

# STEWARDSHIP



## Bethel Discipleship Series

*Note: In order to save space, many Scriptures in this lesson are not printed in their entirety. It is strongly suggested that you take the time to read each Scripture reference to gain a deeper understanding of the scriptural principles involved.*

### I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The Scriptures teach us that as Christians, we are “stewards” or caretakers of all the resources that God places in our lives.
- B. As stewards, we are responsible to utilize and manage our time, our talents, our treasure, and our testimony to the glory of God.
- C. As we have seen in our Scripture texts, God promises blessings to the faithful steward and punishment to the unfaithful steward. Therefore it is important for us to know what stewardship is and how we can become faithful stewards.

### II. STEWARDSHIP – WHAT IS IT?

- A. In ancient times, it was common for wealthy families to assign the management of their household and finances to the care of trustworthy stewards.

*“The steward (Greek-oikonomos) was the master's deputy in regulating the concerns of the family, providing food for the household, seeing it served out at the proper times and seasons, and in proper quantities. He received all the cash, expended what was necessary for the support of the family, and kept exact accounts, which he was obliged at certain times to present for examination before the master.” (Adam Clarke Commentary)*

1. Good stewards, who managed their master’s affairs wisely, were rewarded for their faithful stewardship while inferior or dishonest stewards were severely punished for their mismanagement.
- B. Stewards were entrusted with managing and caring for things that were not their own.
  - *1 Corinthians 10:26* – “For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.”
  - *1 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.”
1. In the parable of the rich man who decided to build bigger barns (*Luke 12:16-21*), the first three verses record the word “I” six times and the word “my” five times. God is never mentioned once! Yet God called the rich man into account, saying, “This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” The treasures held by the rich man didn’t really belong to him –

#### SCRIPTURE TEXTS:

*1 Peter 4:10* – “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

*1 Corinthians 4:1* – “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.”

*Luke 12:42-46* – “And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.”

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they belonged to God!

2. We must understand this fundamental principle if we are going to fulfill our role as faithful stewards of God's heritage. God will someday ask to see our "books" and will require us to give account of how we have utilized those things that He has loaned to us and placed in our care.
3. God has placed many things under our care for the advancement of His kingdom. He allows us to enjoy these things, but we must not enjoy them selfishly – we must use them for His glory! Christian stewardship is using temporal goods to accomplish an eternal purpose.
  - **1 Timothy 6:17-19** – *“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded [arrogant], nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute [give], willing to communicate [be openhanded]; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”*

C. On several occasions Jesus used the subject of stewardship in His parables.

1. The Parable of the Talents (or pounds) teaches us several principles (*Luke 19:12-27; Matt. 25:14-30*).
  - Whatever God has given us, whether little or much, it should be put to use for His Kingdom. (*Luke 19:26; Matthew 25:27*)
  - We will be rewarded for correctly using the gifts with which God entrusts us. (*Matthew 25:23*)
  - We will be punished for not correctly using the gifts with which God entrusts us. (*Matthew 25:30*)
  - As we prove ourselves to be good stewards over little, we will be given more. (*Matthew 25:29*)
2. The Parable of the Wasteful Steward also teaches some important principles (*Luke 16:1-13*).
  - If we have been wasteful or “wicked” stewards, we should repent while we have the opportunity.
  - He that is faithful in little is faithful in much; he that is unfaithful in little is unfaithful in much. (*Luke 16:10*)
  - Before we can be counted worthy to be entrusted with spiritual riches (true riches) we must demonstrate that we are faithful in earthly riches (unrighteous mammon). (*Luke 16:11*)
  - No steward can serve God and wealth; he can be faithful to only one. (*Matt. 6:24; Luke 16:13*)

## III. FAITHFULNESS

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

- A. Faithfulness is the first requirement of stewards. The American Heritage Dictionary defines “faithful” as *“Adhering strictly to the person, cause, or idea to which one is bound; dutiful and loyal. Worthy of trust or credence; consistently reliable.”*
- B. The Scripture is filled with examples of men and women who earned the distinction of being called faithful.
  - Moses was faithful “in all his house.” (*Numbers 12:7; Hebrews 3:2*)
  - Abraham was faithful “before God.” (*Nehemiah 9:7-8*)
  - The ancient treasurers were appointed because they were faithful. (*Nehemiah 13:13*)
  - Daniel was faithful. (*Daniel 6:4*)
  - Timothy was “faithful in the Lord.” (*1 Corinthians 4:17*)
  - Tychicus was a “faithful minister in the Lord.” (*Colossians 4:7*)
  - Onesimus was a “faithful brother” in the Lord. (*Colossians 4:9*)
- C. Faithfulness in stewardship means being “true” to our duty, being loyal and adhering strictly to our purpose; being trustworthy in our responsibility to utilize the things that God has loaned to us for the

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benefit of His kingdom.

- **Proverbs 28:20** – “A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent [unpunished].”

## IV. STEWARDSHIP OF OUR TIME

- A. The Scriptures teach us that the span of our lifetime is short and will pass quickly. We are told to use wisely whatever time God has allotted to us.
- **Psalm 90:9-12** – “For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”
- B. Most of us lead busy lives, and unless we specifically *plan* to give a portion of our time to God, the demands and pressures of our hectic schedules will keep us from giving God the time He deserves.
- **Ephesians 5:16** – “Redeeming [making proper use of] the time, because the days are evil.”
1. Personal Devotion to God. Before attempting to be faithful in service, duty, and work unto the Lord, we must be faithful in our personal relationship with Him. Each day of our lives should include time set apart for prayer and personal devotion.
  2. Service to the Kingdom. Scripture teaches us that we should be faithful to the House of the Lord. This includes activities such as CARE fellowship meetings, revivals, special church services; fellowships for men, women, singles, or youth; fund raising events; evangelistic efforts; church work days; prayer and fasting efforts; discipleship classes; and teaching seminars.
    - **Hebrews 10:25** – “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”
  3. We must make sure that an acceptable portion of our time each week is used in personal devotion and in doing “our Father’s business.”

## V. STEWARDSHIP OF OUR TALENT

- A. Everyone has been given talents and abilities. We often think of talent in terms of artistic or musical ability, but talents can be expressed in many different areas of life. *Anything* you can do to help the kingdom of God is a talent that God has given you to bless and edify His kingdom.
- B. A church can only use a limited number of preachers, teachers, singers and musicians in public worship services – but there are many other ways to use the talents we have been given.
- Dorcas (Tabitha) used her talents to make coats and garments for the needy (*Acts 9:39*).
  - The household of Stephanas “addicted themselves” to serving the saints (*1 Corinthians 16:15*).
  - Anna exercised her talents in prayer and fasting unto the Lord (*Luke 2:36*).
  - The first deacons exercised their talents in ministering to widows and orphans (*Acts 6:2-3*).
- C. There is always something we can do to serve the kingdom. Using our talents is not about “ministering on the platform”; it is about “serving” and “working.” Everyone wants to volunteer to sing, teach, or play an instrument – but few people volunteer to serve God in other ways. God has placed many abilities in our hands and He expects us to utilize them as we have the opportunity to do so. Remember, when we have proven ourselves faithful in small things, the Lord will allow us to be entrusted with greater things.

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- *Ecclesiastes 9:10* – “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.”
- D. The opportunities to serve are endless: church cleaning and maintenance, (painting, carpentry, electrical work, plumbing), prayer ministries, children’s ministries, discipleship ministries, home bible study ministries, deaf ministry, senior citizens ministry, prison ministry, hospital visitation, tape ministry, bookstore ministry, tract ministry, CARE ministry, youth ministries, singles ministries, marrieds ministries, charity ministries, ushers and greeters ministry, fund raising ministry, office and clerical work, etc., etc.
- *Galatians 6:10* – “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”

## VI. STEWARDSHIP OF OUR TREASURE

- *Matthew 6:21* – “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

- A. According to Scripture, stewardship of our “treasure” involves three distinct areas: tithing, giving and alms.
- B. **TITHING**. This word literally means “*the tenth*.” It refers to the principle of returning to God a tenth, or ten percent, of all of our increase. It is also known as “the Lord’s portion.”
1. The principle of tithing, or “the Lord’s portion,” is first seen in the Garden of Eden. One tree in the garden was reserved for the exclusive use of the Lord; it was not to be used by man even though Adam was assigned by God to “dress” and “keep” the tree and help it bring forth fruit. (*Genesis 2:15-17*) It was mankind’s mistake of taking what belonged to God that brought death into the world.
  2. Tithing is first mentioned by name in Genesis 14 in Abram’s encounter with Melchizedek, King of Salem, the priest of the most high God. (Abram is the original name of Abraham)
    - *Genesis 14:20* – “And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he [Abram] gave him [Melchizedek] tithes of all.”
  3. Over a hundred years later, tithing was still the practice of God’s people. Genesis 28 records Jacob’s (Abraham’s grandson) encounter with the Lord at Bethel.
    - *Genesis 28:22* – “And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God’s house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.”
  4. Some people have mistakenly thought that the principle of tithing originated under the Law of Moses. This is not true. Tithing was a practice of God’s people nearly 500 years before the Law of Moses was given. Tithing did not begin with the Law and it was not eliminated with the Law.
    - a. Matthew 5:27-48 reveals that the grace of the new covenant does not demand less of the servants of God than did the legalism of the old covenant. On the contrary, love always requires more than law.
    - b. The Pulpit Commentary states, “The practice of paying tithes, primarily a tax for the servants of the sanctuary, appears to have obtained its origin from the remotest antiquity.”
    - c. However, when the Law was later given to Moses on Mt. Sinai, the principle of tithing was specifically incorporated into it.
      - *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.”
      - *Deuteronomy 14:22* – “Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year.”

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5. Jesus did not criticize the Pharisees for paying tithes; He actually commended them (*Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42*). He reprimanded them for ignoring law, judgment, mercy and faith; but He praised their tithing. He said tithing was something they “ought” to have done. The word “ought” expresses an obligation or duty, and Jesus said that the paying of tithes is something that “ought” to be done.
6. In Jesus Christ, the Mosaic (Aaronic) order of priesthood was fulfilled and made obsolete, but the priesthood of Melchizedek was reestablished. The New Testament teaches us that Jesus Christ is a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek (*Hebrews 7:15-17*) and that we are the children of Abraham through faith (*Galatians 3:7,29*). Therefore, just as our father, Abraham, paid tithes unto the High Priest, Melchizedek, we, the children of Abraham, pay tithes unto Jesus Christ, our High Priest after the order of Melchizedek.
  - **John 8:39** – “*They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.*”
7. The writer of Hebrews confirms that it is Jesus Christ, our High Priest, who receives and acknowledges our tithes in heaven.
  - **Hebrews 7:8** – “*And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.*”
    - a. It is important to remember that it is Jesus Christ who receives our tithes. He accepts them for the use of His ministers.
    - b. When we pay our tithes we are not giving to a pastor, a church or a ministry – we are paying our High Priest, Jesus Christ, what is already rightfully His.
      - **Colossians 3:23** – “*And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.*”
8. The prophet Malachi likened the withholding of tithes and offerings to grand larceny against God.
  - **Malachi 3:8, 10** – “*Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. 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.*”
    - a. In Scripture, the tithe was not considered as a gift to the Lord – it was considered His rightful due as Lord of all creation.
    - b. When we withhold our tithe, we actually rob God. You cannot rob someone of something that does not already belong to them! The tithe belongs to God whether we pay it or not.
9. Tithing is God’s plan for providing for the needs of those who serve in the house of God. Both in the Old and New Testament, the tithe was for the use of the ministry.
  - a. In the Old Testament the tithes supported the Levites whose fulltime service was that of ministry and service in the Tabernacle.
    - **Numbers 18:21** – “*And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.*”
  - b. Likewise, the apostle Paul teaches that under the New Covenant our tithes also support the ministers and ministries of the Church.

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- **1 Corinthians 9:7-14** – *“Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.”*
  - **Galatians 6:6** – *“Let him that is taught in the word communicate [share, distribute] unto him that teacheth in all good things.”*
10. Tithing is also God’s way of helping us order our priorities. It has been said that no man really trusts God until he trusts Him with money. When we tithe unto the Lord, it establishes God’s order in our financial lives and teaches us that the first and the best belongs to God.
- **Deuteronomy 14:22, 23, 29** - *“Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase ... that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always ... that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest.”*
  - a. The Living Bible paraphrases verse 23 as follows: *“The purpose of tithing is to teach you always to put God first in your lives.”*
  - b. Tithing is a matter of priorities, of putting first things first – paying our tithes first and then managing the rest of our income in a responsible manner so that we may also meet our other obligations.
11. Once we see God at the very center of our lives, nothing less than tithing is appropriate. In the highest sense, tithing is directly related to the depth of our consecration and obedience to God and His Word.
12. As a measure of our devotion, tithing is not the end of the stewardship of our “treasure” – it is only the beginning. We have not reached the high point of stewardship when we tithe; we have just taken the first step. Only after we have “paid” what we already owe, can we actually begin to “give.”
13. Some have asked, “Am I to tithe on my gross or my net earnings?” Scripture instructs us to pay our tithes on all our increase and to bring our firstfruits to the Lord. This means that we are to pay God what is His first –before taxes, before Social Security, before investment withholdings, or any other financial obligations to which we are indebted. These other withholdings are classified as bills – and we don’t pay our tithes based on what is left over after we have paid all our bills.
14. Tithing has very little to do with just a mathematical formula – it has everything to do with a right relationship with God.
- a. The amount of our income or the number of our financial obligations have relatively little to do with our ability to tithe. In reality, everyone can tithe in one way or another.
  - b. It is a mistake to wait until we have “enough” to tithe. The time for obedience is always *now*. As we obey God’s Word *now*, He blesses us and increases our ability to tithe more in the future.
  - c. We must trust God, enter into a covenant relationship with Him in regard to our finances, and believe that nine-tenths with God’s blessing will go further than the full ten without His sanction.

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When William Colgate was a young boy, he worked in a soap-making shop. When he became sixteen years old, he left home to find employment in New York City. While traveling on a canal boat, Colgate told the canal boat captain that he planned to establish a soap manufacturing company in New York. The captain gave Colgate this advice: “Someone will soon be the leading soap maker in New York. You can be that person. But you must never lose sight of the fact that the soap you make has been given to you by God. Honor Him by sharing what you earn. Begin by tithing on all that you receive.” William Colgate took the advice of the canal boat captain and became a tither. He not only paid tithes on his personal earnings, but he also paid tithes on the total earnings of his company. Soon he began to pay two-tenths, then three-tenths, and then four-tenths. By the time of his death, William Colgate was paying five-tenths of his personal earnings and five-tenths of the total profits of his business in tithes to the Lord.

Source: *Spiritual Life Through Tithing*, G. Ernest Thomas (1955)

- C. **GIVING**. This second area of the stewardship of our “treasure” involves giving freely and willingly to the Lord – voluntarily offering to God with an enthusiastic spirit. After we have “paid” to God what is rightfully His (tithes), then we have the opportunity to decide what we are going to freely and joyfully “give” to Him (offerings).
1. In the Bible there are 1539 passages that refer to *giving* while there are only 523 passages that refer to *praying*.
    - **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.*”
  2. As early in Scripture as the fourth chapter of Genesis, we see that Adam and Eve’s sons, Cain and Abel, prepared offerings to the Lord.
    - **Genesis 4:3-4** – “*And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering.*”
  3. The apostle Paul confirms that the giving of voluntary offerings is also a New Testament principle.
    - **2 Corinthians 9:6-7** – “*But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity [obligation]: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*”
  4. From the earliest times in Scripture, both tithes and offerings consisted of the fruits of harvest, livestock, or whatever rewards a particular individual would generate as part of his or her labor. Even today, individuals tithe and give offerings of their gardens, harvests, and livestock.
  5. However, in modern society, most of our “increase” comes in the form of money, and likewise our tithes and offerings are generally given in monetary means.
  6. We give freewill offerings for many worthwhile needs and ministries: Home and Foreign Missions, Youth Ministries, Children’s Ministries, Ladies Ministries, Building Fund Programs, etc., etc.
  7. Giving, like tithing, is a matter of the heart. God judges our giving based not upon a specific amount, but upon the motive of our hearts. Ananias and Sapphira gave an offering, but they gave with a deceitful heart and God rejected their offering and punished them. (*Acts 5:1-11*) Giving must not be an act of “duty” (grudgingly), but an act of “love” (willingly).
  8. How much should we voluntarily give to the Lord? We should give generously as though Jesus Christ Himself were the secretary-treasurer of the church. We must let the Lord be our bookkeeper.
    - **Proverbs 11:25** – “*The liberal [generous] soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be*

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*watered also himself.”*

9. How long should we voluntarily give? We should continue to give until Jesus stops giving to us.
  10. The New Testament gives us specific principles that instruct us as to how we should manage the stewardship of our “treasure” in the area of voluntary offerings:
    - We should give regularly – systematically, methodically. (*1 Corinthians 16:2*)
    - We should give bountifully – liberally, generously, and openhandedly. (*2 Corinthians 9:6*)
    - We should give cheerfully – willingly, happily, hilariously. (*2 Corinthians 9:7*)
    - We should give in simplicity – in selfless humility, not seeking acclaim. (*Romans 12:8*)
    - We should give according to our ability – based upon how we have been blessed. (*Acts 11:29; 1 Corinthians 16:2*)
  11. Our God is a giver; giving is His nature – and God is looking for generous givers. As we endeavor to develop His nature within us, we must make sure that we cultivate the nature of a giver.
    - **Deuteronomy 8:18** – “*But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth...*”
  12. John Oxenham, the 17<sup>th</sup> century English theologian, directly connects our *giving* to God to our *love* for God: “Love’s prerogative is not only to give, but to give again, and then to give still again.”
- D. **ALMSGIVING.** This third area of the stewardship of our “treasure” involves giving to the needs of others. Sometimes this area of stewardship is neglected or overlooked, but Scripture reveals that the giving of “alms” is an important part of true Christian stewardship.
- **Acts 20:35** – “*I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.”*
  - **Luke 14:13-14** – “[Jesus said] *But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.*”
  - **Romans 12:13** – “*Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.*”
  - **Ephesians 4:28** – “*Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.”*
  - **Galatians 2:10** – “*...we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward [diligent] to do.*”
  - **Galatians 6:10** – “*As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*”
  - **Luke 11:41** – (Jesus said) “*But rather give alms of such things as ye have...*”
1. In the Bible, the word “alms” is translated from the Greek word *eleemosune*, which means to show compassion, (as exercised towards the poor) beneficence, charity, to offer kindhearted support or assistance to the needy.
  2. Jesus placed extreme importance on giving alms and helping the hungry, thirsty, the homeless, the destitute, the sick, the imprisoned, etc. He said when we have helped and ministered unto “the least of these” needy individuals we have done it unto Him. (*Read Matthew 25:31-46*)
  3. This area of stewardship, the giving of alms, is the area in which the Lord instructs us to be discrete and private. Privacy is not demanded in tithes and offerings, but it is required in almsgiving.

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- **Matthew 6:1-4** – (Jesus said) “Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.”
4. Assisting the needy was the custom, practice and tradition of the early church.
    - **Romans 15:26** – “For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.”
      - a. Aristides, the famous Athenian philosopher, sent a letter to the Emperor Hadrian in Rome about the year AD 135. This letter is an enlightening commentary upon the generous and unselfish almsgiving and almsdeeds of the early Christians.

*“They (the Christians) walk in all humility and kindness, and falsehood is not among them. They love one another. They do not refuse to help widows. They rescue the orphan from violence. He who has gives ungrudgingly to him who lacks. If they see a stranger, they take him home and entertain him as a brother. When one of their poor passes from this world, any one of them who sees it provides for his burial according to his ability ... Truly this is a new people and there is something divine in them.”*
  5. The Bible teaches that when we give to others, we are actually *lending* unto the Lord – and we can be sure that God pays His debts!
    - **Proverbs 19:17** – “He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he [the Lord] pay him again.”
  6. The church today provides help and assistance to those who are destitute and in need. We can give “alms” through the church by designating them as such on our offering envelopes. As the Ministry deems appropriate, these gifts are distributed from the church treasury to those who have needs.
  7. We can also give “alms” individually. It is fitting for us to give personally to our brothers and sisters who are in need. However, great care should always be taken to perform these works of love in discretion and privacy so as not to embarrass others or lose our blessing from the Lord.

## VII. STEWARDSHIP OF OUR TESTIMONY

- A. The Apostle Paul stated that he was a “debtor” to the “Greeks and barbarians, to the wise and the unwise.” (*Romans 1:14*) Paul was referring to his responsibility as a steward to proclaim the gospel to other people.
  1. Each of us has been entrusted with a precious gift from God that we must share with others – our testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
    - **Matthew 10:8** – “Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.”
  2. We have been given the light of truth – we must not hide the light or refuse to let it shine in our lives.
    - **Mark 4:21-26** – And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick? ... And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear [take heed, obey] shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath. And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground.”
  3. Shine the light; sow the seed. Measure out your testimony liberally and God will reward you liberally.

# STEWARDSHIP

## VIII. THE ATTITUDE OF STEWARDSHIP

- A. Greed, selfishness, and the love of money are inherent in the nature of all human beings. For most people, *self* is the absolute center of every decision and every action of life.
- **1 Timothy 6:10** – “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”
1. Our human nature tempts us to use our time, our talent, our treasure, and even our testimony for our own advantage – to fulfill our own needs and desires – to be greedy instead of generous.
  2. The appetite for money and possessions can never be satisfied by getting more. Greed is never fulfilled, no matter how much it gains (*Ecclesiastes 5:10*). A selfish person has great difficulty truly worshipping God.
  3. Greed is never blessed. If you want to enjoy your financial blessings, never put them before God. Money is a wonderful servant, but a poor master.
    - **Matthew 6:24** – “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon (wealth, avarice).”
    - **Matthew 6:19-21** – “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”
- B. While the heart of the carnal man is greed, the heart of the spiritual man is sacrifice. Sacrifice means to give up something that is important to us; something that costs, that hurts, that touches us in a real and tangible way.
1. The Bible teaches that true prosperity is not how much we have, but how much we give – and not only how much we give, but how much we have left over after we have given.
    - a. In Luke 21:1-4 and Mark 12:41-44, the story is recorded of Jesus sitting by the treasury, observing people as they offered their gifts unto the Lord. Jesus said that a poor widow who offered two small copper coins (two mites) gave more than the wealthy who gave much larger offerings.
    - b. The widow’s gift was more valuable and worthy than the larger offerings because she gave out of her “poverty” or “need,” whereas the rich gave out of their “surplus.” Her gift was not valuable for how much she gave, but for how much she had left over after she gave.
  2. Jesus commends voluntary giving that affects our lifestyle, regardless of the amount. If we give only out of our surplus, we have missed the point of giving. It is the sacrifice of the voluntary offering that makes it worthy – not the amount. (*Read the account of the Alabaster Box – Matthew 26:7-13; Mark 14:3-9; Luke 7:37-50*)
  3. It has been said that until our giving “pinches us” and affects our lifestyle, we have not yet given as the widow did. C. S. Lewis stated it well when he wrote, “I’m afraid biblical charity (giving) is more than merely giving away that which we could afford to do without anyway.”
  4. The Apostle Paul praised the sacrificial giving of the Christians of Macedonia who were experiencing affliction and poverty and yet they gave liberally, voluntarily giving even beyond their means.
    - **2 Corinthians 8:2-3** – “How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves.”

# STEWARDSHIP

- C. The faithful steward also gives of his *firstfruits*. This means that the tithes and offerings that we present unto God should be the first portion we set aside, not what remains after we have satisfied other debts.
- **Proverbs 3:9** – “Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase.”
1. We must always put “first things first.”
    - Abel brought the *firstlings* of his flock (*Genesis 4:4*).
    - Israel was to bring the *firstlings* of the herds (*Nehemiah 10:36*).
    - Israel was to bring the *firstlings* of their fruits and juices (*Exodus 22:29*).
    - Israel was to bring the *firstlings* of the labor (*Exodus 23:16*).
    - Israel was to bring the *first* of their dough (*Numbers 15:21*).
    - Israel was to bring the *first* of their oil, wine and wheat (*Number 18:12*).
    - Israel was to bring the *first* of their corn and fleece (*Deuteronomy 18:4*).
    - The *firstborn* of any Jewish household was “holy” because it belonged to the Lord (*Exodus 13:2; Exodus 13:13-15; Numbers 8:16-17*).
    - The widow had to bake Elijah a cake *first* before she made one for herself and her son (*1 Kings 17:13*).
  2. We must never pay or give to God what is “leftover.” We must never pay or give to Him after we have satisfied our other needs. We must offer Him the *firstfruits* of our labor and increase. (*Nehemiah 10:35-39*)
    - **Matthew 6:33** – “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things [material needs] shall be added unto you.”
  3. We must put God first and take care of His things as well as we take care of our own. When we do this we release God to bless us abundantly, as His Word promises He will do.

## IX. CONCLUSION

- A. There are three distinct attitudes of stewardship portrayed in Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-37.
- The thieves had the attitude, “What’s yours is mine, and I’m going to get it!”
  - The priest and the Levite had the attitude, “What’s mine is mine and I’m going to keep it!”
  - The Good Samaritan had the attitude, “What’s mine is yours, and you can have it.”
- B. However, there is another attitude that is more excellent even than that of the Good Samaritan. That attitude is, “Everything I have belongs to God, and I must be a faithful steward of His goods.”
- **1 Timothy 6:7** – “For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.”
- C. As mature Christians, we eventually come to the realization that everything we have actually belongs to God. It is not how much we have that is important, but how we use what we have that makes the difference.
- **Romans 14:12** – “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.”
1. When we consider the vast blessings and opportunities that have been given to us, we might actually tremble when we consider what the Apostle Paul would have done with our personal resources.
    - **Luke 12:48** – “...For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required...”
- D. The Word promises rich rewards to the faithful steward. No matter the condition of the world economy, regardless of the state of our personal finances, if we give liberally and willingly to God, He will reward and bless us. That which we give to God will produce guaranteed interest.

# STEWARDSHIP

- “A faithful man shall abound with blessings.” (Proverbs 28:20)
- “The liberal [generous] soul shall be made fat.” (Proverbs 11:25)
- “He that lendeth unto the Lord; he (the Lord) will pay him again.” (Proverbs 19:17)
- “Bring the tithes into the storehouse ... I will pour you out a blessing.” (Malachi 3:10)
- “Give, and it shall be given unto you.” (Luke 6:38)
- “Give thine alms in secret: and thy Father shall reward thee openly.” (Matthew 6:4)
- “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matthew 6:33)
- “Thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make you ruler over many.” (Matthew 25:23)
- “He which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.” (2 Corinthians 9:6)

- E. When it comes to stewardship, we must remember that we can never “out-give” God. Calvary makes us eternal debtors.
- F. Satan’s strategy is to tempt us to fume, fuss, and stew over our responsibilities to God. But when Jesus is Lord of every area of our lives, He takes the ‘stew’ out of stewardship – and He transforms it into one of life’s greatest blessings!

*The more you give, the more you get; the more you laugh the less you fret.  
The more you give unselfishly, the more you live abundantly.  
The more of everything you share, the more you’ll always have to spare.  
For only what we give away enriches us from day to day.*

- G. The principles of this lesson affect many areas of our lives. It is advisable that you study this lesson more than once in order to gain the greatest benefit.

Additional reading material (available through the Pentecostal Publishing House):

*The Lord’s Portion*, Roy Moss  
*Christian Giving*, John Hopkins

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