



Lesson 12: Stewardship

A steward is a manager or administrator. He takes care of other people's property, and is rewarded or punished for how well he does his job. Jesus used the idea of stewards in his parables (e.g., Luke 12:42, 16:3). Believers are stewards in that God has entrusted to them various resources, and He expects them to use them properly. To do so requires discipline. It's easy to squander what God has given, or to think that the things God gives are really one's own. But believers don't own anything. They are just taking care of God's property.

Matthew 25:21 *His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'*

Luke 16:10 *He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.*

1 Corinthians 4:2 *Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.*

Colossians 4:17 *And say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it."*

Note some important areas of stewardship:

I. Time

Ephesians 5:15-16 *Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil.*

Time is not our own to be used as we see fit, but is a gift or resource from God that believers are to use in ways that would please and honor God. Paul tells us to "redeem the time," that is, make the most of every opportunity. We don't know how much time we have; therefore, we should use our time to accomplish the most for God as possible.

How one uses time is a telling commentary on his or her level of discipline. One who can fritter away hours doing nothing of value or merit shows a low level of discipline. While believers should carve out time for rest and relaxation, too much time spent on unprofitable activities can be destructive. There's some truth in the old saying, "Idle hands are the Devil's workshop." Time on earth must be spent doing God's business and preparing for eternity. Time is short and is passing away. Believers will give an account to God regarding how they spent their time. Discipline yourself to "redeem the time."

II. Money

There is no excuse for financial irresponsibility. You may not have much money, and you may wish you had more, but whatever amount you have comes from God, and you must handle it as a careful steward.

Biblical principles regarding money and its use:

1. God owns everything. He entrusts His resources to stewards (Ps 24:1).
2. Don't love money or be materialistic. Greed gets one into trouble (Luke 12:15; 1 Tim 6:8-10).
3. Being rich should not be a primary goal of life (Prov 23:4).
4. Labor to meet the needs of your family (1 Tim 5:8).

5. Give generously and cheerfully to support the work of the ministry (2 Cor 9:6-8). Generous giving results in generous blessing (Luke 6:38). Giving is an act of worship (Phil 4:18). Giving reflects your level of faith (Mark 12:41f). Giving should be planned and systematic (1 Cor 16:1-2).
6. Save money now for later (Prov 6:6-8).

III. Body

Think of your body as a tool that God has given you to serve Him. Just like any tool, it can be used for good or for evil, in appropriate or inappropriate ways. It takes discipline to use your body for the glory of God and not for your own purposes.

Remember Paul's words: "Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit . . . and you are not your own. Therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor 6:19-20). He further tells us to "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" (Rom 12:1).

We may be tempted to think that if we own anything, we surely own our own bodies. But such is not the case. God owns our bodies, and He tells us very clearly what He wants us to do with them. It takes discipline to follow God's commands regarding how we use our bodies.

Believers must discipline ("keep under" 1 Cor 9:27) their bodies. One should take care of his body. Eat the right kinds of foods, avoid destructive foods and activities, and exercise. Keep your body healthy and fit. Doing so prevents sin and allows one to be an effective tool in God's service.

Note: Part of your body is your mind, your brain. Believers must discipline themselves to use their brains in a way that would honor God. Christianity is an intellectual, mind-intensive way of life. Christians must not be undisciplined and unguarded in their thinking. They are to renew their mind through exposure to God's Word (Rom 12:2). Don't be a lazy-minded person.

Philippians 4:8 *Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.*

IV. Gifts/talents

God has given every believer at least one spiritual gift (1 Cor 12:7). He is responsible to use whatever gifts and talents he has for the good of others. The church is the context for the use of one's spiritual gifts. One should use his talents and abilities to enhance the ministry of his church. Believers are accountable for how well they managed and employed their gifts. For one to be gifted, and then not to use that gift in God's service, is a great shame.

1 Pet 4:10 *As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

V. Truth

Believers are managers of a message—the gospel and the other contents of the Bible. Individual believers, churches, denominations and other organizations are responsible to both protect and project that message.

- Protect: defend the truth against the onslaughts of anyone who would tear it down (apologetics). Believers must stand for correct doctrine and expose false teaching.
- Project: send the message to those who have not heard (evangelism)

Note: There is a sense in which the Bible is independent from man, and a sense in which it is under man's stewardship. Because it's God's Word, which cannot be bound, destroyed or annulled, one could say that man has no power to uphold or destroy the Bible. On the other hand, because man is responsible to translate, preach and send forth the message of Scripture, there is a sense in which the Bible is under the care of believers.

Another Note: Believers will give an account of their stewardship at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor 3:11f). This judgment will be based on how well you managed the resources God entrusted to you. Those who served God faithfully and fruitfully will be well-rewarded, while those who did not will see their works go up in smoke.

Conclusion: Every Christian is a steward or manager of the things God has given him. One's time, money, body, and talents should all be employed in God's service. Even the Bible and its message are under the stewardship of believers in a sense. Strive to be a good steward of everything God has given you.

For Further Discussion:

1. What is a steward?
2. How can one say that all things come from God? Don't people work for their money and things?
3. When will believers give an account of their stewardship?
4. What resources are believers stewards of?