

YOUR THREE BUCKET LIST

By Bill Marianesⁱ

Maybe we can't change the world. If you figured that out already, congratulations, you may be ahead of the game and me. I have a theory called the "Three Bucket List." It's not a list of the things to do before you pass from this earth.

Guru of management and non-profit entities, Peter Drucker, taught the rule of twos and threes. It has different applications, including we should never make more than two or three points if we want to communicate effectively. Following this advice, I believe all opportunities, issues and problems that we all face fit into one of three "buckets:"

Bucket 1: The things we control;

Bucket 2: The things we influence; and

Bucket 3: The things we really can't do anything about.

Most of us spend an inordinate amount of time and energy fretting about that 3rd bucket of things we really can't do anything about. It is frustrating, unproductive, unhealthy, and does little to improve the world or advance our journey toward theosis and salvation. But boy do we know how to rant and rave about those 3rd bucket issues.

Don't get me wrong, into which bucket any particular issue belongs depends on who you are. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ did not have any 3rd bucket issues. If you are the President of the U.S.A., world peace may be in bucket 2 for you; but for most of us, it is a goal beyond our wingspan. Even the Apostles sometimes struggled with into which bucket a particular person, problem or issue should go. So, it's OK if we don't always get it right at first.

Previous Stewardship Calling articles focused almost exclusively on the 1st bucket, namely, your ability to control living a life of a true Orthodox steward and making a difference in what you do. That is a paramount part of each of our own, unique stewardship callings. We must make a difference where we can since stewardship is what we do with the gifts God gave us. That is uniquely personal because your gifts were given uniquely to you by your Father. And what you do with those gifts is your gift back to Him and the others whom your gifts benefit. It doesn't get more personal than that.

So, no excuses for 1st bucket issues. As the old Nike ad said: "Just Do It." Welcome to my "no whining" zone. If it's a 1st bucket issue, the only thing preventing you from dealing with it is you. Give thanks every day. Give back every day. Pay it forward everyday. Do the right thing every day. Fix what you can fix every day. Enjoy your life, and live your own unique stewardship calling every day.

As to bucket 3, give it a rest. Isometrics may improve your body strength, but worrying and fussing about the things you can't do anything about will only weaken you. How many Parish Council, Committee or General Assembly meetings have been derailed by obsessing about things we can't solve or the mistakes others made? I believe you can't change how you got to where you are, but you can change where you're going and how you will get there. I have wasted countless hours, energies and lack of productivity ranting and raving about things (and some people) I really can't do anything about. No more. I'm not getting any younger, and it isn't helping my soul.

For one moment, please imagine how your parish would change if we all stopped complaining about 3rd bucket issues that we can't do anything about and learned to be more positive, productive and encouraging to those around us. By the way, learning to stop fretting about 3rd bucket issues is a 1st bucket opportunity because you can do that for yourself immediately. It really does make you feel better and brings you more peace. It doesn't mean you shouldn't pray about those important, but seemingly impossible, issues. Just stop obsessing and worrying about them.

We should spend more time on the 2nd bucket things we can influence. Because of the unique gifts God has given you, you are inalienably able to influence an amazing number of people and things in your Parish/ Diocese/Metropolis/Archdiocese. And starting with this stewardship message, we will focus on those things you can influence within your Parish/Diocese/Metropolis/Archdiocese. We need to create a culture of stewardship over our gifts in our communities and uplift everyone with whom we interact.

In Luke 10:1, a holy charge was given to make 70 disciples. That is your 2nd bucket charge also. As a part of your unique stewardship calling, who will you recruit to the cause and what will you do to make your Parish/ Diocese/Metropolis/Archdiocese better? Into which ministry will you pour your enormous talents and energy? It doesn't matter where you are in life. You have gifts that can be used for God's greater glory and your salvation.

Holy Tuesday in the Orthodox church focuses us on the parable of the talents, one of my favorite stewardship messages. In one of the hymns of Holy Tuesday we are admonished: "Come, O believers, let us labor with zeal for the Master. Since He distributes the wealth to His servants, **let each of us correspondingly increase the talent of grace that we received.** Let one acquire wisdom by means of good deeds....and let another disperse his wealth to the poor. **And so let us increase that which was lent to us, so that as faithful stewards of grace we may be counted worthy of the Master's joy.**"

That hymn says it all. It's about taking the gifts that God has given us and focusing our energies on the things we can control or influence for God's greater glory and for the achievement of our unique stewardship calling and our salvation.

You are called to fix 1st bucket issues which you control, and work diligently on the things you can influence in the 2nd bucket. Instead of wasting any energy griping about 3rd bucket issues you can't do anything about, save your breath for prayer and cooling soup. Do something today in gratitude for Christ's redeeming love and to help prepare your soul for salvation! God bless you as you pursue your own unique stewardship calling. SOTPAETJ (stay on The Path, and enjoy the journey)

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