

STEWARDSHIP GUIDE

BY PAUL CHAPPELL

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Introduction

This document is a resource to guide you on a journey of effective life stewardship. In these pages, I share truths and principles God has taught me as I have endeavored to learn best practices for living according to the priorities God has placed in my life and stewarding my life for God's kingdom.

In these pages, you will be guided in defining your purpose and vision statements as well as your God-given life roles. You will want to set aside some time to prayerfully and carefully work through this material.

Think of this as something you will most likely work through once every several years. In the in-between

times, I suggest you review the exercises you have written every six months.

This guidebook is designed as a companion to the *Stewarding Life Planner*. Featuring six months of daily and weekly planning pages, this printed planner helps you steward each day through the filter of your God-given life roles. It provides space to record insights from your daily devotional time, gives a full two-page spread for your daily planning and priorities, and provides a weekly prompt to plan your upcoming week specifically around your life roles.

I pray that this guidebook is a tool that equips you to live more effectively to the glory of God.

Life Stewardship

Several years ago, I began a blank notebook which I titled “Personal Life Stewardship.” Nothing complicated—just a single place to keep track of the big picture. Eventually, it migrated into my computer as a long, and regularly expanding, document. In this document, I included a purpose statement for my life, a long-term vision of what I pray God allows me to accomplish, some core truths God has taught me, and specific decisions I’ve made along the way.

My plan was to review the pages of this journal on a regular basis to keep my focus on stewarding my life

for the glory of God. I used it more or less as a holding place—a record—rather than as a daily journal.

Then February 18, 2011, happened.

On the fifth night of a series of dinners with our church family, I was rushed to the emergency room for the second time that week—this time with a blood pressure reading of 220/115.¹ Long story short, each of the many doctors I saw in the days that followed warned me, “If you don’t get rest, you will have a heart attack.”

At the doctor’s orders, my wife Terrie and I traveled to my uncle’s farm in Colorado where I prayed, read, studied, and asked the Lord to renew my strength. I purchased a large sketch pad and began to take notes of what the Lord was teaching me. That time proved to be a turning point in my life, starting me on a journey of more intentional life stewardship.

The pages of my sketch pad began to shape a picture similar to the “Personal Life Stewardship” journal I had begun years earlier, only this time with more clarity—more specifics. Once typed, I had a forty-plus page document that I placed in my planner and purposed to review daily.

What emerged from that forced sabbatical in 2011 was more than a journal. It was a changed lifestyle—a lifestyle that more clearly reflected that I am a steward of the life God has given me.

¹ For the full story, read *Stewarding Life* (Striving Together Publications, 2012), 13–19.

Indeed, there are three primary ways we can expend our lives—either as squanderers, spenders, or stewards.²

Squanderers waste the life God has given in purposeless living. Or they waste their lives in selfish or temporal pursuits.

Spenders expend the life God has given them faster than it can be replenished. Their motivation may be right, but they fail to demonstrate dependence on God by honoring His built-in cycles of rest and renewal.

Stewards recognize that life itself is a gift from God, and they purpose to use it for His glory. They prayerfully and purposefully identify God's directives for their lives and, in dependence on Him, obey. They see God as the owner and themselves as the administrator fulfilling His directives.

At the end of our lives, we will stand before Christ to give an account for how we used the lives He gave us. My overwhelming desire in that moment is to hear my Lord say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant . . . enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:21).

But hearing our Lord's words of praise at the end of our lives will only happen if we plan and live for it today. This resource is designed to help you plan and live as a steward of the life God has entrusted to you.

² Each of these is covered more thoroughly in chapter 2 of *Stewarding Life*.

Developing a Purpose Statement

To gain a proper perspective of our overflowing to-do lists, we need to see a larger picture of God's overarching purpose for our lives.

What is it that God has created you to fulfill? Around what should you center your daily routines and weekly goals to be sure you are making real progress? What one purpose exists that—if nothing else in your life were completed—you could be fulfilled knowing this was accomplished?

In a large sense, the purpose for each of our lives is the same—to bring glory to God. Revelation 4:11 declares,

“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” God created us for His pleasure, and only as we live to glorify Him will we be fulfilled.

Jesus further commissioned us to bring God glory by telling others of His great gift of salvation: “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). He told His disciples that a key way to glorify Him is to bear spiritual fruit, “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit . . .” (John 15:8). So to live for God’s glory is to make spreading the gospel a central part of our lives.

Although Scripture establishes that the core purpose of each of our lives is to live for God’s glory, I have found writing out a personal “purpose statement” to be a helpful exercise. It helps you put into words what living for God’s glory looks like in the context of your life.

Over twenty years ago, I wrote out my purpose statement. After a few drafts, here is what I settled on:

The purpose of my life is to glorify God by living with the mind of Christ, loving and providing for my family, and impacting my generation with the gospel of Christ.

I also wrote a purpose statement for our family. Our children were all young when I wrote this. Terrie printed

it to hang in the hallway of our home, and each member of our family signed it.

The purpose of our family is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ through obedience to His Word, and by edifying and exhorting one another as we grow to understand our diverse yet compatible personalities.

Although the core purpose of your life (glorifying God) will never change, the wording of your purpose statement may shift a little as you grow and as your opportunities and responsibilities shift. In fact, I recently added the following to my purpose statement:

My midlife purpose is to live to leave an honorable Christian testimony for my family, to provide financial security for my wife, and to leave committed preachers for the next generation.

Now it's your turn. Considering the verses above and the comprehensive purpose for every person's life to glorify God, on the following page write a purpose statement—something you can come back to as the center focus for your daily priorities. (Feel free to borrow from my wording.)

I recommend reviewing and writing a fresh copy of this purpose statement on a regular basis. (The

Developing a Vision Statement

Now that you have a purpose statement, pause to consider what living out that purpose will look like in your life. Specifically, how do you envision glorifying the Lord with the unique set of desires, aptitudes, gifts, and opportunities He has given you?

God didn't design us to live "cookie-cutter lives." Scripture tells us that even before birth, God has specially crafted individual purposes for our lives. Jeremiah 1:5 says, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations."

Years ago, as a young father, I had no idea what God would allow me to accomplish in my life or the specifics of what our family would look like years down the road. But I knew I needed a goal. So, I spent some time prayerfully outlining what I wanted the end of my life and ministry to look like. Here is what I wrote:

- I envision my life as a life invested in loving my family, laboring for Christ, and leaving a godly example and written philosophy of ministry for the next generation.
- I envision my marriage to be an ever loving relationship of spiritual growth, with a sense of godly satisfaction and strategic mentoring in the twilight years.
- I envision my children and their spouses to be growing in Christ and in His service. I envision them walking in the truth and leading their families in the truth.

God will give you a passion and dream for achieving His purposes for your life. He will give you both the faith and resources to see those dreams fulfilled.

So looking back to your purpose statement, take some time to prayerfully write out your vision statement on the following page.

Accountability and Relational Investments

Life planning and stewardship are not endeavors you should attempt alone.

If you are married, invite your spouse to take this journey with you. Pray together over it, and ask for his or her input along the way. Do it together—knowing that the purposes of your lives are shared.

Married or single, invite the support and accountability of godly friends. Share with them the specific goals and decisions that emerge through this process, and ask them to pray for you and check up on you as you go along. Give them access to ask you the tough questions, and be honest as you answer.

Every Christian needs personal and spiritual accountability. Accountability means different things to different people, but the crux of it is that the relationships God has given us in our families and Christian friends should not just represent another item on our to do lists. These people represent partners—companions for both accountability and growth. They should be people we invest in and receive from in ways that are integral to our Christian growth.

Of course, accountability and relational investment come in different levels with different relationships. Every day you need the accountability that comes through spending time with the Lord and exposing your heart to His Word. Every day you need heart-level interaction with your family. From there, I would group other Christian relationships into three more categories.

- **Daily friends**—people I interact with (or should interact with) on a daily or regular basis
- **Intentional friends**—my accountability partners—people with whom I intentionally build friendships for mutual growth and encouragement in the Lord
- **Recreational friends**—friendships God has brought into my life that are personally replenishing

On the following page is a chart I created for myself as a visual of these vital relationships in my life.



REGULAR FRIENDS

INTENTIONAL FRIENDS

RECREATIONAL FRIENDS

Beyond naming general categories, I added specific names to my chart. Family was obvious, so I didn't list them, but I did list others who I believe I should be intentional about including in my circle of accountability.

Each person is different, but I believe you should have two to five people in each of these categories. Ask the Lord to give you wisdom, and jot down these names. If this exercise reveals that you have not developed relationships of accountability, ask the Lord to bring names to mind of people you should seek out in friendship.

Disciplines of Life Stewardship

The path of life stewardship may be exciting to begin, but we all too easily lose our focus and revert to our old tendencies. To stay on track, we need to develop disciplines that become habits.

I recently asked my dear friend and the executive vice president of West Coast Baptist College, Dr. John Goetsch, for thoughts on renewal in life stewardship, and he shared the seven daily disciplines below. I've asked his permission to include them for you here as a resource for personal renewal.

1. Remember

Remember that God loves you for who you are, not for what you do. All throughout Scripture, God affirms His love.

The LORD hath appeared of old unto me,
saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an
everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness
have I drawn thee.—Jeremiah 31:3

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great
love wherewith he loved us,—Ephesians 2:4

Let your conversation be without covetousness;
and be content with such things as ye have:
for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor
forsake thee.—Hebrews 13:5

Remembering God's everlasting, unswerving love helps us stay clear of the pitfalls of performance-based drivenness. It frees us to steward our lives for God's glory rather than for God's (or man's) approval.

2. Refuel

The principle here is that you must take in as much as you give out. No one has an unending reservoir of energy, and we will eventually become depleted physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Even Jesus, as He ministered to others, gave of Himself. He was personally expended in the process.

Throughout the gospels, we see that He intentionally found times to renew from exhaustion (Mark 1:35, 6:31).

We must develop habits to replenish in the areas in which we are expending our energy. For instance, a person whose regular job requires intense physical labor will likely need a refueling activity that is physically restful but mentally stimulating—perhaps reading. A person whose job is sedentary should work physically stimulating exercise into their routines. The same comparisons could be made for those who are around people all day versus those who are not. Leaders in ministry who are constantly giving emotionally and spiritually should be careful to develop relationships and hobbies that are replenishing. They should also schedule extended times to spend with the Lord, keeping their personal walk with Him fresh.

3. Review

If we don't review our daily schedules and to-do lists, we'll be dragged along from one urgent need to another—with no way to determine if these urgent needs are even important.

I suggest the following three categories through which to filter your tasks and projects as you review:

- **Priority**—that which God has specifically called you to do. This would be something directly related to your core God-given roles.

- **Peripheral**—that which you would like to do or that which relates to your roles but is not necessary right now.
- **Pollution**—that which wastes your time or energy. This may even be something you enjoy, but it is a distraction from accomplishing the priorities or peripherals.

Once again, we see Jesus as the example as He filtered the demands of His day through heavenly priorities: “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4).

4. Reconcile

An unreconciled life is like a fuel tank with a hole in it. No matter how often you refuel, it will always be empty. Similarly, unresolved conflict with others will zap us of our fervor and focus.

Jesus’ counsel to His disciples was to reconcile people problems swiftly. “Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison” (Matthew 5:25). If there is any kind of conflict between you and another person, go to them in humility, and seek reconciliation. You must live a personally reconciled life to have the energy to steward your life.

5. Require

Our flesh is eager to do whatever feels comfortable in the moment, but Spirit-filled discipline requires a higher standard. In other words, higher disciplines must dominate human desires.

We may think that a quick indulgence will motivate us to diligence, but the reverse is generally true. When you allow your time to be consumed with non-essential cravings, your to do list will bury you. You'll always find yourself behind and scrambling.

Paul wrote, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any" (1 Corinthians 6:12). Refuse to be controlled by your desires. Satisfying human desires at whim never gives energy for the higher disciplines. Instead, reward your higher disciplines with the human desires.

6. Remain

The Christian life is not a sprint; it is a marathon. We need patience to stay in the race until we cross the finish line. It is this patience that Hebrews 12:1 admonishes: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

To stay in the race, we need commitment, contentment, and compassion.

7. Rejoice

Even if you don't finish your to-do list for the day, even if you don't see the results you wanted, choose to rejoice. If you focus only on results, you'll burn out. The truth is, we'll never know all the results of our service for the Lord or others until eternity. Rejoice in your faithfulness, not in your fruitfulness. Matthew 25:21 reminds us that it is faithfulness that will matter in eternity. "His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

Life stewardship is not a one-time session of setting goals. It's a set of beliefs and habits that shape our lives toward the day when we give an account before our Lord.

Identifying Your Roles

Having a big-picture goal to glorify God and fulfill your specific calling is different than actually spending each day reaching that larger purpose. How does our large goal filter into our daily to-do lists?

The answer lies in our God-given roles.

What is a role? It is a divine assignment—a set of responsibilities placed into your life by God. These roles should be the core determining factors of your daily tasks.

For instance, the main role of Eleazar's life was that of a servant. As Abraham's servant, he was placed over all

that Abraham had and was ultimately made responsible for seeking out a wife for Abraham's son, Isaac. Had Eleazar neglected the role of being a servant, he would have failed to accomplish the calling of God on his life.

The main role of Joshua's life was that of a leader. God commissioned him to lead the Israelites to victory in the Promised Land. Had he abdicated this responsibility, preferring his earlier role of being Moses' servant, he would have missed fulfilling God's calling on his life.

Indeed, roles are the center of what God has given us in life, and we all have multiple roles assigned to us by God. I have learned that the best way for me to be sure that my daily priorities match my responsibilities and life purpose is to remember my roles and list my priorities by them. I then review these roles on a regular basis. Of course, my roles in life have grown and shifted over the years, so this is not an exercise to do once and be done with. I recommend that you take a new look at your roles twice each year.

My current roles are as follows:

- Child of God
- Husband/household
- Father/family
- Preacher/teacher
- Pastor
- College president
- Equipper—writing/missions

Putting It All Together

So what do your purpose and vision statements, life roles, and intentional relationships have to do with your day-to-day living? This is where the companion to this guide, the *Stewarding Life Planner*, comes in. This printed planner provides six months of daily pages. Each set of seven pages is followed by a spot for weekly reflection.

Whether or not you use this specific planner, hopefully these thoughts and examples will give you insight into how to plan your days and structure your weeks with a big picture of life stewardship in mind.

Daily Pages

The daily pages are designed to support your daily walk with God and to serve as your daily task list. In fact, they are specifically designed to integrate the two—so that the clarity and direction God gives you during your time with Him can be easily incorporated into your daily life. You'll notice four sections:

1. Time with God: Use these lines to journal your devotional journey with the Lord. Some may want to use this space to cultivate a habit of daily writing out reasons to rejoice in the Lord. Others may choose to write a verse or application from their devotional time. If you run out of space, there is extra room on the facing page. (There are also lined pages in the back to use as your prayer journal if you would like.)

During my morning devotional time, I take a few minutes to look at the day ahead, identifying my biggest priorities for the day as well as listing the myriad of tasks to accomplish. I add to this list anything the Holy Spirit placed on my heart through my prayer time. Space for these is included in the next sections of the daily pages.


2. Today's Top Three Priorities: Throughout your day, there will be many tasks that come your way. Starting the day by identifying the top three most important priorities provides clarity throughout the day.

3. Today's Appointments: Review your calendar and list any time-specific tasks, appointments, or meetings.

DAILY PAGES

Time with God

Devotion: Write what Scripture passage you read.
Response: Write out your response to God's Spirit.
Praise: Write out reasons to rejoice in the Lord.

 DAILY PAGES

Monday

TIME WITH GOD

TODAY'S TOP THREE PRIORITIES

TODAY'S APPOINTMENTS

→ = DELEGATED ✓ = DONE X = DELETE

DATE ____/____/____

Expect great things from God.
WILLIAM CAREY

ACTION ITEMS AND NOTES

1

2

3

4

Today's Top Three Priorities

Start your day by identifying the top three priorities.

Today's Appointments

List any time-specific tasks, appointments, or meetings.

Action Items and Notes

Extra space for whatever you need.

4. Action Items and Notes: This is for your daily to-do list as well as providing extra space for whatever you need.

Weekly Review

These points of weekly reflection, interspersed at the end of each week throughout the daily pages, provide regular checkpoints for reflection and planning.

1. Last Week: This section gives you the opportunity to look back over the past week, including the verses or insights recorded from your daily time with the Lord. It also prompts you to review your key projects and scan through your past week for any still-relevant unfinished action items you need to complete in the coming week.

2. Next Week: This section prompts you to identify the key calendar commitments and priorities for your upcoming week.

3. Life Roles: This section is the core of the weekly checkpoint as it prompts you to consider upcoming action items through the filter of the roles God has entrusted to your life. (These are the roles you listed on page 17. You may want to group similar roles so you have only five main categories.)

I typically conduct this weekly review on Sunday afternoons. As I pray through each role God has placed in my life (Christian, husband, father, grandfather, pastor, etc.), invariably, the Holy Spirit prompts me of an action I need to take to faithfully steward that role He has given to me. This time of planning then shapes my upcoming week.

Weekly Review

DATE ____/____/____

WEEKS REMAINING 26 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

LAST WEEK

List three things for which to give God thanks from last week—either from your devotional time with Him or significant tasks you were able to accomplish.

1

UPCOMING WEEK

Take note of any unfinished tasks or ongoing projects, and add those to your project manager or this week's Daily Pages. Review your calendar for any upcoming events or project deadlines.

Based on your life roles and current responsibilities, what are your top three project priorities for this week?

2

1

2

3

LIFE ROLES

Write down one of your God-given roles in each of the sections on the next page. Spend a few minutes praying through each. Ask the Lord if there are specific action items, not already on your lists, you need to add to this week's calendar based on these roles. ▶

