

CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

Fundamental principles of stewardship

- Ownership VS Stewardship – God owns, we manage

If we are stewards, we are not owners.

King David says...

(Psalm 24:1-2) – The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters.

It is tempting for humans to think that they are a self-made person, especially a non-God-focused person. This is particularly true for people with a humble background. God knows the evil of man’s heart.

(Deuteronomy 8:17-18) - You may say to yourself, “My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.” But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.

When you are successful, do not get carried away and do not think that we produced the wealth, it is God gave us the ability to produce the wealth.

Owners have rights, stewards have responsibilities

- Stewards at the end of the day, must give an account for how we have managed our finances.
- Parable of Talents **(Matthew 25:14-30)** – not how much God gives you but how you have used your talent to grow that.

Proper perspective of earthly treasures

- God is the owner, we are the stewards
- We will have to account for how we manage our resources.

So, what does God expect of us?

- Tithe – not really giving but merely bringing – not ours in the first place, we cannot give what is not ours. – *We give Thee but Thine own, whate'er the gift may be: All that we have is Thine alone, A trust, O lord, from Thee.*

Story of father and hungry son, father offered to take him to McDonalds for fries, was rebuked by son when he tried to eat the fries he bought for his son. He wondered what went wrong with his parenting, was the fries not his to begin with as he bought them? Maybe God is thinking the same way.

Teach the young to give - It is advisable to start giving in small amounts at a young age, when they start earning their keep, advise them to tithe. Involve children to give from young. Giving freely establishes the understanding that what we have comes from God

Two young men pledge to tithe faithfully to God for the rest of their lives. Upon graduation, one went to seminary and became a pastor. He tithed faithfully. The other, a businessman, he tithed faithfully up to the point where he made six million dollars. He struggled to find the strength to tithe six hundred thousand dollars. He spoke to his pastor friend about his struggle. His friend started praying fervently and soon enough, the businessman got impatient and said, "are you asking God if He could release him from the covenant?" The pastor replied, "No, I'm asking Him if bring your income back to the level of where you can comfortably tithe one thousand dollars.

The more the Lord blesses you, the more you will give

- Provide for the family

(1 Timothy 5:8) – Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

(Mark 7:10-12) – For Moses said, 'Honor your father and mother, and, 'Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death. But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is Corban (that is, devoted to God) then you no longer let them do anything for their father or mother.

Jesus said, when you practice giving till a point where you cannot provide for your family, you put aside God's laws for these traditions. God has commanded us to take care of our family.

- Provide for the household of faith
(Galatians 6:10) – Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. **(Acts 2:44-45, 1 John 3:17-18)**

Paul does not mean we should suffer so that others may be in abundance but in our abundance, we should look out for others so that in their abundance, they would look out for us.

- Do good to all mankind
(1 Timothy 6:17-19) - Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Paul says that God gives us everything for our enjoyment, parents would understand and want our children to get the best. God's purpose is to bless us and enjoy life but beyond that, God is blessing us to be generous and kind-hearted to share our abundance.

Remind Me Dear Lord

*The things that I love and hold dear to my heart
Are just borrowed they're not mine at all
Jesus only let me use them to brighten my light
So remind, me remind me dear Lord*

As humans, we are prone to forgetting that whatever we have, is given by God.

Giving as a mark of discipleship

- Giving 10% - is that really all that matters?
- How we manage the 90% is the more telling measure of discipleship – the 10% is the token we bring to show that God is the owner, God owns 100% of all that we have, the entirety of our wealth.

(Luke 18/Mark 10/Matthew 19) – The Rich Young Ruler

(Luke 19) – Zacchaeus's example – general public criticized Jesus for entering a sinner's house. However, Zacchaeus, was overwhelmed by the love of God. He gave half of his wealth to the poor and repaid four-fold to those who he wronged. Jesus said: "Today salvation has come to this house, for this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

Works can never lead to salvation, but works are evidence of salvation.

(Ephesians 2:8-10) – For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

John Wesley’s warning on wealth

“Do you not know that God entrusted you with all that money (all above what buys necessities for your families) to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to help the stranger, the widow, the fatherless; and indeed, as far as it will go, to relieve the wants of all mankind? How can you, how dare you, defraud the Lord, by applying it to any other purpose?”

John Wesley’s expenditure

| Annual Income | Given to Poor | Kept for self |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| £30 | £2 | £28 |
| £90 | £62 | £28 |
| £1000 | £970 | ≤£30 |

John Wesley’s lifestyle never changed despite a rising income.

Why did Jesus talk so much about money?

- Jesus talked about money/possession more than heaven & hell combined
- Jesus talked about money/possession more than faith & prayers combined
- Inference: Financial Stewardship is the harder part of discipleship
- For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. **(Luke 12:34)**

When we do good and give to the poor, we lay up treasure in heaven, there will our heart be also. Our heart will be close to Jesus because we choose to lay our treasure in heaven.

What I spent, I lost

What I saved, I left

What I gave, I have