

Lesson 6: Christian Stewardship

Remarkably, the Bible has much to say about riches, money, and property and their use. It speaks of wealth as one of the gravest dangers to faith, and yet some of the great saints of the Bible were very rich. How then should Christians regard earthly possessions so that they may not harm their souls? As Paul shows in our text, a Christian should consider himself or herself at all times merely a steward of talents and property that God has loaned to him or her for a season. One means by which we may glorify God on earth is Christian stewardship.

The Stewardship of Service

Read 1 Timothy 6:1–5. A large number of Christians in the Early Church were slaves. This shouldn't surprise us because the Roman Empire had a large slave population, and the Gospel did more than anything else to ease their burdens. As a rule, non-Christian masters did not object to their servants becoming Christians, because they noticed that this improved their conduct and service. Paul reminds the Christian slaves that they must be on their guard not to turn their masters against the Gospel by unfaithfulness or ungodly conduct. Instead, they should by an exemplary life try to win them for Christ. On the other hand, those slaves who had Christian masters were very fortunate. Their lot should have been somewhat easier and more tolerable, since Christians naturally treated their servants kindly. However, since slaves and masters were equal in the Church and considered one another brethren (Galatians 3:28), there was danger that slaves might not show their masters the respect and obedience they owed them. Paul wanted the servants to render willing and loving service to their masters. In fact, he admonishes all Christians to walk the way of godliness and to be obedient to the wholesome words of Jesus. Such a God-pleasing life is not possible if a believer listens to evil-minded people who set forth their personal advantages and earthly gain as the chief aim of life.

1. Discuss slavery in Roman times and what the Bible teaches regarding its practice.
2. Why should a Christian be very careful about his conduct while at work? How may we make our occupation a field for Christian service?
3. What is meant by stewardship of time and talents?

The Stewardship of Possessions

Read verses 6–10 and 17–19. In the first section, Paul speaks to those who want to be rich. He warns them against the dangers of covetousness and admonishes them to be content with the share of temporal wealth that God has given them. As long as a person's heart is ruled by greed and discontent, he or she cannot live as a child of God. The love of money is sinful and harmful. When people yield to a craving for wealth, they easily fall into temptations to enrich themselves by sinful means. Faith cannot remain in the heart of a person who worships mammon (Matthew 6:24). The reward of such unholy desires is always sorrow and disappointment. When a covetous person dies, he loses not only his or her treasures but also his or her soul. But it is altogether different with the believer who does not hang his or her heart on perishable things. As long as a Christian has food and clothing, the necessary things of life, he or she is happy and content. In fact, God has given us much more than we actually need for ourselves. The Lord sometimes bestows a great amount of earthly goods on some Christians in order to test their faith and enable them to be of greater service to others. In 1 Timothy 6:17–19, the apostle shows how Christians should regard and use their possessions. He warns them not to become puffed up because of their wealth and not to despise others. They should not make a god of their possessions but should rely only upon the Lord as the giver of all good things, appreciate His gifts, and consider how they may serve God best as His stewards. If they use their possessions to the glory of God and for the benefit of their neighbors in need, they will grow rich in good works, which God has promised to reward in heaven.

4. How much does a person need to live a normal and happy life? Why is it foolish and sinful to spend one's life trying to become rich?

5. Why does Paul call the love of money the root of all evil?

