.
- Is the passing of time causing you and me to despair or rejoice? God's ownership of everything is the reference point for all of us who serve the Lord.<sup>1</sup>

God's Word teaches us 8 habits that can keep us spiritually healthy until death. Wouldn't it be great to be in robust spiritual health, looking forward to Heaven. The habits recorded in this Psalm are not just for those who have one foot in the grave, they are actually good habits for all of our lives. Listen and learn the 8 habits that take the sting out of death and make us spiritually healthy to the last breath we take on earth.

Please stand with me as we read Psalm 116.

Here are the simple habits that make our death precious in the sight of the Lord. These are the marks of a healthy spiritual life that takes the sting out of death.

1. v. 1 **Believe in Him** that He is listening and watching and respond in love.
2. v. 2 **Cry out to Him**. Get used to talking to the Lord. Pour out your heart, your fears, your woes – share them with Him.
3. v. 9 **Follow Him** through your daily life. He is the Shepherd and we are His sheep.
4. v. 13 **Drink Him**. He is our cup of salvation. We thirst and He alone satisfies. Let Him into your life to meet your deepest needs!
5. v. 14 **Obey Him**. Do what He says. Give in and submit to Him.
6. v. 16 **Serve Him**. Tell Him that, say it aloud and offer it as an offering.
7. v. 17 **Thank Him**. Think through all the many blessings and benefits the Lord has heaped upon you. If you have troubles, listen to some

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Alcorn, Money, Treasures and Eternity, p.

children pray. They thank the Lord for eyes to see, warm “blankies” to sleep under, food to eat and all the other simple and sweet blessings of life.

8. v. 18-19 **Live for Him.** From now on live for His glory, talk of His blessings, come into His presence, worship and adore Him.

Now that we are in this New Year, do your plans and priorities for 2003 mirror what the Lord desires? His desires are clearly laid out in His Word.

Our key passage for this series is 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 4.7. Paul says we are to discipline our selves towards godliness. What encourages a godly life? That is our current study which I call ***The Disciplines of a Godly Life***.

1. 1<sup>st</sup> we examined ***The Discipline of Scripture***. Time alone with God in His Word, the Scriptures, is the great necessity of our spiritual lives. We need to be alone with God daily! We need to find times to get away alone. Psalm 16:11 You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore. The Lord God of the Universe wants to Arrange your life, and Accompany you trip through life, and authorize everything needed from now on. Wow, that is the best life there is.
2. 2<sup>nd</sup> we examined ***The Discipline of Spirit Filled Living***. Jesus explained the Holy Spirit in our lives by using the image of a strong river of water flowing out of us. John 7:37-38. John 7:37-39 On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and **drink (present active imperative)**. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. Rivers of water is the way Jesus describes the normal life of believers, His children.
3. 3<sup>rd</sup> we examined ***The Discipline of Stewardship***. Last time we saw the stewardship of our lives, the stewardship of living. A life given back to God as an offering is what stewardship is all about. Stewardship is not about money it is about life itself. Time and life are far greater treasures than money and possessions. God wants you 1<sup>st</sup> and foremost! **A GODLY STEWARD KNOWS THAT GOD OWNS HIM AND EVERYTHING HE HAS.** Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. 2 Corinthians 5:15

and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

Coming to Christ, the Lord who gave everything to buy us expects us to put all our resources at his disposal. This is what stewardship-and life-is all about.

1. **WE HAVE AN UNRIVALED LOVE FOR OUR MASTER.** Matthew 10:37 "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. (NKJV) I like how Randy Alcorn describes this truth. God<sup>2</sup> wants your heart.
2. **WE ACCEPT THAT OUR MASTER HAS THE RIGHT OF DISPOSAL.** Matthew 19:21 Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." (NKJV)
3. **WE RESIST THE TEMPTATION TO CHEAT OUR MASTER.** Luke 12:20-21 "But God said to him, `You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' 21 "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God." (NIV) **Jesus teaches us that some hold on to things with grasping clenched fists and lose them.** Stewardship means we are resisting SATAN'S STRATEGY. Since money is one of the essentials of the work of the Kingdom, it is not surprising that the great adversary does all in his power to prevent it from finding its way into God's treasury, and for that he has many tricks in his bag.
4. **WE OBEY OUR MASTER AND GIVE.** Luke 12:33-34 Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (NIV)
5. **WE UNRESERVEDLY SURRENDER TO OUR MASTER** Luke 14:33 "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. (NKJV) THIS DEALS WITH PERSONAL POSSESSIONS!

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<sup>2</sup> Randy Alcorn, *The Treasure Principle*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 2001, p.43.

6. **WE CONFESS THAT ALL WE HAVE CAME FROM OUR MASTER** 1  
 Corinthians 4:7 For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?
7. **WE SEEK TO GROW AS GIVERS.** 2 Corinthians 9:10-11 Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, 11 while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God. So that *what?* How<sup>3</sup> will he finish this sentence? Prosperity theology would finish it, "so that we might live in wealth, showing the world how much God blesses those who love Him." But that isn't how Paul finishes it. He says, "You will be made rich in every way *so that you can be generous on every occasion*". Do Phil 4.19
8. **WE CHOOSE TO POINT OUR LIFE TOWARD HEAVEN.** Philippians 3:20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, Hebrews 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Hebrews 11:16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. Probably the greatest deterrent to giving all we are and have to the Lord is this: the illusion that earth is our home.

The Lord wants us to realize that earth is a passing stop in our pilgrimage. Giving our moments and days back to the Lord means we finally<sup>4</sup> understand. Nothing on this planet lasts, it all will pass away. At the end of each persons life is a landfill, a junkyard – the final resting place for the things in our lives. Sooner or later, everything we won ends up here. Christmas and birthday presents. Cars, boats, and hot tubs. Clothes, stereos, and barbecues. The treasures that children quarreled about, friendships were lost over, honesty was sacrificed for, and marriages broke up over – all end up here. (I recommend taking a family field trip to a junkyard. It's a powerful object lesson.)"

9. **WE INVEST OUR HEART IN HEAVEN.** Turn to Hebrews 11.26. Moses left Egypt's treasures "because he was looking ahead to his reward". That is what God honors. That is the life of faith. That is what pleases the Lord.

<sup>3</sup> Randy Alcorn, *The Treasure Principle*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 2001, p.72-73.

<sup>4</sup> Randy Alcorn, *The Treasure Principle*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 2001, p.47.

God has given some very timely warnings to us at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, in the most wealthy and consumptive society that has ever existed on planet earth. Please turn with me to Ecclesiastes. There are 5 books that constitute the Wisdom Literature of Israel, these books give us some powerful guiding lights for every day living.

- God's Instructions to us on Godly Suffering – Job;
- God's Instructions to us on Godly Worshiping – Psalms;
- God's Instructions to us on Godly Living – Proverbs;
- God's Instructions to us on Godly Thinking about Life – Ecclesiastes; and
- God's Instructions to us on Godly Loving – Song of Songs.

As I pondered Ecclesiastes, the 4<sup>th</sup> Wisdom book, I was deeply struck by a sermon one pastor presented on Ecclesiastes 5.10-15. Here were his<sup>5</sup> points. See if they strike you like they struck me.

1. "Whoever loves money never has money enough" (v. 10). ***The more you have, the more you want.***
2. "Whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income" (v. 10). ***The more you have, the less you're satisfied.***
3. "As goods increase, so do those who consume them" (v.11). ***The more you have, the more people (including the government) will come after it.***
4. "And what benefit are they to the owner except to feast his eyes on them?" (v. 11). ***The more you have, the more you realize it does you no good.***
5. "The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the abundance of a rich man permits him no sleep" (v. 12). ***The more you have, the more you have to worry about.***
6. "I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner" (v. 13). ***The more you have, the more you can hurt yourself by holding on to it.***
7. "Or wealth lost through some misfortune" (v.14). ***The more you have, the more you have to lose.***
8. "Naked a man comes from his mother's womb, and as he comes, so he departs. He takes nothing from his labor that he can carry in his hand" (v.15). ***The more you have, the more you'll leave behind.***

- He who lays up treasures on earth spends his life backing away from his treasures. To him, death is loss. He who lays up

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<sup>5</sup> Randy Alcorn, *The Treasure Principle*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 2001, p.53-54.

treasures in heaven looks forward to eternity; he's moving daily toward his treasures. To him, death is gain. He who spends his life moving away from his treasures has reason to despair. He who spends his life moving toward his treasures has reason to rejoice.

- Is the passing of time causing you and me to despair or rejoice? God's kingdom was the reference point for these men. They saw all else in light of the kingdom. They were compelled to live as they did not because they treasured no *things*, but because they treasured the *right things*.
- We often miss something in missionary martyr Jim Elliot's famous words, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." We focus on his willingness to go to the mission field. That willingness started when he relinquished his hold on things as MINE!<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Alcorn, Money, Treasures and Eternity, p.