

Christian Stewardship

Part 2

How can we be faithful stewards of God?

1 Peter 4:10 [NIV] *“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.”*

We all have received gifts, and we need to be faithful stewards of those gifts.

What gifts?

Not just “*spiritual gifts*”, but in fact everything we have, for everything we have is a gift from God.

As we saw in the last article, right from the beginning of the history of human beings, God expected us to be stewards of His creation.

Adam and Eve were expected to look after the garden carefully, to use it wisely and productively.

The same is required of us today as human beings.

The first thing that will help us to be good stewards is to appreciate the gifts God has given us.

We need to count our blessings and daily show our gratitude for them, both physical and spiritual, by thanking God.

Colossians 2:6-7 [NIV] *“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, **and overflowing with thankfulness.**”*

We need to constantly be thanking God for all our gifts from Him both physical and spiritual.

Philippians 4:6-7 [NIV] *“Do not be anxious about anything, but **in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,** present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

Our prayers need to be filled with thanksgiving.

Thanking God for who He is and what He has done for us through Jesus Christ.

This will have a dramatic change of mind and direction in our lives.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 [NIV] *“**For Christ’s love compels us,** because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.”*

This expression of God’s love for us, through Jesus Christ will compel us to seek to use the gifts that God has given us to benefit other human beings.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7 [NIV] *“**There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit.** There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is **given for the common good.**”*

All our gifts are to be used to benefit everyone whom God brings into our lives, in what ever way.

Let us now get specific, what are we to be stewards over?

Our area of stewardship can be subdivided into four categories, each beginning with the letter 'T'.

Our Time

Ephesians 5:15-17 [NIV] *“Be very careful, then, how you live, not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.”*

God calls us to use the time He has given us wisely.

Always through prayer and meditation on God’s Word, the Christian Bible, seek what is His will for our lives.

There are so many things competing for our time these days.

Work, meals, shopping, T.V., driving, reading, helping our children with their homework, etc.

Luke 10:38-42 [NIV] *“As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!” “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”*

This example of Mary and Martha is a vivid illustration of how it is possible for the cares of this world to get in the way of eternal spiritual things.

Matthew 6:31-33 [NIV] *“So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”*

It is **not** wrong to look after all our physical commitments, but as Christians we need to put our minds on eternal things, then all our physical needs will fall into place.

Philippians 2:3-4 [NIV] *“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”*

This takes time.

Ephesians 2:10 [NIV] *“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”*

This also takes time, but it is within the will of God for all Christians.

When it comes to time do we give to God prime time or just the leftovers of each day?

Being good stewards of the time God has given us means thinking how we can best use our time each day, not only for ourselves, but to serve God and help other people.

Maybe it means decisions like turning off the T.V. to spend time with God in study of His Word and prayer each day.

Personally I find my day is more productive if I start and end it in a quiet place with my Creator, away from the sounds and pressures of each day.

Our Treasures

Most articles on stewardship focus on finance.

But stewardship involves far more than money, it involves our whole life.

However money is certainly a part of stewardship.

Luke 12:16-19 [NIV] *“And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’ “Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.””*

The world sees such a man as a successful person, able to retire from work young and enjoy the wealth he has created.

But is this really being successful?

Luke 12:20-21 [NIV] *“But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’ “This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich towards God.”*

This was **not** success in God’s eyes.

This rich man had missed the whole purpose for human existence.

This man was only thinking about himself, notice how many times he says “I.”

Luke 12:33-34 [NIV] *“Sell your possessions and give to the poor. **Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted**, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

This world’s riches are with us for but a short time.

Proverbs 3:9-10 [NIV] *“**Honour the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.**”*

Under the New Covenant, God doesn’t tell us the exact amount of our income we are to give to Him.

But He does expect us to use our money wisely, so that we can put a generous amount of it towards His work and our commission to spread the gospel message of reconciliation.

We need to use everything we have in the interests and the will of God, use it as God would.

For we are always answerable to God for everything we do.

1 Timothy 6:6-10 [NIV] *“**But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all***

kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”

It is often helpful to distinguish between needs and wants.

We may have all we need to live but let ourselves become anxious and discontented over what we merely want.

Philippians 4:11-13 [NIV] *“I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”*

Contentment is **not** focusing on our wants, and something we have to learn.

Paul tells us the key to such contentment is trust in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Our Talents

1 Peter 4:9-11 [NIV] *“Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.”*

We have all received gifts from God.

Hopefully most of us have been working on discovering our gifts or talents, and how we can best use them to serve God and other human beings.

After some sixteen years of serving God as a bi-vocational pastor [not directly employed by a church], some of the members in the congregation I was serving at that time questioned why I did not have a website.

They found my presentations [sermons and Bible studies] made the scriptures and Christian living “come alive” for them.

I had never considered such a project, but after prayer and meditation, I found that God had already provided all I needed to run a website.

One of my employees, although wheelchair bound, was extremely talented on the computer and eagerly took up the challenge.

I just converted the notes I had to give my presentations into articles and the Handbook For Life website was born.

Since that day hundreds of thousands of people have accessed the website and millions of megabytes of material have been downloaded.

All this with only a small amount of advertising.

God is now making available the finance for advertising in national newspapers, and I look forward to seeing just what will happen in the near future.

It is amazing what God can do if we offer our lives to Him, as stewards of what He has given us.

All stewards will be expected to give an account to their masters for what they have done with what has been entrusted to them.

2 Corinthians 5:10 [NIV] *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due to him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”*

The more we use our gifts and talents the more likely we are to hear those wonderful words from the lips of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 25:21 [NIV] *“His master replied, ‘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!’”*

No other words could ever sound as sweet to our ears.

The Truth

1 Corinthians 4:1 [NIV] *“So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and **as those entrusted with the secret things of God.**”*

We are stewards of the “*secret things*” or “*mysteries*” of God.

Ephesians 6:19 [NIV] *“Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known **the mystery of the gospel,**”*

This mystery is the gospel message of what God the Father has done for all humanity through His Son, Jesus Christ.

God has entrusted this gospel message to our care.

God doesn’t preach it to others all by Himself, He does it through us.

What an awesome responsibility to be given.

It is amazing how willing God is to step back and allow us to be responsible for taking the gospel message to the world and making disciples in all nations.

2 Corinthians 4:7 [NIV] *“But we **have this treasure in jars of clay** to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.”*

We are just weak physical pieces of dirt, but inside us we have the awesome knowledge of spiritual things, and the hope of eternity.

We must realise it is **not** just ministers who have this job to proclaim the gospel message.

All of us have been entrusted with this task, as stewards of God’s Word.

All of us have been entrusted with others and be involved in evangelism.

We need to ask ourselves the question.

“Am I a good steward of the gospel knowledge that has been given to me?”

Do we just keep this fantastic truth to ourselves or are we looking for ways to share it with others to whom it is still a hidden mystery.

So we see that stewardship is a very important subject, it encompasses the way we live our lives every day.

We need to know that God is the owner of everything, but He has shared it with us.

God has given us things to look after for Him and to use them wisely.

God is looking for faithful stewards who will use their time, talents, treasures and the truth entrusted to them in order to advance His Kingdom.

Luke 12:40, 42-46 [NIV] *“You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.” ... “The Lord answered, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But suppose the servant says to himself, ‘My master is taking a long time in coming,’ and he then begins to beat the menservants and maidservants and to eat and drink and get drunk. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers.”*

We have received a few things to be stewards over at this time, but if we are faithful there will be a far greater stewardship ahead for us in the future with all the joy and fulfilment it will bring to us.

Let us be wise and faithful stewards of all that God has given to us.