

Whole-Life Stewardship

- **Questions: what is stewardship? What does the Bible say about it? Is it only our time and money? What does "whole-life" refer to?**
- **Definition of "stewardship":** "the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care"
 - a **steward** manages the possessions of someone else
 - "A man employed in a large family, or on a large estate, to manage the domestic concerns, supervise other servants, collect the rents or income, keep accounts, and the like" (Webster)
- **Bible Definition:** "using and managing all the resources God provides for the glory of God"
 - we are the manager of God's household
 - we are supervisors appointed by God
- **Stewards in Bible Times:**
 - "The steward of Bible times was usually a servant, or in some cases a slave, who had earned the respect and trust of the master of the house. This trust was so complete that the master would turn over the entire operation of his estate to this individual. What is even more unique about this relationship was the fact that the steward essentially assumed the power and influence of his master and lived much the same lifestyle. As long as the steward remained faithful, he was allowed to continue these special privileges." (<http://www.cuttingedge.org/articles/p112.htm>)
 - **Stewards in the Bible**
 - **Eliezer of Damascus** (Abraham's steward; Genesis 15:1-3)
 - Abraham's heir if no children
 - given the important duty of finding a wife for Isaac
 - **Joseph** (Potiphar's steward; Genesis 39:8)
 - *"Behold, my master wotteth [knoweth] not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand"* (KJV).
 - * Joseph was in charge of it all
 - In the parable of the **Laborers in the Vineyard**, it is the steward who pays the laborers at the close of the day (Matthew 20:8).
- **The Basics of Bible Stewardship:**
 - **(Basic #1) God owns everything; we own nothing**
 - **The earth:** *Psalm 24:1 "The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."*
 - **Silver and Gold:** *Haggai 2:8 "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts."*
 - **All the Animals:** *Psalm 50:10 "For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills."*
 - **You/Your Body:** *1 Corinthians 6:19-20 "You are not your own, for you were bought with a*

price. So glorify God in your body."

- **You Own Nothing:** *1 Timothy 6:7 "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out."*
 - you brought nothing when you came; you will take nothing when you leave
 - * "There are no U-Hauls behind hearses" (John Piper).
- **(Basic #2) God is the owner; you are the manager**
 - We are to take care of God's property; we are only managers
 - What is a manager? What does it mean to manage?
 - definitions of "manage":
 - (1) bring about or succeed in accomplishing, sometimes despite difficulty or hardship
 - * at times it will be difficult to be a successful manager
 - (2) to take charge of
 - * you are being given a responsibility
 - (3) to influence (a person)
 - * you will be able to help or hinder people through your managing
 - (4) to handle, direct, govern, or control in action or use
 - * management requires direct and regular participation; you must be involved
 - "In every stewardship relationship there are two parties involved: the master who hands out the resources and will one day ask for an accounting; and the steward who is entrusted with the resources and must eventually answer for how they were invested." (*Bible.org*)
 - Who is the master?
 - Who is the manager?
 - There will be an accounting of your management
 - **Living as if It All Belongs to God**
 - Every decision concerning God's property is a spiritual decision: "Am I using what God has given me in a way that pleases (glorifies) God?"
 - Make every decision with this in mind: "What would Jesus do?"
 - * You are acting in His place, as His manager
- **(Basic #3) We only have one Master**
 - *Matthew 6:24 "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon [riches]."*
 - your decisions will reveal whom you are serving
 - must be loyal
- **(Basic #4) We will be accountable**
 - a day of reckoning (to judge and determine punishment/reward)
 - *Matthew 24:46 "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing."*
 - *Luke 19:15 "And it came to pass, that when he was returned . . . then he commanded these*

servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading."

○ **(Basic #5) We will be rewarded**

- *Matthew 25:21 "His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."*

● **Requirements for Stewards:**

○ **Faithfulness:** can be trusted and depended on to do what the Master wants

- *1 Corinthians 4:2 "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."*
- *Matthew 24:45 "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household"*
- *Matthew 25:21 "Well done, thou good and faithful servant"*
- be faithful with little, and God will bless you with more

○ **Blameless:**

- *Titus 1:7 "For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God."*
- What does blameless mean?
 - free of blame; above reproach; morally pure
- What is "blameless" according to the Bible?
- *Colossians 1:22 "In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight."*
 - Because Jesus paid the price on the Cross, we can live a life without blame (without sin) in God's sight.
 - blameless = free from blame (sin)

○ **Not on the list of requirements:**

- talented, well-known, rich, beautiful

● **Examples of Stewardship:**

○ **God's commandment to Adam:** *Genesis 2:15 "And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it."*

- meaning of "dress": cultivate, till, serve, work, labor
- Adam was to be a STEWARD (manager) of the Garden of Eden (God's resources)

○ **Parable of the Talents**

- *Matthew 25:14-30*
- Master trusted his servants with a large amount of money
 - God is trusting you with valuable resources
- This was the servants' opportunity to prove themselves to the master
 - prove what? their loyalty, prove their ability to manage
- The amount of talents is not important
 - what is done with what one has is what matters

- **Poor Stewardship (Mismanagement)**

- Excuses for not being a good steward:
 - I'm not organized
 - I'm not talented
 - I don't have time
 - I worked for it; it's mine
 - I'll do it later
 - Someone else can do it better
- God gave you abilities, talents, opportunities, and family that make you especially fit for the stewardship position He is calling you to do. No one else can do it as well as you. You are the only puzzle piece that fits into your place in God's big plan.
 - "Michael Novak puts it like this: We didn't give ourselves the personalities, talents, or longings we were born with. When we fulfill these – these gifts from beyond ourselves – it is like fulfilling something we were meant to do The Creator of all things knows the name of each of us – knows thoroughly, better than we do ourselves, what is in us, for he put it there and intends for us to do something with it – something that meshes with his intentions for many other people." (Bible.org)

- **Review definition of "stewardship":** using and managing God's property for God's glory

- **God's property includes:** (ask for a list from youth first)

- the earth, things, family, relationships, skills (talents), health, time, your body, and knowledge

- **Changing your perspective:** How would you look at your possessions (car, cell phone, tablets, clothes) if you realized that they don't truly belong to you but they are God's and you are just the manager? Would you look at those possessions differently when you realize they are to be managed with the owner's values and goals in mind?

- **First step:** must acknowledge that God is the true owner, and He must be consulted concerning how to manage the resources given to us (this will require giving our hearts and lives to Christ—becoming a Christian)
 - whether we ever acknowledge it or not, all these resources belong to God. He can take them away without a moment's notice.