

Ownership VS Stewardship

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). As the Creator, God has absolute rights of ownership over all things.

The subject of stewardship will not make any sense or have any true relevance if we miss the fact that God is the Creator and has full rights of ownership.

As we learned in our last lesson, everything belongs to God. We don't have rights to anything since all belongs to God. We are not even our own, we were bought with a price. (1 Cor 6:19-20)

Definition: Christian Stewardship is the responsible management of resources that God has entrusted to us, including time, talent, and treasure, for His glory and the betterment of others.

Understanding the concept of Christian Stewardship is crucial for living a purposeful and fulfilling life. It requires a mindset shift from one of ownership to one of stewardship, recognizing that everything we have is a gift from God. By utilizing our resources wisely, we can make a meaningful difference in the world around us and ultimately bring glory to God.

Stewardship involves administering everything that has been entrusted to us by God. It speaks of the devotion of ourselves and our possessions to God's service. Stewardship acknowledges in practice that we do not have the right of control over ourselves or our property—God has that control. It means as stewards of God we are managers of that which belongs to God, and we are under His constant authority as we administer His affairs. Faithful stewardship means that we fully acknowledge we are not our own but belong to Christ, the Lord, who gave Himself for us.

The concept of **Christian stewardship** can be seen throughout the Bible, yet it is often overlooked in our modern world. Understanding this concept is critical for every Christian believer, as it encompasses the responsibility of managing the resources that God has entrusted to us.

Stewardship in the Old Testament

God entrusted **Adam and Eve** with the care of the Garden of Eden (*The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. Genesis 2:15*)

Noah was appointed to be a steward of all living creatures on the ark (Genesis 6:19-22).

Joseph in Potiphar's house

*Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there. The Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he **entrusted to his care everything he owned**. From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the Lord blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. -Genesis 39:1-5*

A steward has tremendous potential.

By God's grace, Joseph's faithful stewardship led to reward, profit, and blessing on a major scale. Potiphar and his household benefited greatly under Joseph's management (Genesis 39:2-6). The jailer and the other prisoners were helped by Joseph's faithfulness (Genesis 39:21-23). Both the butler and the baker were recipients of Joseph's kindness toward them (Genesis 40:1-20). Pharaoh, Egypt, and even other countries were saved from starvation because of Joseph's wisdom leading up to the famine years (Genesis 41:1-57).

Jacob, Joseph's brothers, and their families were provided for by Joseph (Genesis 42-47). Joseph ultimately brought God glory through it all (Genesis 50:15-21)! Joseph was faithful with little and God blessed him with more. Sadly, we can miss the potential God has for us because we fail in the area of stewardship

The Israelites were also called to be stewards of the land, which was considered a gift from God.

The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine. For you are strangers and sojourners with me. Leviticus 25:23

This involved not only the proper use and care of the land, but also the fair treatment of workers and the poor (Leviticus 19:9-10, Deuteronomy 24:19-21).

The Old Testament also emphasizes the importance of giving back to God through tithes and offerings. In Malachi 3:10, God challenges His people to test Him in their giving and promises to bless them abundantly.

Stewardship in the New Testament

*As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as **good stewards** of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 4:10-11*

The Parable of the Talents

*“For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and **entrusted** to them his property. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and*

hid his master's money. Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more. His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master. And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have made two talents more. His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master. He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours. But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Matt 25:14-30

When we exercise the gifts of the Spirit to serve one another we are being good stewards of those gifts.

A steward has a responsibility to be faithful.

With authority comes responsibility. A steward's responsibility is to act on behalf of his master and for his best interest.

For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, Titus 1:7

*This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and **stewards** of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of **stewards** that they be found faithful. 1 Cor 4:1*

Once we're called and placed into the body of Jesus Christ, the stewardship that is required of us is not a result of our own power or abilities. The strength, inspiration and growth in the management of our lives must come from God through the Holy Spirit in us; otherwise, our labor is in vain and the growth in stewardship is self-righteous, human growth. We must always remember the sole source of our strength in pleasing God: *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" Phil 4:13*

Biblical Principles of Stewardship

Stewardship is not just about giving money or time, it is a lifestyle that reflects our relationship with God. Here are some biblical principles of stewardship:

- **Accountability:** We are responsible to God for how we manage His resources.
- **Generosity:** We are called to be generous with our resources, just as God is generous with us.
- **Sacrifice:** Stewardship requires sacrifice, as we give up our resources for the sake of God's kingdom.
- **Integrity:** We are called to be honest and trustworthy in our stewardship, using God's resources for His purposes.

When we apply these principles to our lives, we can become faithful stewards of God's resources and use them to further His kingdom on earth.

Some Results of Good Stewardship

- **Stewardship helps us resist materialism** – By focusing on stewardship, we learn to place our value in eternal things rather than in material possessions.
- **Stewardship helps us prioritize our values** – When we practice stewardship, we learn to prioritize our values and focus on what is truly important in life.
- **Stewardship helps us grow in generosity** – As we practice stewardship, we develop a heart of generosity and become more willing to give to others.
- **Stewardship helps us experience joy and contentment** – When we use our resources wisely and give generously, we experience a sense of joy and contentment that comes from knowing we are fulfilling God’s purposes for our lives.
- **Stewardship helps us build trust and accountability** – When we practice stewardship, we learn to be accountable for our resources and to build trust with others by using our resources wisely and ethically.