

Hands Together through Stewardship Luke 17:7-10



What is a steward? Or what is Stewardship?

Write the above statements on newsprint or a chalkboard. Ask the participants to offer their ideas and write the responses on the newsprint or board.

The *Confession of Faith* defines it this way –

6.10 - Christian stewardship acknowledges that all of life and creation is a trust from God, to be used for God's glory and service. It includes the conservation and responsible use of natural resources as well as the creative use of human skills and energies. These gifts of God are to be shared with all especially the poor.

6.11 - The motive for Christian stewardship is gratitude for God's abundant love and mercy, accompanied by the desire to share all of God's good gifts with others.

6.12 - God gives to the human family a variety of gifts, including gifts to each person for which each person has responsibility. God desires that each person engage in the mutual sharing of these gifts so that all may be enriched.

6.13 - Proportionate and regular giving of all that God entrusts to the human family is an act of devotion and a means of grace. Giving to and through the church is the privilege of every believer. Tithing as a scriptural guide for giving is an adventure of faith and a rich and rewarding practice. The tither not only experiences the grace of God but even the grace of sharing.

6.14 - All believers are responsible to God and to the covenant community for their stewardship.

(Note to Leader: It might be helpful to put all of these statements on a piece of paper and make copies for each participant.)

Luke 17:7-10 teaches when a servant comes in from plowing or taking care of sheep, he doesn't just sit down and eat, but first prepares his master's meal and serves him his supper before he eats his own. He is not even thanked for he is merely doing what he is supposed to do. Just so, if you obey me, you should not consider yourselves worthy of praise, for you have simply done your duty.

Liken unto the story of Jesus and the ten lepers, crying out to Jesus, "Have mercy on us." Jesus told them to go to the Jewish priest and show him that they were healed. As they turned to go their leprosy disappeared. Only one came back, fell upon his face and said, "Glory to God, I'm healed."

Jesus asked "Didn't I heal ten men? Where are the nine?" Jesus said to the Samaritan, "Stand up, your faith has made you well."

- How do we show that we are good stewards?
- When we pray asking from Jesus, do we praise and thank him enough for what he gives us?
- Do we tell others or do we keep it to ourselves and not share what God has done for us?

A certain rich man had a steward, a man who took care of all his possessions. He heard that the steward was wasting his property and he sent for him and said, “What is this that I hear about you?” You must soon give up your place and be my steward no longer.

Then the steward said to himself, in a few days I shall lose my place; and what shall I do? I cannot work in the fields and I am ashamed to go begging from door to door, but I have thought of a plan that will give me friends, so that when I am put out of my place, some people will take me into their houses because of what I have done for them, and this was his plan. He sent for the men who were in debt to his master and said to the first one, “How much do you owe my master?” The man told him he owed him a thousand gallons of oil. Then the steward told him he only needed to pay five hundred dollars. Then the steward said to the other man, asking how much he owed, the man answered, I owe him 1,500 bushels of wheat and the steward said to him that he only needed to pay 1,200 bushels.

When his master heard of this which his steward had done, he said that is a sharp, shrewd man who takes care of himself, and Jesus said be as earnest and thoughtful for the eternal life as men are for this present life.

Jesus did not approve of the actions of the unjust steward but he told his disciples to learn some good lessons even from his wrong deed. Are you cheating God? Are you cheating yourself out of a blessing from God by not being a good steward?

The faithful steward described in Luke 12:35-38 says “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them, and if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.

Read Luke 16:1-8, as it describes the unfaithful steward.

Sometimes stewardship doesn't have to come with a large contribution. In Mark, chapter 9 and verse 41, it says through giving a cup of water in Christ's name, you will be rewarded. Another example of giving is the story of the widow woman in Luke 21:1-4, who gave two mites (Hebrew, “lepton”) which was worth approximately 1/8 of cent. It was so small that its stamp was barely legible. But Jesus said that she of her want did cast in all that she had even all of her living. In Mark 4:3-8, Jesus talked about the sower who sowed his seeds in the good ground returned much, which is unlike the sower who sowed in unfertile ground which returned little.

If we have obeyed God, we have only done our duty and we should regard it as a privilege. Do you sometimes feel that you deserve extra credit for serving God? Remember obedience is not something extra that we do, it is our duty. Jesus is not suggesting that our service is meaningless or useless, nor is he advocating doing away with rewards. He is attacking unwarranted self-esteem and spiritual pride.

Genesis 1:28 says, "...and God blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea and the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." My husband and I have four sons and we lived on a farm in northwest Arkansas, with cattle, hogs, and turkeys. One winter it snowed 18 inches. The conditions were very cold and severe. One morning after Bill and the boys tended to the turkeys and hogs, they noticed that the cattle were lying on the frozen pond to get the thermal heat to stay warm. Bill and the boys moved the cattle from danger, but many ranchers that didn't move their cattle lost many head of cattle from the ice breaking. As the Bible says, we are stewards and have dominion over all God's creation.

In James' gospel it tells us that faith without works is dead. As you read this study you may find yourself as I did, an empty-nester; with our four sons now grown and my husband serving as the pastor of Mars Hills CP Church on Crow Mountain in Russellville, AR, I wanted to do some other things with my time. I write devotions which I give each Sunday before he brings the message. I belong to the local Extension Homemakers Club in our area. There is a great need in all areas of help, especially for elderly people in nursing homes. Our Club decorates the nursing home doors with homemade items for Christmas as well as homemade pillows, lap-ropes and knitted hats for all the residents. Our success is great by seeing the smiles on their faces when they open their gifts. We also do one hundred gifts a month of the children's hospital in Little Rock. These include hats, covers, and pillows. There are so many thing for us to do, not needing a thank you, just realizing that we need to be good stewards of that which God has blessed us. I have found this to be very rewarding and fulfilling, and my reward is the smiles. One person, or many people, can make a difference, perhaps that person is you.

Stewardship is the act of giving not only our financial means but also our love and concern for others who need us. It is also our willingness to do unto others as we would have them do to us, not expecting anything in return. We are to give from our heart as Christ did, giving his life for the whole world.

Prayer:

Our heavenly Father, Lord we thank you for all your many blessings that you give to us. May what we experience be used to make us better stewards in every area of our lives. Prepare our hearts in thoughts and actions that we may follow your will to do for others as you have done for us. Amen.

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