

THE STEWARDSHIP PRINCIPLE

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**“For we must all appear before the judgment
Seat of Christ, that each one may receive the
Things done in the body, whether good or bad.
Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we
Persuade men ...” † 2 Corinthians 5:10-11**

One of the clearest principles of God from the Scriptures is this—the stewardship principle. Yet like me you’ve probably never heard a sermon preached on it except perhaps by one of the Balaam Boys but they always pervert the Word and twist it to benefit themselves. But stewardship means much more than whether or not you give finances

for the work of the Lord. It has to do with your whole life and why you were created for such a time as this.

Every month when I read about Joseph in Genesis it always makes me weep. Perhaps better than anybody in the Old Testament Joseph came to understand *The Stewardship Principle*. This is quite a testimony to the character and wisdom of Joseph and the fact that he had his priorities right—despite all the bad that happened to him he continued to serve God and not become bitter. Remember, unlike us, he didn't have the Holy Spirit living inside of him nor did he have a Bible to read and meditate to build his faith for the promises of God. Also, he had no wise counselors to call upon since there were few if any covenant Hebrews living in Egypt at that time. And *yet*, we learn that the things he endured were tests. Remember, like Joseph, God may give you all kinds of personal prophecies and promises but you will be tested. And we learn this about Joseph from Psalms 105; that “the word of God tested him.”

And we also learn a valuable lesson from Matthew 25 where Jesus gave a parable about entrusting stewards with a certain amount of money invested with each that their master expected a return on. Those who produced a return were given ruling authority over “cities” (Lk. 19) and “many things,” but the one who produced nothing because he hid the money and did not invest it because he was “afraid” and thus produced no return from his stewardship had what he was given taken away and was cast into outer darkness with the unbelievers.

The theme here is that the Lord invests in us—material and spiritual gifts—but he doesn't do it for us to hoard as a treasury of some kind to show off to the world or to use only for ourselves. He expects a return on this investment. Many if not most study bibles incorrectly characterize 2 Cor. 5:10-11 as Paul talking about “the ministry of reconciliation” but that is not the case. He is referring to this stewardship principle.

Over 20 years ago the Lord spoke to me from Luke 16 which is about the “unjust steward.” This steward was both dishonest and lazy; he didn’t take care of his Master’s business, e.g., there were a lot of *account receivables*” (an accounting term for monies owed to your business) that this steward was not serious about collecting even though they were legitimately owed. I wrote about this in our book *The Gifts and Operations of the Holy Spirit* when discussing the fruit of *faithfulness*. Now in this parable—if it was a parable like most bibles say but the fact that Jesus used the words “a certain rich man” may have meant it was a true story. In any event, it certainly applies to the principle of stewardship that we must heed in the Church today—the Lord entrusts us with material and spiritual possessions and He expects us to use them for the Kingdom.

Jesus puts to rest the excuse some people use for not tithing or giving to the work of the Lord; they say something like, “I can’t pay my bills now if I tithe but when I get a raise then I’ll tithe” or “When I come into some money then I’ll give.” That is a lie and Jesus says so right here—if you’re “not faithful in the least” then you also won’t “be faithful in much.” But what He spoke specifically to me about Luke 16 back then had to do with the “true riches.” Verse 11 reads, “If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?” He said that “the true riches are the souls of men.” So the Lord is not going to entrust you with a ministry of souls if He cannot even get you to give of your finances to His work.

Every month when I reread Acts I always see so much of how far short the churches of today compare with the churches in Acts. The most notable things go together—like love and stewardship. One of the reasons people don’t give is because they don’t obey Jesus’ commandments referred to as “the Royal Law”; love God and love your neighbor. When was the last time your pastor brought a woman up and asked for somebody to give her a dining room set of furniture because she had nothing for her children? Or given a car away? Or a house or

lands? They routinely did this in the *real* first church of Acts. We read in Acts 4:37 that Barnabas and *all* the apostles in the early church understood what few do today—that finances and material possessions are a *trust* for us to manage—they belong to God because Jesus is the Lord over all the earth; we are merely stewards of them while we are here. Both Jesus and the apostles in their epistles wrote about this—“seeing your brother in need.”

That is the Stewardship Principle that Joseph learned through experience: God places us on the earth and He gives us certain spiritual and material gifts that He expects us to manage and use for His glory and to expand the Kingdom. They are not some badge of honor, for example our spiritual gifting in the prophetic, to show off all over the internet to make people think we are something—that is pride in manifestation. But He does expect us to be obedient to Him and the Scriptures and to use our stewardship wisely like Joseph did.

And the true test is what Joseph learned—when we manage it wisely it is used to “preserve life” and to bless people and *that* is God’s business—the souls of men and women who might just need our spiritual gifts to “preserve their life” or that of a family member.

Remember, you and all Christians will stand before the *bema* (*Gk. judgment*) seat of Christ “to give an account of those things done in the body whether good or bad.” Make a decision today to repent of your lack of obedience to this principle and look for souls that you can bless today with material goods or spiritual gifts.

Maranatha!