

## Biblical Stewardship: The Basis

Today, we begin a series of sermons where we are going to talk about stewardship. I don't know the rank you give to this topic in the hierarchy of your favorite themes to discuss or learn about. Some of you may be thinking, "Stewardship does not even make my list of favorite topics." However, before you roll your eyes and say to yourself "here we go again," I want to explain a few things.

As we talk about stewardship for the next weeks, I invite you to explore this topic, once again, but from a different perspective. I want you to keep this in mind: As we talk about stewardship, we are going to talk about the subject not because the church wants something from you, (e.g. your money). I want us to talk about stewardship because as the pastor of the church, I want something *for* you.

Here is what I want for all of us. I want us all to:

- Know and experience the joy of generosity...
- Have a better, renewed, Spirit-led relationship with money...
  - I am pretty sure you have heard that Bible verse, "*the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil*" (1 Timothy 6:10). One of the first things we learn from this Bible verse is that the word "love" indicates that we have a relationship with money.
  - Money is one of the biggest sources of stress in relationships. Some people argue that "money fights" are one of the leading causes of divorce.
  - We have to recognize that our relationship with money plays a critical role in our physical, emotional, financial and overall well-being.
- Learn from a Biblical perspective how to better manage the financial resources God has entrusted to us...
- Learn how to honor God through our giving, as well as our keeping...
- Discover financial health and peace...
- Remember that it is the Bible not the budget that calls us to be faithful in our giving to the church...

As we begin this journey, I want us to remember some key concepts in relation to stewardship. I want us to remember the basis of stewardship. What does it mean to be a steward?

### **What is stewardship?**

For us to understand what it means to be a steward we need to know the origin of this term. The word stewardship comes from the Greek term *οἰκονόμῳ* (oikonomon), which in its simplest form means to organize and to manage. From *οἰκονόμῳ* (oikonomon) comes words such as economy.

Usually, when we hear the word stewardship, we think of tithes and offerings. Of course, our tithes and offerings are an important part of our stewardship. However, stewardship covers much more than financial issues. Stewardship involves each of the areas of our lives, and it is something we cannot avoid. Stewardship is something that we exercise at all times, whether consciously or unconsciously.

**Who are stewards?**

We are all stewards. As I was saying, stewardship is something that we exercise at all times, whether well or poorly. Of course, as followers of Christ, we seek to be better stewards every day. This is because stewardship, or better put “good stewardship”, is a matter of faith.

**Why are we all stewards?**

The story is told of this little boy who was at church with his mother...

*Tommy didn't want to put his money in the offering plate Sunday morning, so his mother decided to use some hurried creative reasoning with him.*

*“You don't want that money, honey,” she whispered in his ear. “Quick! Drop it in the plate. It's tainted!”*

*Horried, the little boy obeyed.*

*After a few seconds, he whispered, “But, mommy, why was the money tainted? Was it dirty?”*

*“Oh, no dear,” she replied. “It's not really dirty. It just 'taint yours, and it 'taint mine,” she replied. “It's God's.”<sup>1</sup>*

Very often, I have to remind myself that what I have is “tainted” ... it *ain't* mine...

We are stewards because God is the supreme and only owner of everything created. We are stewards because we are not owners. The word of God affirms,

- *The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it* (Psalm 24:1).
- *'The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the Lord Almighty.* (Hag. 2:8)

John Wesley, the father of the Methodist movement, said, “When the possessor of heaven and earth brought you into being and placed you in this world, He placed you here not as an owner but as a steward.”<sup>2</sup> We have been entrusted with the world and everything in it. We are responsible to manage, preserve, increase, and organize that which has been entrusted to us.

**Everything we have, we receive from God...**

- We receive life from God ... *“Then the Lord God formed a man<sup>[c]</sup> from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life”* (Genesis 2:7).
- The time assigned to us has been determined by God ... *“A person's days are determined; you have decreed the number of his months and have set limits he cannot exceed.”* (Job 14:5).
- The talents we have been given come from God (Matthew 25:14-30).

<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.stewardshipoflife.org/jokes/>

<sup>2</sup> Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Ultimate Book of Illustrations & Quotes*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 534.

- The possessions and riches that have been entrusted to us come from God (Matthew 6:19-21, Colossians 3:1-2).
- The strength to make riches comes from God... “...remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth...” (Deuteronomy 8:18).

From the beginning, in the original design of creation, God made human beings the steward of all creation. Surely you remember the story of creation in the second chapter of Genesis where the scripture says, “So the Lord God took the man, and put him in the garden of Eden, that he might till it and keep it” (Genesis 2:15).

The notion that we are all stewards is clearly seen through the scriptures. We are stewards of:

- Our time ... (time with God, our families, communities of faith, and service)
  - Are we using time wisely?
  - Are we taking time for personal development?
- Our talents ... (intellect, abilities, strengths, relationships, etc.)
- Our money: what we give and what we keep...
  - What we give...
    - Not out of sadness or need...
    - With joy—God loves a joyful giver...
    - We give the best...
  - What we keep...
    - How do we use the money we keep?
    - Do we save or waste?
    - Do we invest in just causes or only in lucrative businesses?
    - Are we generous or greedy?
    - Do we supply needs? Or, are we after luxuries?
    - Do we consume what is necessary? Or, are we partaking of unnecessary consumerism?
- The creation...
  - This is one of the most delicate responsibilities we have: to live in balance, in care and protection of our natural environment.
  - Many times, we talk about salvation and we only talk about humans. Many people have an anthropocentric theology, meaning a theology focused on human beings. But God not only loves humans, God loves all his creation...
  - John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world...” (the cosmos, the whole created order).

As we begin this journey in which our main goal is to refine our stewardship mindset and skills, I want to invite you to ponder on this affirmation: “*God is the owner, I am a steward.*” I know some of us have to wrestle with this assertion. From personal experience, I know that we have to surrender the “owner mentality.” Sometimes it’s a painful process. Yet, it’s also very fulfilling as we understand our proper position on earth and we seek to use our “God-given resources for the accomplishment of God-given goals” (Ron Blue, *Master Your Money*).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.