

A young girl with dark hair, wearing a white shirt and a pink and white striped scarf, is looking down at her open palm. In her palm, she is holding several coins, including a gold-colored one and several silver ones. The background is blurred, showing an indoor setting with a wooden floor and a white wall.

Cultivate. RELATIONSHIPS

STEWARDSHIP

A Study in Managing Your Resources

// STEWARDSHIP

As Christians, we reveal the extent to which we trust the Father by how we manage the resources given to us by Him. However, this trust extends beyond just the resources He's given us. It includes trusting Him with our lack of resources as well. The term 'stewardship' simply means to supervise or manage something that belongs to another person. This class will explore four primary resources God's entrusted to us: time, talent, treasure, and intellect.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

The 7 Habits of Highly effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change

By: Stephen R. Covey
Simon & Schuster ©2013

Living Your Strengths: Discovering Your God-Given Talents and Inspire Your Community

By: Albert L. Winseman, D.Min; Donald O. Clifton, Ph.D.; and Curt Liesvel, M.Div
Gallup Press ©2004

Spirit-Controlled Temperament

By: Tim LaHaye
Tyndale House ©1994

The Blessed Life: The Simple Secret of Achieving Guaranteed Financial Results

By: Robert Morris
Regal Books ©2004

The Screwtape Letters: How a Senior Devil Instructs a Junior Devil in the Art of Temptation

By: C.S. Lewis
Time Inc ©1961

Outliers: The Story of Success

By: Malcolm Gladwell
Back Bay Books ©2008

WEBSITES

- High5Test.com
- TemperamentTest.org
- DiscPersonalityTesting.com
- StrengthFinder.com
- 16Personalities.com

STEWARDING YOUR

TIME

This study will reveal that God has given every individual a purpose and mission. He has given us specific abilities and experiences to accomplish this purpose and mission. To develop life-giving schedules, we need to walk confidently in our abilities and experiences. "Time" will cover several methods that will help us manage our time for God's glory, other's good, and our joy.

PHILOSOPHIES IN DEVELOPING A SCHEDULE

1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17; 1 Peter 4:10-11; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

The purpose God created us for is to bring Him glory through living in relationship with Him. We are most at peace and fulfilled when we glorify Him. To **glorify God** means *we trust Him in all circumstances and reflect His character to others*. When we fully trust Him, there is nothing we can do to earn His approval. Our work is not a means for receiving His approval. Rather, it is a by-product of His empowerment.

The following philosophies are what we use — consciously or unconsciously — in developing our schedules. Three of them have elements of truth, but only the last one truly leads to peace and fulfillment.

1. Hierarchy Schedule

Matthew 7:21-23; Luke 6:46-49

This schedule often looks something like this: 1) God; 2) family (spouse then children); 3) career; 4) ministry; 5) personal; etc. While this appears to be Biblical, it tends toward legalism. We can blur the lines by defining things as serving God when they are rooted in idolatry. For the sake of “doing God’s work” we begin to neglect our responsibilities, our family, and other relationships.

2. Passive Schedule

John 6:22-66; 2 Timothy 4:3-5; Proverbs 29:25; Matthew 10:28

Passive scheduling is the result of allowing others to set our priorities; we put other’s needs and desires above our own God-given purpose and responsibilities. This type of scheduling appears to be rooted in humble service but in reality is actually performance/approval-based. This often leads to frustration, disappointment, and burnout.

3. Self-Care Schedule

2 Samuel 11:1-5; Matthew 25:31-46; 2 Timothy 2:1-5

Self-focused, self-reliant scheduling prioritizes our own self-defined needs and desires above other’s actual needs. This type of scheduling may appear to be based in the confidence of one’s calling or God-designed self-care but

is deeply rooted in immaturity and selfishness. Scheduling based solely upon our desires and preferences promotes a lifestyle of self-gratification, self-medication, and self-motivation. This minimizes unpleasant or unappreciated responsibilities. Self-focused scheduling neglects our ultimate purpose of trusting God in all circumstances and relationships, including those that may not be comfortable, secure, or safe.

4. Holy Spirit Schedule

John 8:28-29; 11:1-44; Romans 8:14; Galatians 5:18; Luke 8:40-56

Allowing the Holy Spirit into our schedule creates a balance of planning and flexibility. It does not ignore or negate commitment. Rather, it takes into consideration our daily responsibilities while allowing room for interruption. This schedule prioritizes the most important, God-given tasks; the needs of others; and our own, God-given, need for care, while encouraging joyful service in our God-given abilities. It cultivates growth and maturity through a moment-by-moment trust in the Holy Spirit.

PRINCIPLES IN DEVELOPING A SCHEDULE

There are several principles to keep in mind when developing a Holy Spirit-centered schedule. Each principle is dependent on the other principles.

1. Thrive Where You Are Gifted¹

1 Corinthians 12:1-31

Filling our time with tasks we don't have the abilities to do steals from others who have been gifted in that area. Within the context of tasks we are skilled in, there will always be aspects that challenge us to grow. Filling our schedule with tasks that we've been equipped to do and that have been affirmed by others will enable us to serve our purpose and design in a life-giving, joy-filled manner.

¹ Albert L. Winseman, D.Min., Donald O. Clifton, Ph. D., and Curt Liesveld, M. Div. *Living Your Strengths: Discovering Your God-Given Talents and Inspire Your Community*. (Gallup Press, 2004), pp.182-187

Our schedules should empower us to grow in our abilities and manage our inabilities. This does not mean that we don't have to sacrificially serve in areas we are not gifted. It means the majority of our time and energy should be given to doing things we are gifted and able.

2. Schedule A Break²

Hebrews 4:9; Genesis 2:2; Colossians 2:16; Isaiah 58:13

Allowing ourselves a day of rest enables our bodies to recover. It refocuses our attention on the Father. While a day of rest can become legalistic and regimented, the purpose is to rejuvenate. Our bodies, souls, and minds are refreshed when we demonstrate our trust and dependence upon God by stopping our work and resting in His responsibility. We must be aware and accept that busy seasons will come. However, we must guard against those seasons becoming lifestyles.

3. Prioritize Your Activities

Luke 9:51; 11:5-6; Colossians 4:5-6

Recognizing and ranking responsibilities and activities will enable us to set a productive life-giving schedule. For some of us, we need to create a "to-do" list. In creating this list, we need to prioritize the most important items. Creating "next steps" for each task will help us begin the task and breaks down the task into manageable steps.³ Completing and creating "next steps" until the items can be checked off gives us tangible goals. This motivates us toward completing our list. For others of us, we need to create a "stop-doing" list. We need to remove excess items off our schedule that are hindering us from fulfilling our responsibilities and purpose. Using the idea of "next steps" will help us fulfill our current commitments. However, it will give us goals to work toward.

² Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears. *Doctrine: What Every Christian Should Believe*. (Crossway Books, 2010), pp.381-384

³ David Allen. *Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity*. (Penguin Books, 2002), pp.236-248

4. Prepare for Flexibility

Luke 8:40-56

Recognizing and ranking responsibilities and activities will enable us to set a productive life-giving schedule. For some of us, we need to create a “to-do” list. In creating this list, we need to prioritize the most important items. Creating “next steps” for each task will help us begin the task and breaks down the task into manageable steps. Completing and creating “next steps” until the items can be checked off gives us tangible goals. This motivates us toward completing our list. For others of us, we need to create a “stop-doing” list. We need to remove excess items off our schedule that are hindering us from fulfilling our responsibilities and purpose. Using the idea of “next steps” will help us fulfill our current commitments. However, it will give us goals to work toward.

CONCLUSION

There are two ways to see our schedules. One is through the perspective of ownership. We see our schedule belonging to us. The other is through the perspective of stewardship. Our schedules belong to God. To live a life of fulfillment and peace, we need to submit our time to God. Living in a Spirit-empowered schedule will enable us to live free from an unhealthy self-focus or false guilt.

ACTIVATION QUESTIONS

- How do you determine what activities to prioritize?
- How have you enabled other people to set your schedule?
- In what areas of your life do you not seek the Holy Spirit?
- When do you stop and rest — including off communication, technology, and entertainment?

STEWARDING YOUR

TALENT

This study will encourage us to grow confidently and walk comfortably in our God-given talents. This will enable us to live passionately and purposefully on Jesus' mission for our life. He has given us specific abilities and experiences to accomplish this purpose and mission. However, this takes us evaluating ourselves realistically. We must be willing to admit our inabilities as well. "Talent" will look at how the Holy Spirit both redeems and transforms who we are to best fulfill our God-given design.

A REALISTIC EVALUATION

1 Corinthians 10:31

Our God-given strengths, talents, and skills are collectively called abilities. The following definitions are from the book, *Living Your Strengths*.¹ **Strengths** are *the ability to provide consistent, near-perfect performances in a given activity*. This ability is a powerful, productive combination of talent, skill, and knowledge. **Talents** are *naturally recurring patterns of thought, feeling, and behavior*. Unlike skills and knowledge, talents naturally exist within us and cannot be acquired (unless supernaturally given by the Holy Spirit). **Skills** are *the ability to perform the steps of an activity*. Our skills show our competence and proficiency when proceeding through tasks. They reflect our rational and predictable areas of expertise. Skills can be learned. Finally, **personality** is a combination of *how we naturally process information (our thinking and feeling) along with how we comfortably interact (behave) with others and the world around us*.

Without a goal or purpose in mind, hyper-focusing on our personality can lead us to being self-absorbed and inflexible. However, discovering the way God uniquely designed us can lead us toward fulfilling our purpose through more life-giving, joy-filled means. There are several resources available to help us discover how God naturally designed us to operate. The following are an assortment of different FREE personality and strengths tests:

- **Strengths Finder Test** – [High5Test.com](https://www.gallup.com/137060/strengths-finder-test.aspx)
- **16 Personalities Test** – [16Personalities.com](https://www.16personalities.com/)
- **DISC Personality Test** – [DISCPersonalityTesting.com](https://www.discpersonalitytesting.com/)

God will usually work through how He created you to operate. However, He is sovereign; He may choose to fulfill His purpose in a moment through uncomfortable or unfamiliar means.

¹ Albert L. Winseman, D.Min., Donald O. Clifton, Ph. D., and Curt Liesveld, M. Div. *Living Your Strengths: Discovering Your God-Given Talents and Inspire Your Community*. (Gallup Press, 2004), pp.182-187

REDEMPTION & TRANSFORMATION

2 Corinthians 5:17

The Holy Spirit both redeems and transforms who we are to best fulfill our God-given design, mission, and purpose. The following two examples will reveal and define how the Holy Spirit, in making us a renewed creation, achieves this:

1. Peter

Peter, throughout the Gospels, is seen as the loud impetuous, self-appointed leader of the disciples. He is often speaking for or on behalf of the other disciples. Peter's words are what lead to his denial of Jesus.² However, when Peter is filled with the Holy Spirit, God redeems Peter's impulsive voice and gives him a purposeful message. He does not change Peter's personality. Rather, He empowers Peter to preach the Gospel of Jesus with boldness and clarity.³

2. John

John, throughout the Gospels, is seen as self-centered, self-seeking, and belligerent. Because of John's brash demeanor, Jesus nicknamed him "son of thunder".⁴ However, when John is filled with the Holy Spirit, God transforms John's antagonistic demeanor back to his original design of love and deference.⁵ He empowers John to write, preach, and demonstrate the love, grace, mercy, and compassion of Jesus.⁶

God also empowers our experiences to fulfill His purpose. The following are several examples of how God uses our experiences:

² See Matthew 14:28-33; 16:21-23; 26:30-35; Luke 9:28-36; John 13:6-9; 21:7-8; 18:26-27

³ See Acts 2:1-4, 14; 4:8

⁴ See Matthew 20:20-28; Mark 3:17; 10:35-45; 9:38-41; Luke 9:51-56; John 20:4

⁵ See Acts 2:1-4

⁶ See John 3:16; 1 John 3:11; 4:21; 2 John; Revelation 1:5; 3:9, 19

1. **Moses**

Moses went from growing up in Egypt, being educated in Egyptian schools, and living in Egyptian culture to being a shepherd in the land of Midian. He was a sheep herder on the countryside of Mount Sinai. God used Moses' experience along with his knowledge in leading the Israelites.⁷

2. **David**

David went from herding sheep — protecting his flock from predators using a slingshot — to killing Goliath with his slingshot. God used David's many years of practice, patience, and precision with a slingshot to kill the predator of Israel.⁸

3. **Paul**

Paul went from being a vehement defender of Judaism to a voracious contender for the Gospel. His experience, proficiency, and education in the Hebrew Scriptures led him to be the single greatest theological contributor to the New Testament.⁹

BE COMFORTABLE

Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-26

The extent to which we are comfortable with our abilities will determine how confident we are with our abilities. The following factors that will affect our comfort and confidence:

1. **Acknowledge the Needs of Others**

Accepting that we cannot nor are we designed to meet everyone's needs will foster unity and dependence within the Kingdom of God. It will encourage us to trust the Holy Spirit in others for each person's need.

⁷ See Exodus 2:1-10; 2:15; Acts 7:20-22, 34

⁸ See 1 Samuel 16:10-12; 17:34-37

⁹ See Galatians 1:13-24

2. Acknowledge the Abilities of Others

Affirming others' abilities and collaborating with them will enable us to minister to people more holistically. It will encourage us to trust the Holy Spirit beyond ourselves.

3. Acknowledge Our Abilities

Discovering, affirming, and accepting our abilities celebrates how God uniquely designed us. Comparing ourselves with others perceived "more important" or "better" abilities can produce discontentment and inadequacy in our minds. Comparing ourselves with others perceived "less important" or "less-than" abilities can produce self-assurance or self-sufficiency in our minds. Both lead to us not walking in-step with the Holy Spirit.

4. Acknowledge Our Inabilities

Recognizing our incapacities and accepting them will enable us to live fulfilled. We will be free to pursue life-giving avenues of accomplishing God's purpose for us. It will also encourage us to be in relationship with others who complement our insufficiencies and minister in unity with other Spirit-filled people.

Grace is the *unearned or undeserved attention, support, or assistance*. Therefore, grace, as it relates to abilities, is the natural or supernatural God-given ability or capacity to do or act. God's natural grace enables us to do or act because of our life's experience, natural abilities, or personalities. This can also work through the things we are passionate about or activities that bring us life and enjoyment. God's supernatural grace is the Holy Spirit's empowerment beyond the scope of how He designed us to naturally operate. This can be an ability beyond how God designed us or an enhanced ability we already possess. This may also include knowledge or wisdom that goes beyond our own natural experience.¹⁰

¹⁰ See Romans 12:6a

Expecting and trusting the Holy Spirit to work through us will encourage us to glorify God. Two actions will help us grow confidently and walk comfortably in our God-given abilities¹¹:

1. Talent Affirmation

As Timothy did, we too need to allow mature Christian leaders to recognize and acknowledge our abilities. This will affirm and build our confidence in how God designed us. Stepping out in volunteer positions in our local church will help confirm and affirm our passions and abilities. This will give our abilities a platform to be affirmed and challenged.

2. Talent Cultivation

Once affirmed, the only way to grow comfortably in our abilities is to seek out opportunities to “fan into flame the gift of God” — that is, deliberately practice. Whether volunteer or paid, we must be willing to take any occasion to learn, operate, and perfect our abilities.

CONCLUSION

God has designed us to operate in unique ways. He purposefully did not design us to be well rounded. Our unique experiences, passions, abilities, and personalities empower us to minister to the specific needs of people. Discovering, affirming, and cultivating these will empower us to enjoy life no matter what and live connected to others and God.

ACTIVATION QUESTIONS

- What abilities have others, especially leaders, affirmed in you?
- How have you cultivated these abilities?
- What knowledge and wisdom have others affirmed in you?
- When is it most difficult for you to be content with your abilities, personality, or the way you process information?

¹¹ See Romans 12:6a

STEWARDING YOUR **TREASURE**

Our ability to steward the resources we've been given is directly affected by our view of God. If we trust that He is kind, loving, and generous then we will be kind, loving, and generous with His resources. Our motivation for how we deal with our resources emanates out of what's in our heart. Our heart determines why and how we steward our resources.

TREASURES EMANATE OUT OF THE HEART

1 Corinthians 10:31

Our treasure — or resources — *is anything that is a part of our collective wealth and assets that is either purchased or traded and/ or used to purchase or trade goods and services* (e.g., job, income, bank accounts, investments, credit cards, possessions, home, car, etc.). Our resources can either be a means to trust God or the thing we trust instead of Him. If we find our satisfaction, safety, security, and status in our resources, we will use God and people to get achieve these ideals. However, if we love and trust God, we will be free and use our resources to love God and people.

What or how much resource we have is not the issue. Rather, it is how and why we manage these resources that matter. This reveals what is important to use and what we ultimately trust. Regarding resources, Scripture defines four types of people:¹

1. Righteous Wealthy

As Christians, we know right living is based upon living empowered by the Holy Spirit and how we operate in relationship with others. Those who are righteous and wealthy acknowledge, trust, submit to, and thank God for their wealth. They love and trust God and steward their resources in a way that reflects this love and trust. They are concerned with and responsible to meet the needs of others as an act of worship to God.²

2. Unrighteous Wealthy

These people do not acknowledge, trust, submit to, and thank God for their wealth. Regardless of whether they claim to love and trust God, how they steward their resources reveal their ultimate trust in themselves and their possessions. They are more concerned with their satisfaction, security, safety, and status than being led by the Holy Spirit and meeting the needs of others.³

¹ Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears. *Doctrine: What Every Christian Should Believe*. (Crossway Books, 2010), pp.389-390

² See Matthew 27:57

³ See Luke 18:18-23

3. Righteous Poor

These people love and trust God above anything else. They steward what little resource they have in a manner that reveals this unwavering trust and love for Him. While they have legitimate needs, they are more concerned with the needs of others and their dependence upon God.⁴

4. Unrighteous Poor

While these people may claim a love for God, the stewardship (or lack if it) of their resources reveals, in fact, that they are more concerned about their well-being. They see Jesus as a means to fulfill their needs rather than a relationship to be cultivated. Their entitlement or poverty mindset is rooted in their false belief that once God provides then they will be generous or that poverty/minimalism somehow draws them closer to the heart of their Heavenly Father.⁵

RIGHTEOUS v UNRIGHTEOUS

1 Timothy 6:1-10; Matthew 12:33-35

The difference between unrighteous and righteous people is not the amount of resource they have. Rather, it is where they place their trust and where they invest their resource. While being wealthy is not necessarily ungodly, setting out to make wealth our goal — for satisfaction, safety, security, or status — is ungodly. This leads to temptation, disappointment, ruin, and destruction.

How we manage our God-given resources reveals the extent to which we trust Him. If we believe that our satisfaction, security, safety, or status comes from having more resources, then our faith is in those resources and our ability to get those resources.

Analyzing the resources we have, the motivation for investing in those resources, and how we steward those resources will reveal the object of worship in our heart. It will reveal what we believe to be

⁴ See Mark 12:41-44; 2 Corinthians 8:1

⁵ See John 6:25-26, 66; Luke 12:13-15

our provider. Either, we will look to resources as our functional provider or our Heavenly Dad as the one responsible for providing.

STEWARDED OUR TREASURE

Matthew 25:14-30

Being generous with the resources God has given us will reveal our dependence upon His responsibility and provision. In Matthew 6:22-23, stinginess is referred to as having a “bad” or “evil eye”. Generosity is defined as having a “healthy eye”.⁶ This is because coveting or envying something begins with our eyes.⁷ If we are generous (have a healthy eye), we will care for, serve, and give toward others’ needs. This ability to care, serve, and give will reveal the level to which we trust God. This level of faith in God will directly affect the level to which we are willing to risk (invest into people and ministry).⁸

In the story found in Matthew 25 of the three servants (or stewards) describe faith in terms of risk and investment. The first steward was given roughly \$3,000,000 to invest. Through his willingness to risk, the return on his investment was \$6,000,000. The second steward was given \$1,200,000 to invest. He also doubled his money through his willingness to risk. Finally, the last servant was given \$600,000. While this steward didn’t lose anything, he also didn’t make a profit. His unwillingness to risk — exercise faith — cost him his reward. He was considered evil for not risking. The servants that risked were rewarded with more responsibility. This story illustrates that risk and faith are essential for each one to exist — faith is realized through risk and risk implies faith. There will always be a measure of risk when exercising faith.

⁶ David H. Stern. *Jewish New Testament Commentary*. (Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc., 1992), pp.32

⁷ See 1 John 2:15-17

⁸ Daren Lindley. *Breaking the Spirit of Poverty*. (www.DarenLindley.com, 2004), audio CD series.

We are created in the image of God. This is our identity. We are designed to reflect His character. He is generous in His risk.⁹ Therefore, the extent of our generosity is dependent upon how we view God. Regarding investing in people and ministries, if we confuse stewardship with stinginess or “being thrifty” then we completely miss the element of risk involved. Being stingy is antithetical to the Gospel message.

STEWARDSHIP IS WORSHIP

Romans 6:16

If we steward our resources for ourselves, we become enslaved to those resources or how we get those resources. Or, if our resources are what is most important to us then we will steward the resources God has given us through stinginess and hoarding. Trusting God and depending upon Him acknowledges that all our resources belong to Him — including our ability to gain those resources. He simply allows us to manage them. The Scripture refers to trusting ourselves, our resources, and our ability to gain those resources as “friendship with the world”.¹⁰ Essentially, friendship with the world is valuing and trusting creation over the Creator.¹¹

Despite a good and steady income source and good healthy we must recognize that God is the ultimate source of provision. Trusting God and depending upon Him does not negate our responsibility or minimize our effort. It is simply us acknowledging that He is the ultimate of health, wisdom, intellect, ability, and resources. As stewards, we do not get to determine where our resources come from or go. We must seek and thank God above anything else.¹²

⁹ See John 3:16-17

¹⁰ See James 4:1-4

¹¹ See Romans 1:18-25

¹² See Matthew 6:24; Deuteronomy 8:17-18

CONCLUSION

Our strength, minds, jobs, careers, incomes, bank accounts, credit cards, possessions, home(s), car(s), investments, etc. all belong to God. Everything we have is a gift to be stewarded. We can try to own these resources. However, in doing so, we reject the peace and rest that God desires for us. When we trust in our own strength, intellect, and abilities, we are choosing to reject how we were designed — to walk moment-by-moment with the Holy Spirit. Our inability to find joy, peace, and fulfillment on this earth is not because God does not desire those things for us. Rather, it is because we pursue those things void of how we were designed to accomplish them; namely, with God. Godly stewardship trusts that our Creator knows best how we were designed and will lead us into living a joyful, peace-filled life.

ACTIVATION QUESTIONS

- What possession or resource, if taken away, would hinder your trust in God's goodness and provision?
- What amount of money in your possession (or bank account) would make you feel secure?
- Beyond your local church, to what ministries or missionaries can you personally begin to financially invest? If you are already investing in these areas, how might you challenge yourself to give more?

STEWARDING YOUR **INTELLECT**

This study examines how our lifestyle, habits, and choices emanate out of what is in our heart. Our hearts are influenced, in part, by what we allow to exist in our mind. “Intellect” will explore practical ways in which we can steward our mind and influence our heart. It will define seven key principles for what we allow into our minds.

THE MIND & HEART

Colossians 3:1-17; 2 Corinthians 10:3-6

Our heart is the seat of our thoughts, motives, and actions. What we allow into our heart will affect what it produces (our beliefs, words, and actions). This includes what we read, watch, listen to, participate in, and with whom we spend most of our time. If we think of our heart as something to cultivate, we must guard to what it is exposed. What we feed it directly affects the health of it. Our mind is how we feed our heart.¹

THE MIND FEEDS THE HEART

Philippians 4:8

As a plant feeds on the nutrients in the soil, our heart is fed by what we put into our mind. Depending on what we allow into our mind will determine the health of our heart. There are several principles that we must implement into our lives that will enable us to live with healthy, life-giving hearts. While this list can easily turn into a legalistic set of “do’s” and “don’ts”, it is to be used as a catalyst for the Holy Spirit to convince us of what is healthy. It will help guide our lives toward, life-giving thoughts.

1. Principle of Excess

Hebrews 12:1

If we picture an Olympic endurance runner, we generally view them with a slender build, wearing lightweight jogging shirt and shorts. Now, picture this same runner carrying a backpack full of rocks. Our walk with the Holy Spirit is like a long-distance runner. If we are weighed down by excess in our life, it will be more difficult for us to follow exactly where the Holy Spirit is leading us.

2. Principle of Expedience

1 Corinthians 6:12a

Not everything we participate in is godless or unrighteous. However, there are things that while they are not “sinful” may not be beneficial. For an endurance runner, carrying

¹ See Matthew 12:33-37; Proverbs 4:23

a water bottle filled with coffee will not kill them, but it is not beneficial to their bodies. We must be concentrating on and participating in activities that build up, exhort, and encourage our walk with the Holy Spirit.

3. Principle of Emulation

1 John 2:5-6

We are created in the image and likeness of our Heavenly Dad. What we allow into our heart will either devalue and distort this reflection or affirm and enhance it. While we do not live for the approval of others, we do live as representatives of our Heavenly Dad. Therefore, what we participate in will reflect His character, nature, and demeanor to those around us. We defeat the enemy in others' lives and our own by telling our story.

4. Principle of Evangelism

1 Thessalonians 5:22

Evangelism is simply *us telling our story to others about what Jesus has set us free from and how the Holy Spirit has empowered us to live victorious*. What we allow to influence our mind (and feed our heart) will either affirm our story or contradict it. Participating in things that affirm our story strengthen our faith and make us stronger against temptation. Participating in things that contradict our story will weaken our faith and make us more susceptible to giving into things from which we have previously been set free. When we share our story we weaken the lies of the enemy and strengthen the Spirit's empowerment in both our life and the lives of those with whom we are sharing.

5. Principle of Edification

1 Corinthians 6:12b

While something may not be classified as a sin or overt distrust of God but we no longer can control or exercise moderation, then it has become a habit. If these habits hinder our walk with the Holy Spirit then they must be rooted out and replaced with Spirit-led behaviors. To trust the Holy Spirit for our freedom implies we are not bound

or addicted to anything that is not encouraging our walk with Him.

6. Principle of Exaltation

1 Corinthians 10:31

We are designed to glorify God. To **give God glory** means that *we trust Him exclusively in all circumstances and reflect Him in our relationships*. If we participate in or allow into our minds anything that does not lead us to fulfilling our purpose than it must be removed. We find true fulfillment, peace, joy, comfort, security, and love when we pursue our designed purpose.

7. Principle of Example

Romans 14:13-23; 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

While we may not be personally convicted by something, anything we participate in that could potentially cause another believer to stumble must be removed. While we, in good conscience and trusting God, may not be sinning in a particular area but know it is a weakness for another Christian around us then it becomes a sin for us.

CONCLUSION

What we allow in our minds affects our hearts. Our heart is the source of our words and actions. If we desire to live free and victorious over the enemy, then we must guard our heart and take every thought captive. Then we must kill any thoughts that does not produce faith, hope, and love. We kill these thoughts by replacing them with thoughts that agrees with God's reality, leads us to worship Him, in line with our design, freeing, loving toward others, leads to a good reputation, wholesome, and praise-worthy.

ACTIVATION QUESTIONS

- How does the content you engage with (e.g., social media, music, books, shows, news, movies, etc.) encourage: a deeper trust in God, hope-filled beliefs, and loving behavior?
- How do your closest friends encourage the same things?



(www.CultivateRelationships.com)