

Stewardship

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In the book Mere Christianity, C.S. Lewis wrote, "If you devoted every moment of your whole life exclusively to His service, you could not give Him anything that was not in a sense His own already."

Today we will be investigating how, as a disciple of Christ, to be a wise manager of our money, time, talents, etc.

Let's begin by making a list of things that you own. (Consider not only material items, but also include talents, decisions, attitudes, future, body, debt, etc. etc.) _____

What does 2 Corinthians 9:7 mean to you? _____

Read Matthew 25:14-30

When we give to someone in need, who are we actually giving to? _____

Who are we really neglecting when we neglect those in need? _____

Four Principles of Stewardship:

- **Principle #1: GOD OWNS IT ALL**

Psalm 24 begins with, "The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." In the beginning of Genesis, God creates everything and puts Adam in the Garden to work it and take care of it. This is the fundamental principle of biblical stewardship. God owns everything, we are simply managers or administrators acting on his behalf. It's ridiculous to talk about how much of the master's estate a servant "owns". He doesn't really own anything, but is given great responsibility. We must use what we are given well and for our Master's glory and good.

- **Principle #2: Our "Ownership" is TEMPORARY**

Everything we own in this life will pass away. The game will end. Hearse's don't have trailers. As Paul said to Timothy, "We brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it". (1 Timothy 6:7) The sad reality is that many Christians spend their lives creating great wealth for the purpose of spending it on themselves to create a "better lifestyle". This results in spiritual emptiness.

- **Principle #3: We are individually RESPONSIBLE, and will one day be ACCOUNTABLE for our stewardship.**

While God has graciously entrusted us with the care, development, and enjoyment of everything He owns as His stewards, we are responsible to manage his holdings well and according to His desires and purposes. Every decision is a spiritual decision. Buying a car, taking a vacation, buying food, paying debt and taxes are all in the same category, because all of the resources are God's. Americans have been blessed with a prosperous, wealthy society. Jesus said, "From everyone who has been given, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked." (Luke 12:48). Many people in the US would tell you that you have the right to whatever lifestyle you can afford. It's the American way! This attitude does not honor Jesus' teachings.

Read Matthew 25:14-30

One day each one of us, like the servants in this parable, will be called to give an account for how we have managed what the Master has given us. These gifts from God include our time, money, abilities, information, wisdom, relationships, and authority. It is clear that God is paying close attention to the way that we manage *everything* that He has given to us in this life (even the things that seem insignificant). The third servant had the same ability as the other two servants to multiply, but did not live for the master's priorities. In this parable, the servant mentioned that he was afraid of failing, because he knew the consequences. Yet, the ironic thing is that his fear didn't drive him to good stewardship. He didn't even put it in a bank account at a low rate of return. Read for yourself the punishment that he received. Who in their right mind would want to be called a wicked lazy servant?

- **Principle #4: REWARD**

The basic principle is that if we are faithful with what we have been given, we will be rewarded. When we give to others in need, we have a choice to give publicly or privately.

- When we give publicly, for all to see, our reward is received here on earth in the form of appreciation and praise from other people (and there is not necessarily anything wrong with this – consider the individual who donates a large sum of money to a church or organization and has their name placed on a building, a classroom, etc.). With this type of giving, however, the expectation should not be an eternal reward from God.

Read Matthew 6:1-4

What kind of giving does God intend to reward eternally? _____

You may have heard the word tithe when discussing giving in a church context. Tithing simply means a tenth part and Biblically was a way of teaching us that God should get the first part of our stuff.

Read Malachi 3:10

Here we find God’s instruction to bring our first part to the Lord and watch Him provide for all our needs. Is it difficult for you to bring your first fruits financially to the Lord?

What has helped you or made it more difficult? _____

Read Luke 16:10-13

How can a person use worldly wealth for eternal purposes? _____

How do you use your money for that end? _____

What grade would you give yourself for the way you have managed your financial resources? _____

What would you need to do to get a better grade? _____

Memorize: Luke 12:48b “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.”