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Equipping, Enabling, and Encouraging Marketplace Leaders

Nine Keys to Fulfilling Christianity

I was in a neighborhood restaurant with my family some time ago when a framed poster caught my eye. It was from the Coca-Cola Company and pictured a Navy crew member serving his buddies Coca-Cola on board a destroyer during World War II. The caption read, “*Any place, any time, the pause that refreshes.*”

As I stood there reading this phrase for the fourth time, I suddenly realized that in our hectic, go-go lives, we seldom take a break to refresh ourselves; to think about how we live our lives, our Christian walk, and whether we are centered in God’s will.

We could refresh ourselves “anyplace, anytime,” but you know what happens; you get busy, and “anyplace, anytime” never happens.

Sometimes, we need to take a moment to review ourselves, considering God’s unique plan for us, and make sure that we are still on track. So, let’s take a moment now to “*pause and refresh.*” When done, to learn more about developing a fulfilling, authentic relationship with God, read Bill Hybels’ book, *Honest To God? Becoming An Authentic Christian*.

1. Role Relationships

These are confusing times for men. On the one hand, we are supposed to be more considerate, caring, and sensitive. But we are supposed to be confident decision-makers and leaders. If we are too caring, we are labeled “wimps.” If we are too strong, we are labeled “macho.”

Women have had to deal with many of the same confusing role issues. June Cleaver from the TV show *Leave It To Beaver* would never have considered working outside the home, but many of today’s women face the daily challenge of managing a career, home, spouse, and children. They burn out trying to be super-mom to their kids, super-wife to their spouse, and super-employee for the boss.

This is a complicated world. Many people (television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and now even the government) are trying to tell us how to behave as men and women. They are even telling us how we should feel as people. No wonder people are confused about their roles.



Fortunately, God gave us much help. As you read the Bible, men, consider the examples set before you of the many men God lifted up who balanced work, marriage, and raising children successfully.

Men

What should a man do in today's world? How should he behave? There are as many answers as there are men. But Paul provides some excellent advice: *“Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage. Do everything in love”* (1 Cor. 16:13-14). Men need to develop a strong relationship with God. We need to be on our guard for those that seek to take us away from our faith or break our relationship with God. We need to be men of courage, capable of standing up to defend our Godly principles. At the same time we need to be loving, caring, and sensitive to others' needs.

Women

Does the Bible give similar advice for women? Indeed, it does! Look at the examples of the many women God used: Deborah (Judges 4-5) was a wife, a prophet, a judge, a ruler, a warrior, and a poet; Esther (Esther 1-10) the Jewess who married a Persian king and saved her nation from a genocide at the risk of her own life; and Priscilla (Acts 18) who with her husband Aquila, provided theological training to young Apollos. These are just three of dozens of women whom God used in a mighty way.

The point of all this is that God made each of us unique. We should not try to be like someone else. We should try to be the best at what God created us to be, our unique self. Find that uniqueness that God put in your life and break away from the pack.

2. Work

Work is not a spiritual curse. As the writer of Ecclesiastes said, *“...enjoy oneself in all one's labor in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward”* (Eccl. 5:18 NAS). Here are four tips to help you find a great reward in your work.

Attitude

Remember Paul's admonition to the Corinthians to be content in their stations (1 Cor. 7). The one with the most toys is *not* the winner. While work is an essential part of God's plan, it is secondary to our need to be God's servants.

Diligence

Work as Solomon said, *“with diligent hands”* (Pro. 12:7). We should work as though God were standing beside us all the time. Honor Him by working hard and by doing your best.

Passion

Do work for which you have a passion. God uniquely created each of us to do specific work. Discover what God has created and gifted you to do and do it!



Perseverance

Paul was shipwrecked, stoned, flogged, and put in prison. Yet, he considered these difficulties as merely “light and momentary afflictions.” Paul was effective because of his sheer determination and perseverance. Do not let your light and momentary afflictions keep you from being God’s servant.

“Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.” Psalm 9:2

3. Marriage

As I stood in church one day during prayer, I felt my wife, Barbara, put her head on my shoulder and squeeze my hand. It was a silent but meaningful acknowledgment of the love we share for each other. Of course, we have our differences. I am controlled and patient and can read a good book all weekend long. She is always on the go. It pains her to stand still in one place for five minutes. We are opposite in so many ways I marvel at the fact we remain together. Yet we are more in love today than the day we were married.

To the extent we have a successful marriage, I believe it is because we have learned to value our differences and use them to build a healthier family. I rely on Barbara’s opinion of people – she can read someone better after five minutes than I can after a year. When we’re under stress, she relies on my calm nature and patience.

God made us different so that when we were put together, we would be one whole. Find those differences in your spouse and celebrate them, use them, and build on them.

4. Finances

Driven by the desire to acquire, Americans spend \$1,300 for every \$1,000 they make. Yet no one is getting rich renting U-Hauls for funerals. You cannot take it with you! So why do so many people keep spending what they don’t have for things they don’t need, to keep up with people they don’t even like?

I would be OK if things stopped wearing out and if manufacturers would stop coming out with new and improved models. But things do wear out, and manufacturers do build obsolescence into their products.

Solomon was the richest man in the world, and even his wealth did not bring satisfaction. What chance do we have? Only one; learn to be satisfied with what we have and learn the basic rule of God’s economy.

Luke said, *“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap”* (Luke 6:38). Investing in God’s economy will return many blessings. So, gain your financial freedom by paying God first, then yourself, in a regular savings plan, and live on the rest.



5. Evangelism

Frankly, I'm impressed that you are reading this section. Many of us get a cold shudder running up and down our spines when someone mentions the word "evangelist." You can see some intimidating, Bible thumping man screaming at you about hellfire. And you don't want to be like him.

Or you picture a televangelist who says he will not eat until someone sends him millions of dollars or sells a time-share in his theme park. And you know you don't want to be like them!

Rest easy, folks. There is good news: there is only one Billy Graham. God only made one Billy Graham because He only needed one. That is why He made us all different.

Every follower of God needs to hear God's message in a unique way. That's why to succeed as evangelists; we need not worry about being just like someone else!

Confrontational

God made some of us to be confrontational. Confrontational evangelists feel comfortable giving the bold truth to perfect strangers.

Intellectual

Some people have intellectual questions. Intellectual evangelists get excited, leading someone through all the scientific evidence of God's creation.

Testimonial

Many people's hearts are stirred through hearing testimonies about what God has done in other people's lives. Testimonial evangelists are most comfortable telling people how God made a difference in their lives.

Relational

Some people are extremely uncomfortable talking about God with strangers. Relational evangelists love to talk about God most with people they are closest to, like family and friends.

Invitational

Many people don't like a "hard sell." They want to put their toe in the water to test the temperature first. Invitational evangelists may not be comfortable sharing the gospel themselves. Still, they love bringing other people to a church service, a Christian concert, or a play where people will be exposed to the gospel.

Even if we are not outspoken evangelists, we are all serving evangelists. Our lives are a testimony of our faith through our service to others.

God made every one of His creatures unique and has provided several ways to present the Message through His servants' unique gifts. Don't worry about not being comfortable with a particular style of evangelism. Find the style that suits you best and prepare your message so that you're prepared when you have the opportunity to present the gospel to someone.



“For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.” 1 Peter 2:23

6. Parenting

A survey done in the 1940s asked teachers what students did that caused them the most concern. The answers included talking in class, running in the halls, chewing gum, and not wearing appropriate clothing.

A similar survey completed in 1982 had different answers; rape, robbery, assault, burglary, murder, and suicide. Today, the same problems exist, but teachers now live under the constant threat of being sued if they try to take corrective, disciplinary action with students.

What happened over those 70 years? The breakdown of the family unit; divorce skyrocketed, dual-income families left kids unattended, role models like rappers who advocate killing police and raping women, and a cheapening of the value of life all played a part.

These are challenging times. Millions of single parents face the challenge of raising children by themselves and homes where both parents work just to provide the necessities of life.

Despite all the difficulties, one of the most important jobs we will ever have is to raise up a generation of children who know God. The writer of Proverbs tells us to *“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it”* (Proverbs 22:6).

Of the many things we need to teach our children, none is more important than having a relationship with God. Teach a child about God, lead them into a personal relationship with Him, and you will have equipped them to lead fulfilled lives.

What things are worth more than this? Things are only things. What parent would not give up everything they have to have their children happy, successful, and fulfilled? An investment in children, yours or others, will reap eternal rewards.

7. Facing Difficulties

On April 9, 1993, Good Friday, at 7:10 am, my father died. At that moment, and for the next few days, I repeatedly thought about Philippians 4:4, *“Rejoice in the Lord always; I will say it again, rejoice!”* I struggled with the question, “What in this situation is there to rejoice in?”

On March 5, 2006, at 4:40 pm, my mother was promoted to Glory. Again, I struggled with the question, “What in this situation is there to rejoice in?”

Regardless of age, we all face difficulties, difficulties in which it seems there is nothing to rejoice. So why then, did Paul write this command to the Philippians? The answer comes in verse 7, *“And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”*



No matter what the situation. No matter how bleak the outlook appears. When we rejoice in the Lord, when we focus our lives on Him through prayer and thanksgiving, God will provide peace in our lives. We may not understand it, but God will give us the strength and the peace to see us through any valley of darkness.

8. Service

The psalmist wrote, *“How can I repay the Lord for all his goodness to me?”* (Ps. 116:12). We can’t; our righteousness is as filthy rags, but shouldn’t we try?

Paul said, *“...I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord has given me...”* (Acts 20:24). Clearly, Paul thought it was essential to do the work God had called him to do, even if it meant death. Peter wrote, *“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms”* (1 Pet. 4:10).

There are speaking gifts (teaching, prophecy), people-oriented gifts (counseling, encouragement, hospitality, leadership), service gifts (giving, helps, craftsmanship), and support gifts (knowledge, discernment, faith, interpretation, wisdom). God has uniquely built into each of us gifts that can be expressed only through us.

What are you passionate about? What are you driven to do? These are your gifts. We should spend time figuring out what our gifts are and then use them!

9. Physical Fitness

Our bodies are an incredible piece of God’s handiwork. Sadly, many of us fall into the temptation of fast-food restaurants, snack foods, and putting off until tomorrow exercise that should be done today.

Paul wrote to the Romans, *“I urge you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present yourselves a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship”* (Rom. 12:1 NAS). And to the Corinthians, he wrote, *“...do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body”* (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

If we are to present ourselves as living sacrifices, as Paul suggests, shouldn’t we keep these bodies that house the Holy Spirit in good condition? Lose the weight you need to lose, change your diet, and get the exercise you need to keep healthy and useful to God for many years to come.

One Final Thought

If my wife, Barbara, were standing behind me reading this letter, she would undoubtedly be shaking a clenched fist with index finger extended, saying, *“You don’t do this, you don’t do this,*



and you don't do this either!" And you know what? She's right. I know I am sadly deficient in many of these areas. Oh, I have moments of brilliance, but I have plenty of room for improvement.

The checklist presented here is designed to help you review various aspects of your life. Read them, think about them, and pray about them. They are vital parts of living a fulfilled Christian life. It does not matter that you need improvement in one or more of these areas. God already knows you are not perfect. What matters is the condition of your heart toward God.