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RESTORING THE CHURCH - PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH LIFE

Christian Stewardship

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this lesson is to demonstrate to the believer his responsibility to God in the use of his life so that he will be equipped to make decisions in life that are consistent with this knowledge.

KEY VERSE:

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

I. WHAT IS A STEWARD?

- A. The dictionary defines a steward as “a person entrusted with the management of estates or affairs not his own; an administrator.”
- B. The New Testament word translated “steward” means “the manager of a household or household affairs; a manager.” (1 Corinthians 4:1, 2; 1 Peter 4:10)
- C. A steward is an individual who has been delegated authority by an owner to oversee his possessions, property, and household affairs.

D. Stewards were common in the Biblical culture. Most wealthy people and rulers have stewards to whom they entrusted the oversight of personnel and property.

1. Abraham has Eliezer (Genesis 15:2). He proved to be very faithful (Genesis 24:1-9).
2. Elisha and Gehazi (2 Kings 4:12). He proved to be an unwise steward (2 Kings 5:20-27).

II. HOW IS THE CONCEPT OF STEWARDSHIP SEEN IN THE BELIEVER'S RELATIONSHIP TO GOD?

A. God is the owner of all things (Genesis 14:19, 22; Psalms 24:1; 50:1-12; 68:19; 89:11; Haggai 2:8). As the owner of all things God is:

1. The giver or source (James 1:17).
2. The One to whom account is given (Romans 14:12).
3. The rewarder (Hebrews 11:6).

B. The believer is a steward (Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-26). As a steward, the believer is:

1. The receiver (1 Corinthians 4:7)
2. Accountable and responsible to the owner (Romans 14:12; Luke 6:2).
3. The one rewarded for faithfulness (Matthew 25:21, 23).

III. WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT REALMS IN WHICH STEWARDSHIP IS TO BE RECOGNIZED AND PRACTICED?

A. Stewardship involves, first of all and most importantly, a giving of one's life (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; Romans 12:1, 2; Acts 17:25).

B. Steward involves a wise and honourable use of one's time (Psalms 90:12; Proverbs 24:30-34).

- C. Stewardship involves a wise investment and cultivation of individual **talents and abilities**.
- D. Stewardship involves a proper understanding and use of one's **possessions**. (Matthew 6:19-21; Colossians 3:1, 2).
- E. Stewardship involves a careful and purposeful use of all **finances**. (1 Corinthians 16:1, 2)

IV. WHAT IS A DEFINITION OF CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP?

Stewardship is the practice of systematic and proportionate giving of time, abilities and material possessions based on the conviction that these are a trust from God to be used in His service for the benefit of His Kingdom. It is a divine/human partnership, with God as the senior partner. It is a way of living; the recognition of God's ownership of one's person, powers and possessions and the faithful use of these for the advancement of Christ's Kingdom in this world.

V. WHAT ARE THE PRIMARY QUALITIES OF A GOOD STEWARD?

- A. Faithful and loyalty (1 Corinthians 4:1, 2; Matthew 21:40, 41).
- B. Industriousness (Matthew 25:26; Romans 12:11).
- C. Discipline and obedience (Colossians 3:22, Titus 2:9).
- D. Fruitfulness and productivity (Matthew 25:20).
- E. Humility and servant's heart (1 Corinthians 4:7; 1 Peter 4:20, 21).

VI. WHAT TRUTHS DID JESUS EMPHASIZE IN HIS TEACHING ON STEWARDSHIP?

Jesus' main teaching on stewardship is found in two main parables in Matthew 25:14-30 and Luke 16:1-13. These accounts bring out the following truths:

- A. If we do not use what God has given us we will lose it.
- B. God expects us to use our talents to bring increase to His Kingdom.
- C. God expects us to use great wisdom as we use our talents.
- D. Even though God does not appear to be giving direct oversight to what we are doing, yet there is a day of accountability.
- E. The industrious will be rewarded by God.
- F. The wicked and slothful will be judged by the Lord.
- G. Faithfulness over natural, material things will qualify us for true spiritual riches.

VII. WHAT KIND OF QUESTIONS SHOULD A BELIEVER ASK HIMSELF IN THIS AREA OF STEWARDSHIP?

- A. Do I daily acknowledge that all I have belongs to God?
- B. Do I seek God's approval above man's approval in the lifestyle I lead?
- C. Do I use my time, talents, abilities, and finances in a way that would bring glory to God?
- D. Am I contributing to the extension of the Kingdom of God by the use of all that I have?
- E. Am I managing the affairs of my life in such a way that it will be easy for God to say to me, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant?"

CONCLUSION:

Christian stewardship describes the position and responsibility of the Christian to manage or administer as a steward for God the things which God has committed to him in this life. We are not our own. Jesus Christ has bought us at an infinite cost. We belong completely to Him. Everything we do in life should reflect this fact. Every person is endowed with a free will and can choose to return to God that which belongs to Him, or he can withhold from Him that which is rightfully His. Let us all prove to be good stewards of the manifold grace of God (1 Peter 4:10).