

Responsible Stewardship

Stewardship is a major theme in the Bible. I would estimate that 100% of Christ's teachings deals with stewardship of life, while just 20% focuses specifically on money and material possessions. Stewardship in the physical realm involves progressing in God's story toward the City of God – tending His creation so that it becomes increasingly fruitful.

Darrow Miller

When the Possessor of heaven and earth brought you into being and placed you in this world, He placed you here not as an owner but as a steward—as such He entrusted you for a season with goods of various kinds—but the sole property of these still rests in Him, nor can ever be alienated from Him. As you are not your own but His, such is likewise all you enjoy.

John Wesley

Matthew 25: 14 – 30

1) The meaning of stewardship

- What is the meaning of stewardship anyway? I looked up the word in the Webster's dictionary and the word is defined like this: "Stewardship is the responsibility of managing some assets or affairs or property of someone else's." Stewardship is managing something that isn't your own. The key word in that definition is the word "management". The word "steward" means "manager". It's the old English word for manager.

Rick Warren
- To care for and develop God's house for God's glory. Man is God's steward or vice – regent over creation and is responsible to Him.

Darrow Miller

2) Stewardship of our time

- Ephesians 5: 15 - 16 See, then, how exactly ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil
- Psalm 90: 12 (LB) Teach us to number our days and recognize how few they are; help us to spend them as we should.
- 2 Thess. 3:11 We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies.
 - Saying: "The devil finds work for idle hands"
- We can tell what we value in life by the way we spend our time.
 - How much time do you:
 - Spend praying and reading your bible
 - Watching TV
 - Working
 - Gardening
 - Spend with your spouse
 - Spend with your children
 - Etc.
- When man sinned his value system was turned around meaning that man does not value what God values
- Redemption restores God's values to our lives leading to responsible usage of our time.
- Responsible usage of our time takes effort to look at our priorities according to godly values and set them into our schedules.
 - Stephen Covey talks about "scheduling your priorities and not prioritizing your schedule".
 - High priorities are things that are high on your values list
 - God
 - Family
 - Church
 - Work
 - If we are supposed to work on a Sunday we need to decide what our priority is – to worship God in church or go to work!
 - If we have planned family time and we get a call from a friend asking if we can help them out at that time do we agree to help the friend or tell him/her that we're busy and can't help?

3) Stewardship of possessions

- We need to remind ourselves that all that we own belongs to God and that we are merely stewards of His possessions
- As with stewardship of our time the way we treat possessions and the way we spend our money reveals what we value.
- The Gnostics believed and taught that the spiritual world is real and important but the material world is only temporal and therefore not important.
 - According to the Bible God created the material world and made man stewards of it.
 - We, therefore, have a responsibility to treat everything that we have responsibly.
- The fact that so many people – Christians included – live in debt and are having houses, cars and other possession repossessed is a sign of irresponsible living. But not always as some have been retrenched or lost jobs for other unfortunate reasons out of their control.
 - If we had been irresponsible to get into debt then it would be the responsible thing to prioritize our finances to get out of debt as soon as possible.
- We need to be responsible in the way we budget and spend our money
 - Needs and obligations
 - Rent or bond
 - Tithes
 - School fees
 - Wants and pleasure
 - A new car
 - A better cell phone
 - Eating at a restaurant
- Good stewardship goes beyond just making ends meet. It seeks to take what God has given us and increase it for His kingdom and glory.
 - Zimbabwe is an example of bad stewardship.

4) The rewards of good stewardship

- Affirmation by the Lord – “Well done, good and faithful servant”
- Being entrusted with more responsibility
- Sharing in God’s happiness – joy – delight (Matthew 25: 21, 23)
- Prosperity – not necessarily having an over abundance but having more than your needs met.
 - God gives us more than we had before
- Eccles. 11:6 Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let not your hands be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well.

5) The consequences of bad stewardship

- A scolding rebuke by the Lord – “You wicked, lazy servant”
- Lose what you have
 - Can lead to poverty
- Judgement