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**DAILY  
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STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

# Eternal Investments

October 22, 2018

I love my to-do list. Absolutely love it. Crossing things off my list is one of the best parts of my day. On a good day, my to-do list is a helpful tool to keep me focused on reaching my goals. On a bad day, it *is* my goal. Some of you know exactly what I mean. On a bad day, I wake up thinking about my to-do list. I spend my entire day checking things off my list, and I measure my day by how many items I completed. Then at night, I think about what I *didn't* accomplish that day and start planning *tomorrow's* to-do list.

Although my list-making began as a good habit to stay on task, it took a turn for the worse. It got to the point where I felt bad about spending too much time with friends and family because I could be using that time to get things done on my to-do list.

Then I realized, **God doesn't care about my to-do list.**

Sure, he cares about some of the items on my list and what some of those items represent. However, overall, God doesn't care about my to-do list and whether I complete it. God *does* care about people. I was so busy crossing *things* off my list, I wasn't making time for the *people* God had placed in my life—people who excite the heart of God. And while my to-do list investments were “good,” very few of them had any impact beyond my own life. God wants us to invest our time in what is *best*.

Therefore, when we invest our time and other earthly resources in what God cares about—people, relationships, and his church—God's strength transforms them to make an eternal difference.

Of course, we don't always know which investments will have lasting effects. Just as we might entrust some of our finances to a human investor, we must entrust our earthly resources to God as our eternal investor. As Ben shared last weekend, when we trust God with earthly resources, his strength transforms them to make an eternal difference. God knows better than anyone what our eternal return on investment (E-ROI) will be.

Here are the 10 key takeaways that Ben Snyder taught from the passage in 1 Corinthians:

1. God has work for each of you.
2. Your work looks different than my work.
3. God's strength is what matters most.
4. Stop comparing, period.
5. Working together makes the fruit better.
6. You matter. Your hard work matters.
7. Jesus is essential to lasting change.
8. Not all work has the same value.
9. Good things don't equal eternal things.
10. When we trust God with earthly resources, his strength transforms them to make an eternal difference.

### **1 Cor 3:5b-15**

*<sup>5b</sup> Each of us did the work the Lord gave us. <sup>6</sup> I planted the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God who made it grow. <sup>7</sup> It's not important who does the planting, or who does the watering. What's important is that God makes the seed grow. <sup>8</sup> The one who plants and the one who waters work together with the same purpose. And both will be rewarded for their own hard work. <sup>9</sup> For we are both God's workers. And you are God's field. You are God's building.*

*<sup>10</sup> Because of God's grace to me, I have laid the foundation like an expert builder. Now others are building on it. But whoever is building on this foundation must be very careful. <sup>11</sup> For no one can lay any foundation other than the one we already have—Jesus Christ.*

*<sup>12</sup> Anyone who builds on that foundation may use a variety of materials—gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay, or straw. <sup>13</sup> But on the judgment day, fire will reveal what kind of work each builder has done. The fire will show if a person's work has any value. <sup>14</sup> If the work survives, that builder will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup> But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss. The builder will be saved, but like someone barely escaping through a wall of flames.*

### **Questions:**

Where are you investing your earthly resources? Your time? Your money? Your energy? Your talents?

Do the things you're investing in matter to God?

What is the eternal return on these investments? Is there an eternal return?

**Next Steps:**

Pick one resource you feel you could be investing better to make an eternal impact. If helpful, make a pie chart of how you're currently investing that resource. Choose one thing in which to invest less (or stop investing in at all) and one thing in which to invest more, according to the E-ROI.

**Prayer:**

*Heavenly Father, thank you for all the earthly resources you have placed in my life. I recognize that these resources are not truly mine, but are gifts from you. They are examples of you investing in my life because I matter to you. Help me to give these gifts back to you by investing them in things that excite your heart. I invite you to guide how I use my time, money, energy, and skills so that I may make a lasting impact for your Kingdom. May your will be done, both in my life and through my life. Amen.*

# Let's Do It!

October 23, 2018

Every Advent Sunday in the weeks leading up to Christmas, my mother, siblings, and I would play Rommé (a card game). We would then each donate our respective winnings to a charity of our choice on the Heiliger Abend (Christmas Eve, which is when we celebrate Christmas in Germany). I feel lucky that through this traditional act of giving, my mother instilled in us a compassion for others and the desire to help those who are less fortunate than us. Ever since those childhood days, I have had the thought in the back of my mind that I would like to do more to help others.

This week, Lead Pastor Ben Snyder talked about God having given us earthly resources (time, talent, and treasure) to make an eternal difference. And if we think about it, we definitely all have one or several earthly resources that we could use to make a difference in the lives of others. The key is to open our hearts to opportunities that God places in our lives and try to figure out how we can best use our time, special talents, and earthly possessions to achieve this goal.

Giving money is definitely one way to help, and it gives me great joy to give to CedarCreek each week. But I have long held the desire to do something more hands-on. Writing and editing for *LivingItOut* feels like a special privilege as it allows me to use my life experiences and professional skills to help deepen our understanding of the weekly messages. I also play cards once a month with the residents of a local retirement home. But I would still like to do more.

So when I heard a couple weeks ago that my fellow CedarCreekers Rita and Dave Kuntz (I am using their names with their permission) talk about their mission trips to Haiti, my curiosity was immediately peaked. Their story is one of the wonderful examples of how God invites people to do good in his name, and how when we take up his invitation, the lives of many can be transformed forever. Dave and Rita founded Beyond Relief International Ministries almost eight years ago after feeling that God had led them to do so. They created a trade school in St. Louis du Nord in the Northwest region of Haiti, with the first classes in English, art, plumbing, and electricity starting about a year later. Their mission is to train and equip impoverished people to earn a living and improve their communities. They originally rented the first floor of a small building, but since then, they have raised enough funds to purchase land and build their own school building. They

have added classes in computer skills, tiling, and sewing, with approximately 400 students enrolled. The students are charged a small fee, and the remaining expenses to run the school are covered by donations and grants from the United States.

### **1 Cor 3:10-11**

*<sup>10</sup> Because of God's grace to me, I have laid the foundation like an expert builder. Now others are building on it. But whoever is building on this foundation must be very careful. <sup>11</sup> For no one can lay any foundation other than the one we already have—Jesus Christ.*

With God's grace, Rita and Dave were able to lay the foundation for something amazing, practical, and transformative. They are continuing to build on this foundation to this day. When I heard their story, I knew that one day, in the not-too-distant future, I would serve on a mission trip to Haiti or elsewhere. I am not sure how I will be going about it, but I know in my heart that I will be doing it. When we have an open heart and do things *with* heart, God will show us the way. And, as we serve him by serving others, he gives us a humble and joyful heart.

### **Questions:**

What earthly resources has God given you that you could use to help make a difference in the lives of others? When could you donate time to serve others? What talents do you have that you could use for good? How would serving others make you feel?

### **Next Steps:**

Make a list of your talents and then think of ways you could apply them for the good of others. Next, see where you could carve out small blocks of time once a week or once a month to use your talents to serve others. Set a date in your calendar or an alarm on your phone to start doing it. If you aren't sure of your talents or interests, attend GrowthTrack at your campus and find out how God has wired you!

**Prayer:**

*Dear Father in heaven, thank you for equipping me with some earthly resources that I can use to serve others and giving me the desire to do so. Please show me opportunities where I can serve you by changing the lives of others. Please give me the strength and wisdom to take up your invitation, whatever it may be. Amen.*

# Sharing Jesus

October 24, 2018

I love the book *Jesus Calling* because it feels like Jesus is talking to me personally. He is telling me how much he loves me, and that he is always there for me. Every day that I read it, I am reminded how I need to depend on Jesus and not myself. At the end of each daily entry, there are verses from the Bible that go along with that day's reading. I can honestly say the book has changed my life. *Jesus Calling* helped me feel God's presence through a particularly tough and heartbreaking season of my life. I am so grateful for the book.

I love the book so much that when a friend was going through a really hard time, I immediately thought to give her a copy and a card telling her that I was praying for her. I continue to give out the book to friends and family who are hurting or having a very difficult time. One friend was struggling after losing her mom suddenly. She was devastated. *Jesus Calling* helped her so much—she told me she felt God helping her through that difficult season. My oldest daughter, Anna, was getting ready to leave for the Navy's Officer Candidate School (kind of like boot camp)—I gave her a copy. When she was having a really tough time, she would read it. Sometimes, she even read it to her roommate. Several months later, one of her closest friends was experiencing a difficult time, and she said, "Mom please don't be mad, I gave him the copy you gave me. He needed it more than I did." I was so proud of her.

I feel so blessed that God has given me the resources to provide this book to those who are hurting. I am overwhelmed with joy when I see the changes God makes in the lives of others through this book. I feel this is a ministry God has given me.

## **2 Corinthians 9:7-8**

*<sup>7</sup> You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully."<sup>8</sup> And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others.*

I feel blessed to belong to a life-giving church like CedarCreek. I am honored that I can give financial resources to a church whose mission statement is "to help spiritually restless and unchurched people love Jesus, serve others, and tell the



world about Christ.” I believe using my finances to further the Kingdom of God is the best investment I can make for my eternity and for the eternity of others.

**Acts 20:35**

*“And I have been a constant example of how you can help those in need by working hard. You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”*

**Questions:**

Are you only using your resources for this life or for eternal purposes? How can you use your resource to further the Kingdom of God?

**Next Steps:**

Pray and ask God to show you how to further his Kingdom. If you don’t give to the church, please consider it. If you already do, thank you. Make a list of ways you can use your resources to help people spread the Good News of Jesus, and then start doing them.

**Prayer:**

*Dear Jesus, I am so grateful for all you have done for me. Help me not to hoard the gifts you have given me, but to use them to tell others about you! Help me use my resources to bring glory to your name. Jesus, I am so grateful that you loved me enough to die on the cross for me. Help me to spread your love, peace, joy, and hope to all those I come in contact with. I love you with my whole heart, and I thank you for all your blessings. Amen.*

# Risky Business

October 25, 2018

Jesus loves it when we take risks in his name. In Matthew 25:14-30, Jesus tells a parable about three servants. A man went on a trip and entrusted his three servants with his money. One received five bags and invested the money, earning five more. Another received two bags and went to work and earned two more. The last servant received one bag and buried it for safe-keeping because he was fearful of making a mistake and losing what was entrusted to him. When the master returned, he was pleased with the first two servants, and as a result, he gave them more responsibility for the future. When the last servant returned his one bag, the master was angry, taking away this servant's future responsibilities and entrusting them to the first two servants.

When given resources from God, it's easy to want to preserve things and hold them tight and safe. But, God wants us to trust him with our time, talents, and treasures, so he may use *his* strength to transform them to make an eternal difference.

## **Matthew 25:21**

*"The master was full of praise. 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!'"*

When I was working, I struggled with the tug-of-war many moms experience between work and home. As I considered staying at home, my biggest fears were losing my income, job skills, and a title I worked so hard to achieve. After a lot of prayer and conversations with trusted Christ followers in my life, I was blessed to be able to quit my job and stay at home. Since I've done this, I've lost my mind approximately 52 times, and the budget naturally became a bit tighter. However, the relationship with my kids has grown exponentially. I have been blessed with the spiritual gifts of teaching and discernment, and God has used these to benefit my children and their growth as Christ followers and as people in general. God has helped us through their milestones and worries, and I get to celebrate their victories. I have been able to get to know the inner workings of my children individually, and, just as God delights in us, I'm able to better delight in them. I have also learned a lot about how God looks at us through a

parent/child relationship. It has helped me get better at giving my kids grace, just as I receive it from God.

When we trust God with earthly resources, his strength transforms them to make an eternal difference. There are days that I'm counting down the minutes until my husband comes home and days that I wish I was contributing more financially to my family, but I believe God has called me to be home during this season of our lives. I am trusting him with my talents, my time, and my treasure. I'm trusting that the work I'm doing now will result in the biggest possible return on my investment and that God is using me to make an eternal difference in my family's life.

One thing that I find important to note is this: your work looks different than my work. The worst kind of guilt I've experienced is "mom guilt." God calls us each to different assignments, and no two will look exactly the same. I've been blessed to experience being a working mom and a stay-at-home mom, and both are invaluable. I know God sees value in both roles. You matter!

### **Questions:**

What is the work God has given you to do?

Have you ever found yourself comparing the value of your work with someone else's?

When you are obediently investing your earthly resources, do you trust that God can transform your investment to make an eternal difference?

### **Next Steps:**

Journal any questions you have about how you are currently investing your earthly resources. Pray and ask God to reveal to you your best eternal return on your investment. Position yourself to be able to receive this information from God and try to be open to whatever he lays on your heart, putting your full trust in him.

**Prayer:**

*Dear God, you have made us all unique, and you have given us each different earthly resources. Help me to use what you have given me for your Kingdom. Give me an open heart so I may be ready to accept whatever responsibility you assign to me. Help me to not compare myself to others. Give me the courage to take risks for you, trusting you will carry me through. Amen.*

# A Job Well Done

October 26, 2018

There are so many things that I love about CedarCreek Church. The top reason? Nothing else in my life has helped me grow closer to God. Finding out how much I matter to him, how he has designed me for a higher purpose, and what that purpose is has been invaluable; I cannot thank CedarCreek enough!

My life was very dysfunctional. I have two failed marriages, two failed businesses, and I have done many other things in life that I have regretted. In coming to CedarCreek and getting involved, I realized that those things did not define me. I took the spiritual gifts assessment, which helped me see how God has created me to help others and the specific areas in which he had gifted me to do so.

Jesus tells a story in Matthew about a master and some servants. The master entrusted each of the servants with some money (interestingly called 'talents'), and then he left. When he came back, each of the servants had chosen to do different things with what they were given. One was scared so he buried the money until the master came back. Another invested but played it safe so he wouldn't lose anything. The third used the money to take big chances, and it paid off tenfold. Speaking to the third man, the master had high praise for him.

## **Matthew 25:21**

*"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'"*

CedarCreek helped me internalize this story. Jesus is the Master, and I am the servant. He has given me gifts, and it's up to me to be faithful and give him a big return on his investment. I started writing for *LivingItOut*. I started tithing. I started serving and joined a small group where I made some great new friends. With the help of Celebrate Recovery, I was able to leave the past in the past and heal from my hurts, habits, and hang-ups. Then, I joined the women's leadership ministry, SheLeads. What an incredible experience! I really started digging into God's purpose for my life and what that looks like.

My life is still chaotic and messy, even after these eye-opening experiences. But, now I see the higher vision, the reason why it's so important to give yourself away. I have had a wild ride, and I don't think things will change much while I'm

here on this crazy planet. What I know is that when it's all over, I want to stand before the Master and have him say, "Well done, my good and faithful servant!"

**Questions:**

How can looking at the gifts that God has given you help change the way you see yourself and your purpose in life?

How can using those gifts affect your journey through life?

**Next Steps:**

Attend week three of GrowthTrack and take a spiritual gifts assessment.

Pray about how you could better use the top three gifts you have been given to impact those around you.

Start investing your resources and see how God can transform them to make an eternal difference!

**Prayer:**

*Papa, thank you for giving me so much. Thank you for CedarCreek and the ways that this church invests in me and helps me see that you have created me with unique gifts for a higher purpose. Help me see how everything in my life is for your glory. Amen.*