

“Made for Stewardship” by Dr. Timothy Keller
Listening and Discussion Guide (Leader’s Guide)

Genesis 1:26-2:2; 2:7-9, 15

Audio link: <http://sermons2.redeemer.com/sermons/made-stewardship>

- In Genesis, there are some of the most foundational issues of humanity. In chapters 1 and 2, the words that keep coming up are: work and rest.
- The main villains of our culture of work are emotional, spiritual and theological. Work is becoming a personal spiritual crisis issue.
- There are no rhythms left of work and rest. Neighborhoods are gone, families are gone.
- Understanding work and rest is a life and death issue. It’s at the very essence of living a human life.
- Genesis 1 and 2 teaches us:
 1. What we’re called to do.
 2. How we’re called to do it.
 3. What we need in order to get it done.

What we’re called to do:

- In the Biblical account (Genesis 2:2) “God finished the work that He had been doing”. This was a radical statement in the time when it was written.
- In the Eastern (Babylonian) account of creation in the Enuma Elish, work is completely bad.
- In the Western (Greek) account of Pandora’s Box, out comes death, disease, and work.
- Greeks thought that if you had to work, stay out of the dirt.
- The book of Genesis shows us with God getting dirt under His fingernails and setting his people up to be gardeners as well.
- In addition to great food, beautiful things for the eye to look at, spirituality, sexuality, and friendship, there was work in paradise.
- Marx didn’t ground his high view of work in the love of God whose son came not as a person high in society’s eyes, but as a carpenter.
- In the Bible, all work has dignity, because God does it.

How we’re called to do it:

- Look in (at our giftings), look out (at the needs of people), look up (at the One who has called us and destined us for something).
- We’re all made in the image of a Creator, and therefore we need to create.
- Sub-creation is making something relatively new out of existing material. This is what the Spirit did in the beginning of creation (Genesis 1:2). He brought order out of chaos.

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- Genesis 2:15: “The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” This is stewardship.
- Do not only find work that fulfills you, but find work that helps people. You are stewards of the people around you.
- There has to be a sense that you’re on a mission.
- “Nunc dimittis” means “I can go now.” The musician was saying “I’ve done what God has created me to do.”
- Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are God’s workmanship, created by God to do good deeds, which He has prepared beforehand for us to accomplish.”

What we need in order to get it done:

- This is not utopia, so we need to paint a realistic picture of how to work in this world.
- You can’t do your work well unless you rest. There’s a rhythm. But if you really want to be able to work well, you need a Sabbath rest.
- In Psalm 3, it says, “Even though there are 10,000 people on my right and my left, I lay myself down to sleep and I awake and the Lord sustains me.”
- The scientist will tell you it’s not the amount of sleep you need, but the depth.
- Psalm 95, Hebrews 3&4, and Psalm 3 infer that we need a deep rest of the soul.
- What do Rocky, Madonna, and Harold Abrahams show us? There is a work under the work. Why are they working? They’re not just working for a living or for the money – they are working to have meaning.
- If you don’t have a relationship with God, if anything goes wrong with your career, you don’t have a self.
- In Genesis after creation, God cried “it is finished,” so that He could rest. On the cross, Jesus cried “it is finished,” on the day of redemption so that we could rest.
- “We who believe enter that Sabbath rest now...” -Hebrews 4:9.
- Until you believe Jesus Christ died on the cross for you, and did everything necessary to fulfill the law of God and that the approval, significance and security you really need is from God, you will be crushed by the work under the work.
- Then finally the work is just about work. It is no longer about you.
- How do you know that you have this deep rest? You take your time off. If you don’t take the physical rest, it proves that you don’t have the spiritual rest.
- Jesus says, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

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– Matthew 11:28

Discussion Questions:

1. What has happened to the rhythm of work and rest in our society? Why has this happened?
2. Why is it “radically stunning” that God is pictured being at work in Genesis?
3. According to Genesis 1 and 2, how are we to view work?
4. When you “look in,” what are the giftings that you see in yourself?
5. When you “look out,” what are some of the biggest needs of people around you?
6. When you “look up,” what do you sense God has created you to do?
7. How are we to experience a deep rest of the soul?
8. What does it mean to “harden our heart”?
9. What is the “work under the work”?
10. How have you experienced trying to create meaning for yourself?
11. How is it that when Jesus cried out on the cross, “it is finished,” that we could rest?

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“Blessed Self-Forgetfulness” by Dr. Tim Keller

Listening and discussion guide (leaders guide)

1st Corinthians 3:21-4:7

Audio Link:<http://sermons2.redeemer.com/sermons/blessed-self-forgetfulness>

- The Corinthian church Paul is writing the letter to was in division. The root cause of division is because of pride and boasting.
- Traditional views have held that the root cause of evil in the world was too high of a view of self (pride).
- Modern, western cultures (the U.S.) follows the opposite. We say people misbehave because they have too low of a view of self.
- We follow the low self esteem view in our culture because of the comfort of not having to make moral judgments.

This passage in 1st Corinthians gives us three reasons that show the biblical approach to seeing ourselves is different from traditional and modern views.

- Three views are: Natural condition of the ego, the supernatural condition of the ego, and how to get it.
- The word Paul uses to describe the natural condition of the ego is pride, meaning something that is overinflated and beyond its proper size.
- The natural condition of self is prideful and therefore, empty, painful, busy, and fragile.
- Spiritual pride is the illusion that you are big enough to have meaning in life without God.
- Your ego is always drawing attention to itself because there is something wrong with it. Things don't draw attention to themselves unless something is wrong with them.
- The ego is always busy drawing attention to itself by comparing itself to other people. Pride is by nature competitive.
- Your ego is constantly busy building a resume.
- The ego is fragile because it is always in danger of being deflated.
- Because of the natural pride of the Corinthians, they weren't enjoying that fact they knew Paul, rather they were using the fact they knew Paul to one up other people.

In verses 3 and 4, Paul gives the example of his own view of self identity in his life based off the foundation of the gospel:

- Paul has come to the place where his identity owes nothing to what other people say.
- It is a trap to think the answer to other people's high standards to is make and live by your own low standards.
- We don't receive the verdict of our identity from others, or from ourselves.

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- Paul has incredible confidence, yet in 1st Timothy says he is the “chief of sinners.”
- Paul doesn’t connect his sins or his accomplishments to his identity.
- The essence of gospel humility isn’t thinking more of yourself or thinking less of yourself. It is thinking of yourself less.
- A truly humble person doesn’t draw attention to themselves. They aren’t devastated by criticism. They don’t need honor.
- God’s opinion of us is the only one that counts.
- In other religions or lifestyles, the performance leads to the verdict. In Christianity, the verdict leads to the performance.
- God’s verdict of us in Romans 8:1-There is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.
- We simply live and perform on the basis of God’s verdict that he loves and accepts us.
- We are not on trial like we tend to think because Jesus already went to trial for us.

Discussion questions:

1. Why do you think pride and boasting cause division among people?
2. Why is the low-self esteem view of evil so popular in our modern day culture?
3. What is the natural condition of the ego? Have you experienced the effects of this condition in your own life?
4. What is the supernatural condition of the ego that the gospel of Jesus brings to our lives?
5. How could what other people think of him owe nothing to the way Paul viewed his identity?
6. How can we learn to live in a way where what others think and what we think isn’t important to us?
7. What does it mean when he says, “in Christianity, the verdict leads to the performance?”
8. How does knowing we have no condemnation from God change the way we find our identity?

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“Your Plans: God’s Plans” by Dr. Tim Keller

Listening and Discussion Guide (Leader’s Guide)

Proverbs 11:3; 12:5,15; 15:22

Audio Link: <http://sermons2.redeemer.com/sermons/your-plans-gods-plans>

- Wisdom is the ability to make right choices.
- We need guidance to make decisions.
- In proverbs, the word for guidance comes from the word rope. Rope was used by sailors as means of navigation. God’s guidance helps us navigate through life.

How do you get God’s guidance?

- Proverbs gives us three ways of seeing God’s guidance: Guidance God does. Guidance God gives. Guidance God purchases for us.
- God guides paradoxically and non-obviously. (Prov 21:5, Prov 16:33)
- Every detail comes down to exactly the way God has planned.
- Our choices belong to us, we are responsible for them, but whatever happens from our choices is set under the sovereign control of God. (Prov 16:3,9)
- U.S popular culture believes that our futures are whatever we make them.
 - Fixed: Legend of Edipus (sp?) “Predetermined by a prophecy to kill his father and marry his mother.”
 - Free: Marty McFly from Back to the Future. “your future is what you make it so make it a good one,”
 - If our future depends totally fixed by our choices we would be to afraid to get out of bed in the morning. If our future is totally fixed by God there is no reason to get out of bed.
- The Bible tell us that God relates our choices partially to our destiny, but he is the one who ultimately fixes our destiny.
- Because of this, we are held responsible for our decisions, but we can also relax. (Acts 27) Paul informed by God that no one would die in the storm at sea. But Paul tells the sailors unless you stay on the ship we are all going to die.

God guides non-obviously

- This passage tell us good AND bad things are part of God’s plan. (Prov 16:4)
- God does not force anyone to do evil, rather he uses the evil we do to work his own good in the end.
- We learn from the story of Joseph never to think God isn’t working when he seems absent, and never to think we will figure out what God is doing before he shows us in the end. (Gen 50:20)
- God’s guidance is more something he does, than something he gives.

We have to pay the price and develop the wisdom for God’s guidance

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- Proverbs 16:5 does NOT say commit your plans to the Lord and your deeds will succeed. Rather, it is saying to commit your deeds to the Lord and you will become a person who makes smart plans.
- Unconditionally trust God with all things in your life, and you will become a person who makes wise plans.
- To ask God's guidance requires abandonment of our own plans.
- We do not come to God asking for his advice, we come to God asking for his will.
- When we do this, we choose to obey what God commands and accept what God sends, even if we don't understand it.
- No one ever learns their flaws or learns of God's love for them simply by being told. They have to be shown their flaws and shown God's love.
- The more you seek to commit your entire life to God, the more and more you become a wise person.
- If Jesus had made his decisions based on emotional feelings of peace, he would have never have gone to the cross.
- Keller didn't know for sure if he was called to plant a church, but he knew that if he failed God was preparing him for something else he couldn't envision.
- We haven't paid the true price to receive God's guidance but he still gives it to us because Jesus paid the ultimate price for us.
- Jesus went through the ultimate storm for us. Because of this we know he won't abandon us in the storms we go through. (Matt 8:23-27)

Discussion Questions:

1. How does God guide us paradoxically?
2. How does God guide us non-obviously?
3. How is what the Bible says about our decisions and our futures different what our culture tends to think about our decisions and our futures?
4. Is there ways you have seen God use your sins, or somebody else's' sins against, you to work out his good in your life?
5. What does it mean to unconditionally trust God?
6. Who paid the ultimate price of receiving God's guidance? How did he pay it?
7. How does knowing Jesus went through the "ultimate storm" help us when we are going through storms in life?
8. How does knowing more about God's guidance for your life help you answer the interview question of, "Do you have any questions for us?"

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“How to Change” by Dr. Tim Keller

Listening and Discussion Guide (Leader’s Guide)

Galatians 5:16-18, 22-25

Audio Link: <http://sermons2.redeemer.com/sermons/how-change>

- Paul uses the words “fruit of the spirit” to imply four things about christian change. It is: gradual, inevitable, internal, and symmetrical.
- The word “fruit” evokes a botanical metaphor of growth.
- You never really see plant growth happen. It is too small and gradual to see.
- Growth is sometimes seasonal.
- Growth is something we never feel, it has to be measured.
- If you have the Spirit in your life, there will be change.
- Remember, you are not saved by fruit, you are saved by faith.
- But, you will never saved by fruitless faith.
- Other people’s lives being changed through you doesn’t mean your own life is being changed.
- Paul uses the word “fruit” as singular before using a list of the fruits of the Spirit to show that all growing of fruit is symmetrical. It all happens together.

Jonathan Edwards said that the graces (fruits of the Spirit) are concatenated.

- All graces go together.
- Real peace comes from humility.
- Just because you are gentle, doesn’t mean you are loving.
- All graces are interdependent.
- A person of integrity is always the same no who they are with because their integrity comes from utter peace and tremendous joy.
- Joy without faithfulness and patience isn’t real joy.
- Some people are unflappable but they might not be gentle or kind. Their seemingly peacefulness is simply because they do not care.
- Being too naive and being too cynical both come from a self-righteous lack of self control.

2 things for growing in grace: Crucify your sinful nature, and keep in step with the Spirit

- To crucify your sinful nature means to find the things in your life that are more important than Jesus.
- The Spirit is in love with Jesus. To keep in step with the Spirit is to do the same.
- Doing this means always looking to see the beauty of Christ.
- Works are things you can do, but the fruit of the Spirit is only something you can open yourself too.

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- Learn to lust for Jesus. Listen and follow him as the Holy Spirit does.

Discussion Questions

1. Why does the Bible chose to relate christian growth to the growth of fruit?
2. What do you think Keller means when he says christian growth is seasonal?
3. Can we feel growth? How can we know we are growing?
4. Is the fruit in our lives what saves us? What does save us?
5. What does it means when he says growth is “symmetrical?”
6. What does it mean to “crucify our flesh?”
7. Are there areas of your life that are more important than Jesus at times?
8. When we keep in step with the Spirit, who are we looking too?

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“Sin as Slavery” by Dr. Tim Keller

Listening and Discussion Guide (leader’s guide)

Numbers 11:4-6, 10-20

Audio Link: <http://sermons2.redeemer.com/sermons/sin-slavery>

- Keller asks the question, why is it we know what is wrong, yet still do it?
- The Bible says we are slaves to sin.
- Every sinful action is a power.
- Sin is the suicidal action of the self against the self.
- All humans, like the Israelites in this passage, our spiritual slaves who are powerless to do what is right.
- If you aren’t aware of your spiritual submission to sin, than your moral ambition is too low.
- All sin is addiction.
- The Israelites show addiction through an emotional craving which overwhelms their thinking, and dries up their strength.

All addiction begins with a distress. We choose to find an agent to deal with our distress which gives a false promise of freedom and escape. There are three things that than happen in addiction-Tolerance, Denial, Destruction.

- We become trapped in tolerance. We always need more of our addictive agent.
- When we reach denial, we refuse to think clearly.
- Addiction destroys our will power. We then try to escape our distress with the very thing that brought our distress.
- Sin is living for something more than living for God.
- Our longing for certain careers or marriage can be sinful because we want the rush it brings more than we want God.
- You can’t crave vengeance and still be rational.
- Jonathan Edwards described sin as turning the heart into a fire. The more fuel you put on the fire, the more it needs to keep going.
- The thing we say “if only” to in our lives is what we are slaves too.

How are we healed?

- God does an intervention.
- The real problem we have is that God isn’t at the center of our lives.
- We need to taste God, not simply believe in him. This comes from quality time spent with him.
- The only way to have quality time with God is to have tons of quantity time with him.
- Spend time reading his word, reflecting on him, and worshipping him.

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- When we do this, our “if only” becomes desiring the Lord.
- God is the only master who doesn’t enslave. He is the only master who forgives instead.
- The Bible tells us God’s mercies are new every morning.
- Moses was too burdened to bear the sins of the Israelites. He would rather have died.
- Jesus took our burden AND died for us to free us from our addictions.
- Jesus lost his freedom so we could be free.
- The truth of Jesus taking our burden of sin will set us free.

Discussion Questions

1. According to the Bible and this message, why do we still do the wrong thing, even when we know it is wrong?
2. How is sin a “suicidal” action against ourselves?
3. What does it mean when Keller says we develop a “tolerance” to our sinful agent?
4. How can good things like a job or marriage become sinful?
5. What is the real problem of our addictions?
6. What does the Bible mean when it tells us Jesus is a “better” Moses?
7. How has Jesus made us free?

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“How Sin Makes us Addicts” by Dr. Tim Keller

Listening and Discussion Guide (leader’s guide)

Jeremiah 2:1-8, 23-32

Audio Link:<http://sermons2.redeemer.com/sermons/how-sin-makes-us-addicts>

- We are taught by society that to use the word sin is wrong. This leaves us with a lack of proper vocabulary to express what is wrong with the world.
- Sin is reducing and replacing God.

In this passage from Jeremiah, we are taught three important spiritual dynamics. The dynamic of spiritual attraction, the dynamic of spiritual addiction, and the dynamic of restoration.

- Sexual imagery is used often in the Bible to relate spiritual attraction to physical attraction.
- In this passage, Jeremiah is saying that we have a spiritual attraction that is every bit as powerful as sexual attraction physically.
- Without sexual function, our race would stop existing. We are incomplete without it. In the same way, there is a deep spiritual desire which is even more powerful. It tells us we can’t produce our own meaning in life.
- We can’t produce our meaning in life anymore than we can produce our own race by ourselves.
- If it isn’t God, there is something each of us have that we have given ourselves to spiritually.
- God has made us to have him at the center of our hearts.

Dynamic of Spiritual Addiction

- Idols themselves are usually not sins (example of wood and stone from the passage). They become sins when we put them as the center of our souls in place of God.
- When we take good things and start to find our worth in them, it becomes an addiction.
- The absence of the additive substance is what tells us we are addicted.
- In this passage, God tell the Israelites to call upon the gods they made to save them when they are in trouble, knowing that they can’t be saved by them.
- It is when we are in trouble when we realize the things we have built our lives on can’t save us.

Dynamic of Restoration-Three things to know how we can avoid fatal spiritual attraction

- Personalize our understanding of sin. Remember grace. Look in the mirror.
- Sin is more than breaking God’s law, it is also breaking God’s heart.

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- Our sin is like the pain of a divorce to God.
- The reason the Israelites got into idolatry was because they had spiritually forgotten their salvation.
- Our “horns of grace” include things like, the Lord’s Supper, corporate worship, and christian friends.
- Like a bride is constantly looking in the mirror to check her beauty, we need to look into the mirror to see that God has made us beautiful through Jesus.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the Bible use sexual imagery in a physical way to describe spiritual attraction?
2. If we can’t produce worth and meaning in our own lives by ourselves, where does it come from?
3. What do you think it means to have God at the center of your lives?
4. How can things which seem to be good turn into an addiction?
5. What are some areas of your life where God is not at the center?
6. How does personalizing our understanding of sin help us understand it better?
7. What are some things we can in our lives to remember God’s grace to us?
8. What does it mean when he says we need to “look into the mirror” to see the beauty God has given us?

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“The Gospel and Yourself” by Dr. Tim Keller

Listening and Discussion Guide (leader’s guide)

Isaiah 6:1-13

Audio Link: <http://sermons2.redeemer.com/sermons/gospel-and-your-self>

Self Absorption is a growing and continuing trend in our culture. Keller asks the question, “how can we be less self absorbed?” The answer, is an encounter with God.

- An encounter with God leads to three different “quakes.” They are God quakes, self quakes, and world quakes.
- Ice and liquid water quake when something heavier than them is dropped on them because that object has more glory.
- Compared to anything else, nothing matters more than God.
- The difference between a concept and a reality is glory.
- A belief in God as a concept just fits in with our own beliefs and our own agendas.
- God as a reality is heavier than you.
- When God becomes a reality, things in our lives give way to his glory. God becomes our agenda.
- God was just a concept to Isaiah until this moment when he became a reality and started to rearrange everything in Isaiah’s life.
- If you are out of touch with the reality of God, you are out of touch with reality.

God as a reality leads to a self quake.

- A self quake is known by three things: An experience of radical beauty. An experience of radical humility. An experience of radical purity.
- Holiness is God’s otherness. Holiness means brilliance and beauty.
- God is satisfying in and of himself.
- You can’t beat God because his power is holy power. You can’t outsmart God because his wisdom is holy wisdom. You can’t escape God because his presence is holy presence.
- In the Bible, the fire of God usually means wrath and judgment. Instead for Isaiah, the fire was for cleansing and forgiveness.
- Isaiah realized that he was more wicked than he could ever have believed, but that he was more loved than he could ever have hoped.
- Everyone who hasn’t experienced the grace of God is trying to earn their meaning through some kind of performance standard.
- In God’s grace, we are both bold and humble at the same time.
- Jesus was shaken so that we could be made unshakable.
- The holiness of God is beautiful to us when we see we are accepted by God on the basis of Jesus and NOT our performance.

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- A world quake is characterized by three things: availability, dependability, and expectancy.
- We are available to serve because God is more real than our needs.
- Isaiah doesn't work his ministry around his own needs and self fulfilment.
- We always work in the hope that eventually, everything sad will become untrue.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is something "quaked" when a heavier object is dropped onto it?
2. How does an encounter with God lead to a "quake" in our lives?
3. What is the difference between a concept and a reality?
4. Is God a concept or a reality in your life right now?
5. Why can't God simply remain a concept in our lives?
6. Why is God's holiness a threat to us?
7. Why might Isaiah have feared the fire of God coming towards him?
8. How does the holiness of God become beautiful to us?

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