

2008 Trinity Deacons Conference

Instructing in Stewardship

• Definition of Subject

- What is Stewardship?
 - “Managing God's wealth”
 - Stewardship is a Spiritual matter
- Deacons teaching biblical principles of stewardship to those with whom they labor
- This is only one aspect of the work of deacon, but it should permeate and characterize all of the work

Instructing In Stewardship

- I. The Mandate
- II. The Material
- III. The Manner

I. The Mandate

- The Deacons, as a part of the work of mercy, have the duty to teach good stewardship to all the members of the church
 - ∩ Someone will say
 - a. Too personal/prying
 - b. Just meet the immediate needs
 - c. The deacons are no experts
 - ∩ But consider
 - a. The authority, mercy, spirituality of their office
 - b. Their calling to be stewards of the benevolent fund
 - c. The prophetic aspect of their office
 - d. Their calling to determine who are indeed poor
 - e. The teaching that Christ, our High-priest, and all of Scripture, gives in the area of stewardship
 - f. The need for this instruction in the congregation

Church Order, Art. 25

The office peculiar to the deacons is diligently to collect alms and other contributions of charity and, after mutual counsel, faithfully and diligently to distribute the same to the poor as their needs may require it; to visit and comfort the distressed and to exercise care that the alms are not misused; of which they shall render an account in consistory, and also (if anyone desires to be present) to the congregation, at such time as the consistory may see fit.

Form for Installation of Deacons

From which passage we may easily gather, what the deacon's office is, namely, that they in the **first** place collect and preserve with the greatest fidelity and diligence, the alms and foods which are given to the poor; yea, to do their utmost endeavors, that many good men be procured for the relief of the poor.

The **second** part of their office consists in distribution, wherein are not only required discretion and prudence to bestow the alms only on objects of charity, but also cheerfulness and simplicity to assist the poor with compassion and hearty affection: as the apostle requires, Rom. chap 12; and 2 Cor. chap. 9. For which end it is very beneficial, that they do not only administer relief to the poor and indigent with external gifts, but also with comfortable words from Scripture.

From the revised CRC Form

“Deacons, therefore, are called to assess needs, **promote stewardship** and hospitality, collect and distribute ...”

Scripture Passages

1 Timothy 5:16 ¹⁶ If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.

1 Timothy 6:17 ¹⁷ Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly

Ephesians 4:28 ²⁸ Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 ¹⁰ For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. ¹¹ For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. ¹² Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

II. The Material

- A. Will give you
 - 1 Principles – to keep in mind
 - 2 Passages – to use as appropriate
- B. What is a principle?
 - 1 Something that is always true for anyone at any place and time
 - 2 Different than a rule - a rule is an application of a principle in a specific situation
 - 3 Examples?
- C. Why principles and not rules?
- D. Principles all begin with God

Principle #1 – God Owns All Things

Psalm 24:1 The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

Psalm 89:11 The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them.

Haggai 2:8 The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts.

Implications of Principle #1

- 1 God has ownership rights, I have only responsibilities
- 2 Every financial decision, not just giving, is a spiritual decision
- 3 If God is owner, you can't fake it – your checkbook is your spiritual biography (maybe that's why we're so secretive)

Principle # 2 – God Distributes Wealth

1 Samuel 2:7 ⁷ The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up.

Proverbs 22:2 The rich and poor meet together: the LORD *is* the maker of them all.

Job 1:21 And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.

1 Corinthians 4:7 For who maketh thee to differ *from another?* and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?

Implications of Principle #2

- 1 A man does not get his wealth by his own strength, ability or smart business decisions
- 2 God provides, so trust in Him
- 3 We should obtain our income only in God-prescribed ways

Principle #3 – God Forbids Self-reliance and Self-indulgence

Deuteronomy 8:11-14, 17-18 ¹¹ Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: ¹² Lest *when* thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt *therein*; ¹³ And *when* thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; ¹⁴ Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God

¹⁷ And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of *mine* hand hath gotten me this wealth. ¹⁸ But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for *it is* he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as *it is* this day.

More Passages for Principle #3

Philippians 3:18-19 ¹⁸ (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ: ¹⁹ Whose end *is* destruction, whose God *is* *their* belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

Luke 12:18-21 ¹⁸ And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry. ²⁰ But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? ²¹ So *is* he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

Principle #4 – God has a purpose for our Money

- God's Glory – This is priority
 - **Proverbs 3:9** ⁹ Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:
- Giving
 - **Ephesians 4:28** working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.
- Spiritual growth (tests and tools)
 - a. Our financial situation is a test
 - b. Our finances are a tool to serve God
- Meeting our needs

Principle #5 – God Defines Needs/Wants

- ⌋ Biblical Definition
 - a. Needs are those things necessary to live for today (food, clothing, transportation, shelter) cf. Matthew 6:11, 31, 34
 - b. A want is a purchase that improves the quality and comfort of my life beyond my needs
- ⌋ Implication – What determines spending and consumption?
 - a. What I have? What I can get? or
 - b. What I need? Moderation?

Principle #6 – God demands Action in Stewardship

Matthew 25:24-27 ²⁴ Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: ²⁵ And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, *there* thou hast *that is* thine. ²⁶ His lord answered and said unto him, *Thou* wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: ²⁷ Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and *then* at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.

Specifics of Principle #6

- 1 Seeking Kingdom Causes
- 2 Working with our hands
- 3 Giving to the poor
- 4 Managing and not wasting
- 5 Avoiding, getting out of debt
- 6 Trusting God
 - a. His Provision
 - b. His Priority
 - c. His Prescription
- 7 Contentment (fruit of all this)

How do we Apply the Principles

- 1 To Giving?
- 2 To Debt and Credit?
- 3 To Work/how much should a person work?
- 4 To Spending/consumption?
- 5 To Budgeting?
- 6 To seeking to be financially successful/rich?
- 7 To Retirement planning?

III. The Manner

- A. Your Approach – from a personal point of view
 - 1) Humility
 - a. You don't have the answers, the Bible does
 - b. You don't have the authority, the office does
 - 2) Mercy
 - 3) Readiness, availability, seeking out the poor

A. What can you do to teach these things?

1) To the congregation as a whole?

a. Be an example

- Personally, as a steward, with your spiritual outlook on life
- As a deaconate in your handling of church/benevolence funds

b. Teach classes, have them taught, ask your pastor to preach on these things

2) To the specific individuals with whom you labor?

a. Directly apply biblical principles

b. Teach by your ongoing work (month to month, not quick relief – that can be as bad as “get-rich-quick”)

c. Maintain accountability – you don't make all the financial decisions, but you want honesty

d. Study and know Scriptural principles yourself! Read!