

The following article is a chapter from the church leadership training manual titled, "Building A Dynamic Church" by Randall Hillebrand. Copyright © 2008, 2011 by Randall J. Hillebrand. All rights reserved.

If you desire to download the manual in its entirety, please go to the following url:
<http://www.hillebrandministries.com/CompleteEnglishManualWithCovers.pdf>



CHURCH LEADER'S PERSONAL GROWTH:

Spiritual Disciplines

The importance of spiritual disciplines:

Spiritual disciplines are an important aspect of every believer's life, but especially of the pastor/elder. They are important because they help him live a more consistent, disciplined, and fruitful Christian life on a day-to-day basis. This is key because believers are to live out their faith in accordance with the Scriptures, walking in a manner which is worthy of their calling (Eph. 4:1; Php. 1:27; Col. 1:10; 1 Thes. 2:12). Doing this will produce a believer whose life inside the church is the same as his life outside the church; he is not a hypocrite. Strong church leaders and strong churches are those who practice these disciplines.

Although the list may vary on what spiritual disciplines should consist of, the following will be discussed in this article:

- 
1. Daily devotions and prayer
 2. Scripture memorization
 3. Bible study
 4. Special time alone with God
 5. Fasting
 6. Evangelism
 7. Service
 8. Stewardship
 9. Giving
 10. Journaling

Daily devotions:

It is important for a believer to start each day fellowshiping with his Heavenly Father. This is a time set aside each morning for Bible reading and prayer. It is devoted to God for the purpose of communion with Him, to speak to Him (cf. Psa. 62:8) and to hear from Him as one reads His Word and prays. This is when a believer sets his focus on God and prepares himself for the day which lies ahead.

A believer's personal, daily devotions will not only help him better understand the Word of God, but God Himself. Through His Word, God reveals Himself, His Son, His Holy Spirit, and His will for man. It is also through His Word that God speaks to His children, as His Holy Spirit uses the Scriptures to communicate to them the things which He desires them to know; "for the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of

soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb. 4:12; cf. Psa. 119:130). During this time God uses His Word to impact the believer's personal life as the Creator, the King of the universe, communes with His child and speaks to him.

As a pastor/elder reads the Scriptures and God enlightens his mind to new things in His Word, he can share these insights with his congregation. If he makes it his habit to read through the Bible yearly, this will help him as a teacher to know the whole of God's Word. Not only will this give him the opportunity to see afresh all that God's Word says from year to year; but the more he reads the Bible in its entirety, the more he will see how everything in the Bible harmonizes. His understanding of the Scriptures will increase as will his ability to see it as a whole, complete unit. This will also help him correlate the whole of Scripture and not become skewed in his view of what the Word of God teaches. This complete picture will help him better understand the God of the Old Testament and His Son in the New Testament, who is the exact representation of the Father (Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3); the One who explains Him (John 1:18). These and other benefits gained will be extremely helpful to the pastor/elder, his family and his church.

Other benefits to reading the Bible daily are because it: is a believer's source of nutrition (Deut. 8:3), is a lamp to his feet (Ps. 119:105), gives understanding (Ps. 119:130), keeps his way pure (Ps. 119:9) because it is pure (Ps. 119:140), can judge his thoughts and intentions (Heb. 4:12), is a mirror into which he is to look so he can judge himself rightly (Jam. 1:23-25), is truth (John 17:17), is the Word of God (2 Pet. 1:19-21) and is all that he needs for spiritual growth (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The summation of these truths is why Bible reading, study, memorization and meditation are so important to a Christian's life. Therefore a pastor/elder needs to set his heart to study it accurately (2 Tim. 2:15), practicing and teaching it (Ezra 7:10). As God's Word, it will have the effect of sanctifying him and its hearers (cf. John 17:17). Without the influence of the Word of God in a Christian's life, he will not grow in his faith, will not walk close with the Lord and will struggle with sin and with knowing and understanding clearly God's will and plan for his life. Therefore, if a believer is not feeding upon the Bread of Life, he will starve spiritually (cf. Amos 8:11-12; Matt. 4:4) and not grow into a mature man (cf. Heb. 5:13).

Prayer is also an important part of a pastor/elder's daily devotional time. It is a special, concentrated time to communicate with his God. He is always to have an attitude of prayer (1 Thes. 5:17), being devoted to it (Rom. 12:12). It is during this time he has the opportunity to give thanks (Psa. 33:2; 1 Thes. 5:18; 2 Thes. 1:3; 2:13), praise (Psa. 9:2; 34:1; Heb. 13:15), confess (Psa. 51), intercede (cf. Mat. 5:44; 2 Cor. 13:9; Eph. 6:18-19; Col. 1:3,9; Jam. 5:16), cast his burdens (Psa. 62:8; Php. 4:6-7; 1 Pet. 5:7; cf. Rom. 8:26-27), and make requests (cf. Ps. 5:2; Psa. 32:6; Php. 4:6; 1 Thes. 5:17; Jam. 5:13) to his God. This is also when God has the opportunity to speak to His child, who theoretically is at a heightened state of sensitivity to Him and His will, as he is seeking and communicating with His Heavenly Father on various issues.

Prayer is a discipline which over time can become meaningless, as with any of the other spiritual disciplines. When a pastor/elder is earnestly seeking God and His will, then this can be a time of spiritual refreshment as God answers and guides him in praying within His perfect will. It is also when he can make a contribution through his prayers, literally affecting events in his own home, community, nation and

throughout the world. This is possible because the God of the universe, his Heavenly Father, considers his every prayer and determines the best way to answer each of them. This is the case even in those times when the one praying is unsure of how to pray about a situation, for He understands and knows the person's heart on the issue (Psa. 139:1-5). A believer can be assured of this for Paul told the Romans: "In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of God*" (Rom. 8:26-27). God so desires to know each believer (cf. Psa. 139:1-5) and what is burdening his heart (Psa. 62:8) that His Holy Spirit searches him and intercedes to Him on his behalf. King David stated in Psalm 62:8: "Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us." Therefore during prayer and throughout the day, God desires that His child run to Him as his refuge, trusting in Him. When he is before God, he is able to pour out his heart to Him (everything that is in it, every last drop). This is the blessing of prayer -- being able to cast all of one's burdens upon his Heavenly Father, the One who cares (1 Pet. 5:7).

Previously it was mentioned about praying in the morning. There is no specific time the Scriptures designate when a person must pray, read the Bible, etc. The key to a good devotional life is consistency. If for this to happen a person needs to do it at 5:00 a.m. or 5:00 p.m., this is unimportant. A person needs to create a schedule that will work for him, but having one's devotions at the beginning of their day is a wonderful way to start a day. For some, their day may begin at 4:00 a.m. and for others at 4:00 p.m. So whenever your day starts, if at all possible, start it with time spent alone with the Lord. The Scriptures record that Jesus arose at the start of each day and prayed (Mark 1:35; Luke 4:42). He prayed at other times as well (Luke 5:16; 6:12). King David said in Psalm 5:1-3: "Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my groaning. Heed the sound of my cry for help, my King and my God, for to You I pray. In the morning, O LORD, You will hear my voice; in the morning I will order *my prayer* to You and *eagerly* watch." David prayed in the morning and eagerly watched for God's answer throughout the day. This is a good example for the pastor/elder as well.

Scripture memorization:

Scripture memorization is vital to a pastor/elder for his spiritual life and ministry. When he memorizes God's Word, hiding it in his heart, it will always be with him no matter where he goes or what situation he encounters. The Holy Spirit is able to recall to his mind God's Word and use it in his life. This is important for God said: "'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,' declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:8-9). When faced with difficult situations in which he is not sure what to do, God and His Word can guide him in the right path; not necessarily the one that he himself might have chosen. Having God's Word hidden in his heart will strengthen his trust in God (Prov. 22:17-19), will be a reminder of godly living and not sinning against Him (Psa. 119:11), will help him walk steady and be stable in his daily life (Psa. 37:31), will be pleasant to him and guard him from the evil way (Pro. 2:10-11), and will make him more effective in his ability to teach others (Col. 3:16). All of this culminates in the words of Psalm 40:8: "I delight to do Thy will, O my God; Thy Law is within my heart."

Another advantage to having the Word of God hidden in his heart is that he is then able to meditate upon it wherever he goes. God's Word should always be the basis of his meditation: "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success" (Josh. 1:8). The pastor/elder who makes God's Word the basis of his meditation is blessed (Psa. 1:1-2). His meditation will result in obedience as he considers His ways (cf. Psa. 119:15). He will say with the psalmist: "O how I love Thy law! It is my meditation all the day" (Psa. 119:97). He can also say as David said in Psalm 63:6: "When I remember Thee on my bed, I meditate on Thee in the night watches." David's meditation on God's Word kept him from his sleep because he would think about the vastness and greatness of God as the night passed before him; pondering how the things of God are so awesome and wonderful.

Often people say they do not memorize Scripture because they are unable to memorize. Although it may be difficult at first, God will bless those who persevere at drawing close to Him (cf. Deut. 4:29; Psa. 34:10; Jam. 4:8). As one makes progress, it becomes easier to memorize God's Word. Writing verses out on note cards and taking them with you as you go about your day is a good way to work at hiding God's Word in your heart. Also, making Scripture memory a part of your daily devotional time is helpful and profitable. It is beneficial to begin by recalling those verses that you already have memorized, writing them on note cards if you have not already done so. Then add those verses which you have almost memorized, and work on committing them to memory. Continue to add verses you want to know. It will also be beneficial to memorize verses which have special meaning or are helpful to your life. Memorizing verses which you need to share the gospel is also essential. Since it is hard to remember the verse's reference (book, chapter and verse number), it is good to say this at the beginning and end of each verse as you recite it.

Bible study:

The study of God's Word is a process which is different from simply reading and/or memorizing the Scriptures. Reading the Bible can be compared to walking down the street and simply observing things from a distance. Bible study on the other hand is much more detailed and thorough. It is not just walking down the street, but it is stopping at various places along the way for a period of time to investigate, look behind every bush and under every rock, ask questions of everyone you see, and then correlating that information with other information you had already know, trying to understand everything you have observed and studied within its context. While Bible reading is important, for a pastor/elder, Bible study is crucial.

Studying the Bible is how the pastor/elder is going to learn and grow as he better comes to understand God's Word. The problem is that Bible study, though it is worthwhile and provides valuable insight, is difficult. It takes time and a lot of effort; but such effort will be blessed of God in direct proportion, or greater, to the amount of effort exerted. Bible study is necessary for the pastor/elder who needs to "be diligent to present [himself] approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). As a teacher of God's Word, he is to be careful: "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment" (Jam. 3:1). The pastor/elder

who does not spend a sufficient amount of time studying God's Word yet still teaches, and inaccurately at that, will one day have to answer to Jesus for this. This is why it is vitally important that he is not simply teaching the traditions of a famous person, church or denomination (cf. Mark 7:1-13), but the Word of God as a result of his personal study. The pastor/elder must handle accurately the Word of truth and be fully convinced in his own mind what he believes (Rom. 14:5). This way he will not condemn himself in what he approves (Rom. 14:22). He is to read the Word of God, memorize it and meditate upon it, digging deep into its texts as a miner digs deep into the depths of the earth to discover valuable jewels hidden there. Once found, the pastor/elder can take this wealth of information and share it with those in his church (cf. 2 Tim. 2:2). The pastor/elder who neglects this spiritual discipline will come to church each Sunday, stand before his congregation, speak words which have no life because they are not empowered by the Holy Spirit, and speak on topics which the congregation has heard many times before because he has nothing new to say. This kind of preaching/teaching can kill a church and the work of the Holy Spirit within it. This man will have to answer for such poor labor (cf. 1 Cor. 3:10-15). On the other hand, "the elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching" (1 Tim 5:17).

Special times alone with God:

Special times alone with God can be very rewarding, refreshing and intimate. A pastor/elder can emerge from these times with a renewed perspective on life, ministry, and relationships. These times can change him and have a profound impact in his life. Jesus went away alone to spend time with His Father (Mat. 14:23; Mark 6:46; Luke 6:12-13; 22:41), sometimes spending whole nights in prayer with Him (Luke 6:12). Others who also spent time alone with God, although it was God who beckoned them into His presence, were Jacob (32:24-31), Moses (Exo. 3:1-4:17; 24:18; 34:28-29), and Elijah (1 Kings 19:1-18). As a result of these meetings, their lives were impacted greatly. These times alone with God left them with a new and better understanding of who God is, a direction for their lives, and the specifics of what God wanted them to do. Although these results may not always be the outcome of a person's time alone with God, some elements and potential benefits can be:

- Seeking God (Psa. 105:1-7; Pro. 28:5; Lam. 3:25; Jam. 1:5)
- Fellowship with God (1 Cor 1:9; 1 John 1:3)
- Confession (Psa. 32:5; 38:18; 41:4; 51; Pro. 28:13; 1 John 1:9)
- Worship (Psa. 2:11; 95:6; Mat. 4:10)
- Prayer (Psa. 32:6; Luke 18:1; Rom. 12:12; Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2; 1 Thes. 5:17; Jude 20)
- Contemplation (Deut. 8:2; Hag. 1:5,7; Psa. 26:2; 139; Lam. 3:40; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 6:4)
- Meditation (Psa. 1:1-2; 4:4; 19:14; 63:6; 119:15,27,48,97,99,148)
- Hearing God (cf. Pro. 3:5-6; Php. 3:15; Heb. 4:12)
- Emotional and spiritual healing (Psa. 107:20; 147:3; Php. 4:6-7; 1 Pet. 5:7)
- Refreshment (Jer. 31:25; Acts 3:19)
- Encouragement (Rom. 15:4-5; 2 Cor. 1:3-4; 7:6; Php. 2:1; Col. 2:1-2)
- Rest (cf. Exo. 34:21; Mat. 14:13; Mark 6:31-32)

These special times with God can take different forms. A person can spend them alone by himself or with others. They can be as long or as short as their schedule allows (hours or days in length). They can be taken monthly, quarterly or yearly. These times can be accompanied with fasting. During these times a person may do various things, such as reading the Bible and/or Christian book, using a hymnal to spend time singing, walking while meditating on Scripture, worshipping, and/or praying. He may even take a nap during this time and/or sit and fellowship with other believers. These times should never be so rigid that the day's schedule becomes one's focus and not God. This is why when spending time with God, one needs to shut off his cell phone and shut out the world. Furthermore, flexibility needs to be an important characteristic of this time as one seeks God and waits upon Him (cf. Psalms 62:5; 103:5-6; Isaiah 40:31; 49:23; 64:4; Lamentations 3:25) to hear from Him and be empowered by Him. The one seeking needs to relax before God and look to Him in expectation (Hebrews 11:6). Such times set aside for God will be blessed of Him (cf. Psalm 37:4-6).

Fasting:

Fasting is probably the least practiced and least desirable of the spiritual disciplines, but nonetheless one which is profitable and beneficial. About His disciples, Jesus said: "But *the* days will come; and when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days" (Luke 5:35). The Bridegroom is gone, therefore, there seems to be an implication that fasting is to be practiced in a Christian's life today.

For what reasons should believers fast? In the Scriptures, fasting was done for many reasons: when mourning (Judges 20:26; 1 Samuel 31:13), as a response to sin (1 Samuel 7:6), to gain God's favor (2 Samuel 12:21-22), when seeking God (2 Chronicles 20:3; Daniel 9:3), as an act of humbling oneself when petitioning God (Ezra 8:21-23; Nehemiah 1:1-5; Esther 4:16), to gain release from sinful passions resulting in becoming a person of compassion (Isaiah 58:6-7), when seeking compassion from God (Joel 1:14-16), as evidence of repentance (Joel 2:12-13; Jonah 3:5), in preparation for ministry (Matthew 4:1-2), and when commissioning and dedicating Christian workers to the Lord (Acts 13:2-3; 14:23). When fasting, as with many of the spiritual disciplines, it is to be a personal and often private act. It is not to be done for the acclaim of man, but for the approval of God. Those who fast only to be noticed by God will be rewarded by Him (Matthew 6:16-18).

What kinds of fasts are recorded in the Bible? There were fasts when people abstained from just food (2 Samuel 12:20-21), from food and water for periods lasting no more than three days in length, unless they were supernatural in nature (Exodus 34:28; 1 Kings 19:8; Ezra 10:6; Esther 4:16; Acts 9:9), or just from tasty foods (Daniel 10:3). The type of fast a person chooses is up to him or as directed by the Lord.

How often or for how long should a believer fast? In the Bible, we observe fasts which lasted three days (Esther 4:16; Acts 9:9), seven days (1 Samuel 31:13), three weeks (Daniel 10:2-3), and forty days (Matthew 4:2). There are also supernatural fasts recorded in which the person went long periods of time without food or water (Exodus 34:28; 1 Kings 19:8). When a person fasts, especially for any length of time, they need to consider health issues as well as their work schedule. Poor health or an active schedule can hinder the attainment of their goal. It can also cause them to be-

come sick, weak or even faint. Depending on their health, some people should consult their physician beforehand. It is also recommended that if someone desires to fast for an extended period, he not do so before having completed some shorter fasts first. One may begin by skipping just one meal and using that time for prayer and the reading of God's Word (cf. Job 23:12). He may follow this then by not eating for an entire day. Please note that this section on fasting is not meant to be an all inclusive study on the topic. It is recommended that you first consult your doctor and read a book or two on the topic first.

When considering a fast, take time to plan it; how you will spend your time, and where you will do this. Prepare for it through prayer and reading God's Word. Consider if you will drink only water, or water and/or tea, and/or juice, and/or eat non tasty foods. Plan your time so that you will not have an active schedule; and if possible, so that you can be alone. During your fast, plan times of prayer, reading the Word of God, as well as singing and listening to music that will encourage you in your walk with Christ. If you want to fast with your spouse, a friend, or even a group of people, then plan times when you can be alone and other times when you are together as a group for prayer, singing and the reading of God's Word. Then, as you do this, look to God and expect to see Him work: "And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him" (Heb. 11:6).

Evangelism:

Each believer has a personal responsibility to share his faith in Christ with the lost (cf. Mat. 28:19). Jesus told those listening to His Sermon on the Mount: "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? It is good for nothing anymore, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Mat. 5:13-16). Jesus spoke these words to the people of Israel. They, as a nation, were to be such a light to the Gentile nations (Exo. 19:5-6; Deut. 4:5-8; 14:2; 26:18-19; 28:1,9-14); but they failed miserably over the centuries in doing so (2 Kings 16:7-18; Jer. 6:1-8; 16:10-13; Ezk. 5:5-6; 36:22-23). The application of this passage applies to Christians as well. Christians are to be salt (cf. Col. 4:6) and light (Rom. 13:11-14; Eph. 5:8-11; Php. 2:15); like a city set on a hill for all to see, shining their light in such a way that their Father will be glorified (1 Thes. 2:12; 1 Pet. 2:9).

Reaching the lost is very important to God (2 Pet. 3:9) and to Jesus (Mark 10:45; Titus 2:14), and is the reason why He came to earth to die on a cross (1 Pet. 3:18). Even after His death and before His ascension, Jesus commissioned His disciples to reach the lost (Mat. 28:18-20), not only those who were around them, but by going to the ends of the earth to do so (Acts 1:8). "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). As a result of this, Paul said: "Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, *as though* seasoned with salt, so that you will know

how you should respond to each person" (Col. 4:5-6). This is the task and a discipline of each believer.

Service:

Service is another important aspect of the Christian life. As disciples of Christ, Christians are to serve and follow His example as a servant. Mark recorded about Jesus: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Jesus fulfilled this statement when He served believers by going to the cross.

Serving others was so important to Jesus that it was the last topic He taught about before going to the cross. The night He was taken He performed the task of a humble servant by washing the feet of His disciples. It was after this act of service that Jesus said to them: "You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them" (John 13:13-17). Jesus' point was that if He who is greater than His followers, their Lord and their Teacher, washed their feet, how much more are they to serve others? If they do this, following His example, they will be blessed. This correlates with 1 John 2:5-6 which says, "...By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked." Therefore believers are to follow the example of their Savior and serve others.

One problem with serving is that too often the servant desires to be served by others and not to serve. Even James and John came to Jesus asking Him to place them, one on His left side and one on His right side in glory; but Jesus answered them with these words: "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all" (Mark 10:42-44). Sadly to say, many times pastors, elders and evangelists in the church act as rulers of the Gentiles instead of as servants and slaves. They, having become influenced by society instead of the Scriptures, desire the praise of men more than the praise of God. Church leaders especially need to be careful; because on the one hand, they are specially called of God as leaders (Eph. 4:8,11-16) who have great responsibility (1 Pet. 5:1-4; Heb. 13:17) and are to be highly esteemed in love and appreciated by the church (1 Thes. 5:12-13). Yet on the other hand, they are to be servants to the very people over whom they have responsibility (Mark 10:42-45). Therefore it can become a temptation for a leader to lord it over his people. A servant leader does have its challenges, but such a life can be lived out in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Church leaders are to serve God and not work for the things of this world (Matt. 6:24; Luke 4:8; Jam. 4:4). As they serve, they are to do so humbly (Php. 2:3-4), not being self-serving, but doing what they do for the benefit of God and others (2 Cor. 4:5). For this they will be honored (John 12:26). "Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will give

himself *to serve*, and have them recline *at the table*, and will come up and wait on them" (Luke 12:37).

Stewardship:

Stewardship is a discipline which encompasses how a person uses those things entrusted to him by God, including such things as his family (Pro. 13:24; Eph. 5:26-30; 6:4; Col. 3:21; 1 Pet. 3:7), money (Luke 16:11), possessions (Mat. 6:19-21), time (Eph. 5:16), spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:7; 1 Pet. 4:10-11), his body (1 Cor. 6:13,15,17,19-20; 1 Thes. 4:4), etc. A steward will one day have to give an account of these things to his Master (2 Cor. 5:10; cf. Mat. 25:19; Luke 16:1-2).

The main goal of a good steward is to be found trustworthy (1 Cor. 4:2; cf. Luke 12:42-44), for a trustworthy steward who is found faithful by God will be rewarded (Mat. 25:21; Luke 12:35-37; 19:17,19,24-26). The worthless steward on the other hand will not be rewarded. As a result of his poor performance, he will not be entrusted with greater riches (Luke 16:10-13) and/or greater responsibilities (cf. Luke 19:17,19,20-26) as the faithful steward will be. Instead one day he will be punished for his poor stewardship (cf. Mat. 25:24-30; Luke 19:20-24,26).

How a steward carries out his responsibilities is a direct reflection of his maturity in Christ. A person who is mature in his faith will use all that he has for the glory of God (cf. 1 Cor. 10:31). His desire will be to use these things to the greatest extent in his service to God. He understands that he is in a race (1 Cor. 9:24-27; Heb. 12:1); therefore it will be his desire and goal to win the prize. To do this, he needs to be shrewd (cf. Mat. 10:16; Luke 16:8-9) in how he uses those things which God has entrusted to him.

As a believer in Jesus Christ, one's stewardship is an important part of his faith because it speaks to the seriousness of it and his relationship with Christ (cf. Titus 2:11-14). Therefore a steward needs to use his time and other resources on earth wisely (cf. Rom. 13:11-14).

Giving:

Christians are to be generous people (cf. Pro. 22:9; Mark 12:41-44; 2 Cor. 9:6-7; 1 Tim. 6:17-18) who give sacrificially (Luke 21:1-4; Rom. 12:8; 2 Cor. 8:1-5). The believer's example of generosity is God the Father and Jesus Christ. God gave the world His best -- Jesus (John 3:16; 2 Cor. 9:15). Jesus gave the world Himself (Heb. 12:2-3). God continues to give to His children all they need (Rom. 8:31-32; Php. 4:19). As a result of the great generosity of God the Father and God His Son, believers are to manifest this discipline as well.

Jesus, upon giving His disciples the authority to heal and perform miracles, told them: "Heal *the* sick, raise *the* dead, cleanse *the* lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give" (Mat. 10:8). Christians as well are to give freely of what has been given to them. Jesus also said: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your

heart will be also. No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth" (Mat. 6:19-21,24). God never meant that everything He gives His children is to be just for them. To the contrary, He gives to them so that they will share with others (cf. Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35; 1 Cor. 16:1-3; 2 Cor. 8:13-15; 9:6-15); believers and unbelievers (Gal. 6:7-10).

The believer is not only to give to those in need such as the widow, the orphan and the poor (Deut. 10:18; 24:19-21; 26:12-13; Gal. 2:10; Jam. 1:27; 2:15-17; 1 John 3:17), but to his church as well. In the Old Testament, a tithe was required by God of a man's total produce (Deut. 14:22); grain, new wine and oil (Deut. 14:23). The tithe was holy to the Lord (Lev. 27:30) and was to be used to supply the needs of the Levites "in return for their service which they perform, the service of the tent of meeting" (Lev. 18:21). Those who did not give of their tithe, God said, were robbing Him and were cursed for doing so (Mal. 3:8-9). Yet He told them to test Him: "'Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,' says the LORD of hosts, 'if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast *its grapes*,' says the LORD of hosts. 'All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land,' says the LORD of hosts" (Mal. 3:10-12). In other words, those in the nation of Israel who would trust God by their tithe would be blessed of Him. The same principle is repeated in the New Testament.

Whereas in the Old Testament a tithe was required of the people of Israel, in the New Testament there is not a required amount specified that believers are to give to the church. One principle of giving was stated by Paul when he was taking up an offering for the poor believers in Jerusalem. He told the Corinthians: "On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come" (1 Cor. 16:2). They were to lay aside money for the offering in direct proportion to how they had been prospered. So on Sunday a believer was to consider how God had prospered him the previous week, and then in proportion to that, set money aside for the offering. Another principle of New Testament giving is found in 2 Corinthians 9, where Paul further told the Corinthians: "Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one *must do* just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:6-7). The point here is that a person will be blessed in proportion to how he gives. If he gives sparingly, he will reap sparingly. If he is generous in his giving, then God will be generous toward him. God does not want His children giving "grudgingly" (when they do not want to) "or under compulsion" (when they feel they have to). He desires that they be cheerful givers, giving joyfully. To the person who gives cheerfully and generously, God will supply even more, multiplying what He gives him even before he uses it. This will result in the maximum distribution and impact of a believer's resources (2 Cor. 9:10).

How much money should a Christian give to his church? As with the people of Israel, the tithe -- ten percent -- of a person's gross income is a good place to begin. It seems that the tithe was a standard in Old Testament times because even before the Law of Moses was given, Abraham paid a tithe to Melchizedek, King of Salem who "was a priest of God Most High" (Gen. 14:18-20; Heb. 7:6-10). Beginning with a tithe, a person can then later give up and beyond that as God prospers him (cf. 1

Cor. 16:2). Also, a person should always give to God first before spending his money on anything else, for in doing so he honors God (Pro. 3:9-10). When God comes first, then the believer's other needs will be met (Mat. 6:25-34; cf. Php. 4:15-19). Giving in this manner is a test of one's faith (cf. 2 Cor. 9:13), in contrast to giving to God from what is left after all other needs are met.

In addition, a generous, cheerful giver will share what he has with others in need (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35), doing this not for the praise of men, but for God (Mat. 6:1-4; cf. Acts 4:36-5:11); thus laying up treasures for himself in heaven (Mat. 6:19-21). A cheerful giver realizes that a generous man will be blessed and will increase (Pro. 11:24-26; 22:9; 2 Cor. 9:6-11; Php. 4:14-19) in proportion to his generosity (2 Cor. 9:6). He understands that ultimately God is the owner of all things (Deut. 10:14; Psa. 24:1), and that all good things which he possesses come from Him (Jam. 1:17). He knows that he is never to be greedy nor seek riches (1 Tim. 6:9-11), but instead be satisfied with what God provides for him (cf. 1 Tim. 6:8,17). In the words of Agur the son of Jakeh: "Two things I asked of You, do not refuse me before I die: keep deception and lies far from me, give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is my portion, that I not be full and deny *You* and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or that I not be in want and steal, and profane the name of my God" (Pro. 30:7-9).

Journaling:

Keeping a journal is one way in which people can record things that God has done in their lives. By doing so, they can look back and see such things as God's faithfulness, lessons learned, commitments made, answers to prayer, high points, low points, changes that have occurred in their lives, etc. Through such an instrument they can remember, be encouraged in their faith, and teach others.

God and the people of Israel did similar things. On many occasions God told the people of Israel to "remember" things which He did not want them to forget (Deut. 4:10; 5:15; 7:18; 8:2; 8:18; 9:7,27; 15:15; 16:3,12; 24:9,18,22; 25:17; 32:7). God placed a rainbow in the sky to remind people of all generations that He would never again flood the world with water to destroy all living flesh on it (Gen. 9:8-17). On one occasion God told Moses to write a prophecy in a book as a memorial (cf. Exo. 17:14); and then in response to this, Moses built an altar as a physical reminder (Exo. 17:15-16). God also told the Israelites to make tassels on the corners of their garments to which they were to attach a blue cord. The tassels were to remind them of all of God's commandments so that they would obey them and be holy to God, not following after their own hearts and eyes (Num. 15:38-39). On another occasion God told Joshua to set up 12 stones as a sign and a memorial to future generations of how He had cut off the waters of the Jordan before the ark of the covenant when the children of Israel crossed into the land of Canaan (Jos. 4:6-7). Mordecai and Esther established a feast as a reminder of the time when God rid the Jews of their enemies (Est. 9:20-28). The Bible is full of memorials and writings that God gave to His people so that they would remember and not forget. The Bible itself is a memorial and reminder to believers.

Journaling for the believer can be his own personal record of how God has blessed his life in good times and bad, in times of sickness and health, through times of blessings and even in times of discipline, etc. Not only can this journal be a blessing to him, but possibly to future generations.



**APPLICATION QUESTIONS FOR CHURCH LEADERS,
CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH
PLANTERS:**

1. List which of the ten disciplines described that you practice on a regular basis. Next to each discipline list how often you practice it (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly, etc.)

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

2. List which of the ten disciplines described that you do not practice at all:

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

3. As you look over the lists above, how do you feel about your success or lack of it in these areas of your Christian life? Do you desire to grow in these areas?

4. Please list three disciplines which you want to incorporate into your life immediately. Next to them state how often you desire to practice them (daily, monthly, quarterly):

-
-
-

5. Please take the time now to develop a reasonable, attainable plan which you will follow to incorporate these three disciplines in your Christian life. Determine a date by which you desire to be practicing these disciplines. Please note that no matter how good your plan, it must be carried out in the power and strength of the Holy Spirit if you expect to accomplish it. If you are not depending upon Him, then you will not be successful in making these disciplines lifelong practices. This must be the goal because your Christian life is a lifelong process; therefore your implementation of these spiritual disciplines must be as well.

Implementation date: _____

6. Please list three additional disciplines which you would like to incorporate into your life after you have successfully begun the above three. Next to them state how often you desire to practice them (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly) and when you would like to begin working on them.

Starting date: _____

-
-
-

When and if you decide to incorporate these disciplines into your life is your decision. Please remember that this decision will ultimately impact your walk with Christ, your effectiveness as a Christian, your potential impact as a leader, and ultimately your eternity.