

Arbor Foundations

16 – Biblical Stewardship

Key Ideas / Biblical Basis

What is Biblical Stewardship?

- **Dictionary Definition:** the job of supervising or taking care of something, such as property or \$\$
 - **Key Point:** The word "steward" actually means "overseer." A steward does not own; he oversees what is owned by another.
- **Biblical Insight**
 - In the New Testament, two Greek words embody the meaning of our English word "stewardship."
 - The first word is *epitropos* which means "manager, foreman, or steward." At times it was used in the New Testament to mean "guardian," as in Galatians 4:1-2: "What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father."
 - The second word is *oikonomos*. It also means "steward, manager, or administrator" and it refers mostly to the law or management of a household or of household affairs.
 - Divine trust over God's assets for furthering His Kingdom & His glory

Understanding Biblical Stewardship? – 7 Key Principles

- **Principle #1: Ownership**
 - God is the owner of all things because He is God and Creator.
 - "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ..." (Genesis 1:1)
 - "The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." – (Psalm 24:1)
 - See also Deuteronomy 10:14; Haggai 2:8; Colossians 1:16; Psalm 50:11-12
 - We own nothing. Everything we have is a gift from God. (Romans 11:36; 1 Corinthians 4:7)

Nothing else in the Bible, including the doctrine of stewardship, will make any sense or have any true relevance if we miss the fact that God is the Creator and has full rights of ownership. It is through our ability to fully grasp this and imbed it in our hearts that the doctrine of stewardship is understood.

- **Principle #2: God Has a Plan to Accomplish with His Creation**
 - To reveal His Glory by building His Kingdom and having His Son Rule (Phil. 2:9-11; Rev. 22)
- **Principle #3: Our Responsibility: We Are Stewards of God's Creation**
 - **The Creation Mandate:** Adam and Eve were commanded to rule and take dominion over creation as God's vice-regents (Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15). They were the stewards of God's creation, and they were to reflect God ways and glory in all they do.
 - The FALL – Sin messed everything, that that didn't change God's plan.
 - We are still called to be stewards over creation. In fact, as Christians, we are the ones best equipped to be godly stewards because:
 - we know the owner (through the atoning sacrifice of Christ)
 - we have His "manual" (God's Word)
 - the Holy Spirit dwells within us (we can know the will of God & have the ability to obey)

Every faculty you have, your power of thinking or of moving your limbs from moment to moment, is given you by God. If you devoted every moment of your whole life exclusively to His service, you could not give Him anything that was not in a sense His own already.
– C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

Fundamentally, stewardship is about exercising our God-given dominion over His creation, reflecting the image of our creator God in His care, responsibility, maintenance, protection, and beautification of His creation.
– R.C. Sproul, *How Should I Think about Money*

- **Principle #4: As Stewards, Our Primary Responsibility Is to Glorify God.**
 - *As it pertains to stewardship, how do we glorify God in our lives?*
 - Whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31; also Col. 3:17).
 - Our stewardship is directly related to practical obedience in the administration of everything under our control, everything entrusted to us. It is the consecration of one's self & possessions to God's service. *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.* As faithful stewards we acknowledge we are not our own but belong to Christ, the Lord, who gave Himself for us. (Titus 2:14)
- **Principle #5: As Stewards, We Will Be Held Accountable**
 - *Parable of the Talents* (Matthew 14:30) | *Parable of the Minas* (Luke 19:12-27)
 - *Parable of the Master's Return* (Luke 12:41-48)
 - *“Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required”*
 - *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that which he has done, whether it be good or bad* (2 Cor. 5:10)
 - See also 2 Cor. 8:12; 1 Cor. 4:2;

What about tithing?

- Under the Old Covenant, the Israelites were commanded to tithe 10% of their crop yields (first fruits) to the Levites for their priestly service (Deut. 14:20-27; Numbers 18:20-21)
- Question: *Is this command still relevant, applicable for New Covenant Christians?*
 - The Old Covenant temple and priestly system is now no longer needed or in effect. Christ has fulfilled.
 - The “children of God” are not defined by ethnic Israel, but those who have repented and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ = the true Church.
 - We are not under law today, but under Grace (Paul's arguments from Romans and Galatians)
 - Some therefore, hold that tithing is not a requirement for Christians today.
- Thinking of Tithing as Financial Stewardship – A principle that God reveals to us in both the OT & NT.
 - Just as any other part of the Law in the OT, tithing was not about “salvation by works”, but rather was directly connected to gratitude, worship of God and providing for the needs of others.
 - These same principles are repeated in Paul's letters.
 - “Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7)
 - The elder is worthy of his wages (1 Tim. 5:17-18)
 - “Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2)

*I would say we should value our riches in Christ in this new covenant relationship so highly, and our freedom from sin so highly, and our gospel so highly, that we would simply love to give. Jesus said it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). And we would be free from a love of things, and a dependence on things, and we would **out give** those who lived under the law because we have a better covenant and a better promise. Everything is greater with Christ. Why wouldn't giving be greater?*

Everything is greater in the new covenant. We have better promises, a better covenant — Hebrews says — why wouldn't there be better sacrifice, better giving? (John Piper)

Illustration: Historical Example in John Wesley

Randy Alcorn's “Treasure Principle Keys”

1. God Owns Everything. I'm His Money Manager
2. My Heart Always Goes Where I Put God's Money
3. Heaven, Not Earth, Is My Home
4. I Should Live Not for the DOT but for the LINE
5. Giving Is the ONLY Antidote to Materialism
6. God Prospers Me NOT to Raise My Standard of Living, but to Raise my Standard of GIVING

- **Principle #6: God Will Provide His Stewards What They Need to Accomplish His Will**
 - God promises that those who are faithful in their stewardship over what they have been given will have their needs met and every godly desire satisfied.
 - *Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.* (Matt. 6:33)
 - *And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.* (Phil. 4:19)
- **Principle #7: There Is Reward for Faithfulness**
 - *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.* (Col. 3:23-24)
 - To someday hear, *“Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!”* (Matt. 25:23)
 - Faithful Servants Share in the Glory of God (John 17:22; Romans 5:2; 2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Peter 1:3-4)
 - *The glory of God is the infinite beauty and greatness of HIS manifold perfections.* (John Piper)

All believers have been redeemed by the atoning work of Christ and regenerated by Holy Spirit to be transformed into the likeness of Christ Jesus – WHY? So that we might be made “perfected” – holy to dwell in the presence of God our Creator – the Divine Trinity – our Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit.

Our motivation of “good stewardship” is not perfection or holiness *in and of itself*. No, rather – it is the reward of Christ. Union with Christ is the all sufficient reward secured by Christ for His people. The true longing for all Christians then is to Know Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2), to be “in Him” so as to someday physically for eternity dwell in the House of the Lord and see His face. (For that will be JOY!)

SIGNIFICANCE: How you understand Biblical Stewardship will affect how you live each day.

- What you do with your “free” time? | How you spend your money?
- What do you allow to engage your mind and thoughts? | Who you spend time with and why?
- What attitudes and emotions you embrace each day?
- What you do with the gifts, knowledge and experiences that God has given you?

Resources for Further Study

Craig Blomberg, *Neither Poverty Nor Riches: A Biblical Theology of Possessions* (IVP Academic, 2000)

Hugh Welchel, [*Monday Morning Success: How Biblical Stewardship Transforms Your Work*](#)

Institute for Faith, Work & Economics <https://tifwe.org/>

John Piper, *Is Tithing Commanded for Christians?* (Desiring God)

<https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/is-tithing-commanded-for-christians>

John Piper, *Toward the Tithe and Beyond: How God Funds His Work* (Desiring God)

<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/toward-the-tithe-and-beyond>

Norman Wirzba, *Sabbath Living (The Christian Practice of Everyday Life): Discovering the Rhythms of Rest and Delight* (Brazos Press, 2006)

Randy Alcorn, *Treasure Principle* (LifeChange Books, 2005)

R.C. Sproul, *How Should I Think about Money?* (Reformation Trust, 2016)

R.C. Sproul, *To Much Is Given ... Teaching series* (Ligonier Ministries)

<https://www.ligonier.org/store/to-whom-much-is-given-cd/>

R. T. Kendall, *Tithing: A Call to Serious Biblical Giving* (Zondervan, 1983)

Timothy Keller, *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just* (Penguin Books, 2012)

Tom Elliff, *Practicing Biblical Stewardship: The Sixth Pillar of a Kingdom Family* (SBC Life)

<http://www.sbclife.net/article/1107/practicing-biblical-stewardship>

[Wayne Grudem: A Theology of Work/Vocation](#), This video is a part of the Leadership Lecture Series, and was recorded September 15, 2011 at the Talbot School of Theology Faculty Retreat in La Quinta, CA.

<https://youtu.be/4RyKBRsqXzE>