

Honour the LORD with thy substance, And with the first-fruits of all thine increase; So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, And thy vats shall overflow with new wine. Prov. 3:9-10

## CHRISTIAN CHARACTER > STEWARDSHIP

To discover what the Bible says about stewardship, we start with the first verse: “In the beginning God created the Heavens and the earth”. As the Creator, God has absolute rights and ownership over all things, and to miss starting here is like misaligning the top button on our shirt – nothing else will ever line up. Nothing else in the Bible, including the doctrine of stewardship, will make any sense or have any true relevance if we miss the fact that God is the Creator and has full rights of ownership. It is through our ability to fully grasp this and imbed it in our hearts that the doctrine of stewardship is understood.

The biblical doctrine of stewardship defines a man’s relationship to God. It identifies God as owner and man as manager. God makes man His co-worker in administering all aspects of our life. It is our divinely given opportunity to join with God in His worldwide and eternal redemptive movement (Matt. 28:19-20) and we see that stewardship is not God taking something from us; we see it is His method of bestowing His richest gifts upon His people.

In the end, stewardship is our obedient witness to God’s sovereignty. Stewardship defines our practical obedience in the administration of everything under our control, everything entrusted to us. It is the consecration of one’s self and possessions to God’s service. We acknowledge that He is in control and as stewards of God, we are managers of that which belongs to Him, and we are under His constant authority as we administer His affairs.

Therefore, although this workshop will concentrate on financial stewardship, we as Christ followers are also stewards of God’s bounty to us in the areas of:

Time > Psalms 39:4-5; 90:12. 2 Cor. 4:18. Eph. 5:15-17. Col. 4:5.

Gifts/Talents > I Pet. 4:10-11. Rom 12: 3-8.

Works > Matt. 5:16; 6:33. Eph. 2:10.

Resources in General / Our life > Esther 4:14. Matt. 25: 1-46. I Cor. 9:7; 10:31. Eph. 3:2. I Pet. 3: 15.

Biblical stewardship then recognizes 3 important facts:

1. God owns everything (Psalm 24:1)
2. Our role is to be stewards of God’s resources (Gen. 1:26. I Cor. 4:1-2)
3. The goal of our stewardship is to accomplish God’s mission in this world (Matt. 28:18-20)

A good biblical definition of stewardship recognizes that God’s resources are to be displayed through God’s people to accomplish God’s mission.

Examples of giving:

Gen. 14:17-20; 28:20-21. Ex. 36:5. Mark 12:42. Luke 21:1-4. 2 Cor. 8:1-5. Phil. 4:15-16.

Warnings about improper relationship with money:

Prov. 11:28. Eccl. 5:10-12. I Tim. 6:7-10, 17-19.

The New Testament concept of giving seems to point to a relationship with God in the area of money that is more devotion oriented, rather than duty. The Bible has a lot to say about money and managing money. More than 2,000 verses address a wide range of financial topics. The Bible is practical and accurate when talking about financial stewardship.

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Jesus taught more on giving than any other one subject. It is not generally a natural thing for most people to do. Much of the teaching about giving in the New Testament is concerned with the poor and the needy. Anytime we share financially with others for Christ sake we are engaged in a scriptural and spiritual exercise of obedience. Jesus and his disciples were supported by gifts as were the apostles and travelling evangelists, and later, the elders of the Church (Luke 8:1-3. I Cor. 9:13-14. I Tim 5:17-18).

Strategic giving is profitable in 3 ways. It helps some kind of service of God's work that depends on support, it then results in souls being influenced for Christ's kingdom, and it accrues to our heavenly account where there are no devaluations, no bank failures, no market crashes and no inflation (Phil. 4:10-19)! Some other motivational passages to freely engage in this ministry/obedience: Matt. 25:21. Rom. 14:12. Gal. 6:9. Col. 3:23-24. I Pet. 2:5.

If we believe His promises and obey by faith, God will allow us to have more so we can give more as expressed in 2 Cor. 9:6-8.

Other verses on Wealth:

Gen. 1:1; 1:28; 2:15. Lev. 27:30. Deut. 8:18; 10:12-14. I Chron. 29:14. Psalm 50:9-12. Matt. 25:14-30. Luke 16:10-13; 19:11-26. John 3:27. 2 Cor. 8:1-5. Gal. 5:22-23. James 1:17.

What to do:

Prov. 22:9. Isa. 1:16-17. Micah 6:8. Mal. 3:8-12. Luke 6:38; 8:1-3. I Cor. 9:3-14. Rom. 15:15-16. I Tim. 5:17-18.

What happens when we don't put God first?

Hag. 1:3-11. Let us not allow this to happen to us.