

Stewardship

I Corinthians 4:2: “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”

A steward is a person who has been entrusted to take care of or manage another person’s property or household. A biblical example is found in Genesis 39:5: “And it came to pass from the time *that* he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.” From this verse we see that Joseph was entrusted as a steward to be the house manager for Potiphar. When we observe Mrs. Potiphar was attempting to bring Joseph into adultery, Joseph gives this godly answer to her advances: “There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Genesis 39:9). We are impressed with the fact that as the overseer over the house that belongs to Potiphar, Joseph reveals that he has an even greater obligation to God. With this in mind, it is important to lay down a Scriptural foundation:

A. GOD OWNS EVERYTHING.

Psalm 24:1: “The earth is the LORD’S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.”

Psalm 50:10-12: “For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.”

II Corinthians 4:4 refers to Satan as, “...god of this world...,” and in Ephesians 2:2 as, “...the prince of the power of the air...” Revelation 12:9 tells us, “And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” Notice the differentiation between “earth” and “world.” The Devil was cast into the earth and his dominion is the world system, restricted to time, which one day will be expired and he will lose his power as its prince. But never does the Lord abdicate ownership to him in any age or in any time.

B. WE BELONG TO GOD.

Genesis 1:27: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”

I Corinthians 6:19, 20: “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.”

We are God’s by creation and we are God’s by redemption.

C. WE SHALL GIVE ACCOUNT OF OUR STEWARDSHIP.

Romans 14:10c, "...for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." II Corinthians 5:10: "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 he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Hebrews 13:17b was a strong reminder to the overseers of the House of God (pastors), "...for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

As faithful stewards, we must give account of:

1. OUR TIME SPENT

As we examine the life of Jesus on this earth, we learn much about how He spent His time. In the beginning of our Lord's ministry, after the busy day at Capernaum we learn something of Christ's priorities: Mark 1:35. In the middle of our Lord's ministry we see a similar occurrence: Matthew 14:22,23. At the end of Jesus' ministry we see our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane: Luke 22:39,40. While our Lord was dying, the beginning, the middle and final words of our Lord on the cross were prayers: Luke 23:34; Matthew 27:46; Luke 23:46. The Bible reminds us that at this very moment our Lord is praying and specifically for us: Hebrews 7:25. How can we be faithful stewards of our time without attending to Luke 18:1 and I Thessalonians 5:17?

I Timothy 4:13: "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." First of all, let us give time to the reading and heeding of God's Word. There is an old saying, "So many books; so little time." In our age of high tech, it is so easy to waste time in the screens of our phones, tablets and computers. Even as Paul was soon to die, he requested in II Timothy 4:13: "The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments." You are the same person one year from now except for two things, the people you meet and the books you read.

II. OUR FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

The husband's requirement: Ephesians 5:25: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." The wife's requirement: Ephesians 5:22: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." The parent's admonition: Ephesians 6:4: "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The child's responsibility: Colossians 3:20: "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord." The dedication of the single adult: I Corinthians 7:32: "But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord."

III. OUR FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The Bible says, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him..." (I Corinthians 16:2).

There is a promised blessing upon all who give ten percent of their income to God. Malachi 3:10, 11: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts." Proverbs 3:9, 10: "Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase. So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine. Leviticus 27:30: "And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD'S: it is holy unto the LORD." Exodus 23:19a: "The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the LORD thy God...."

In Hebrew, the word we translate "tithe" means a tenth part. Notice the requirement was to bring, not give. The tithe is not ours and it is never ours. It is the Lord's. When we bring the tithe, we are returning or giving back what belongs to God. Tithing was never limited to the Old Testament. Let's do a brief word study on the word "ought." Compare Matthew 23:23, Acts 5:29 and John 3:7. Tithing is not a matter of generosity. It is a matter of honesty.

"...Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35b). Luke 6:38: "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."

-Pastor Pope-