

Week 24

Stewardship

Key Verses

2 Corinthians 9:6-11 “Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.⁷ Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; ⁹ as it is written,

“HE SCATTERED ABROAD, HE GAVE TO THE POOR, HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ENDURES FOREVER.”

¹⁰ Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; ¹¹ you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God.”

+ Introduction

We believe that God is the maker of all things, and He rightfully owns every tangible thing on the earth and in the heavens.

- Genesis 1:1 says, *“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”* (NASB)
- In Psalm 24:1, David writes, *“The earth is the Lord’s, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it.”* (NASB)
- In Psalms 50:10, God says, *“For every beast of the forest is Mine, the cattle on a thousand hills.”* (NASB)

As we accept these truths and recognize God’s ownership of everything, we accept our role as a steward, a manager of someone else’s property. As we mature in our relationship with God, stewardship should become a way of life.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus encouraged believers, then and now, to trust God for their day-to-day needs and to see Him as our Provider.

MATTHEW 6:25-34 *"For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?"* ²⁶ *Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?"* ²⁷ *And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?"* ²⁸ *And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, ²⁹ yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these.* ³⁰ *But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith!"* ³¹ *Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?'"* ³² *For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.* ³³ *But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.* ³⁴ *So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."* (NASB)

Paul tells us in Philippians 4:19 that *"And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."* (NASB)

Even in the days of Moses, God provided manna and quail for their physical sustenance. Even during the days of tribulation and exile, God provided for His people when they were in Babylon for 70 years. Throughout all of Scripture, God is a provisional God for His people.

If we truly believe that God is the Creator, that He owns everything, that He loves us, and always has our best interest in mind, then we should be willing to manage His resources in the way that He asks us to do so. It is an opportunity and privilege for us to become better stewards of what God has given us, our time, talents, and treasure.

+ Stewardship of Our Time

PSALM 90:12 *So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.*

There are 525,600 minutes in a year. Twelve months or 52 weeks make up a year. 365 days make up a year. 24 hours make up a day. 60 minutes make up an hour. 60 seconds make up a minute. No matter how you number your days, we are all on the same playing field. No person gets 53 weeks or 372 days, or 538,750 minutes in a year. God has made time equal for everyone.

The Psalmist realized that our days on this earth are limited. If we are not careful, we miss opportunities. There is an intentionality in this simple verse. There is teaching and learning taking place. He is asking God to teach, but there must be a willingness to learn and apply. Those willing to learn and apply will gain a heart of wisdom in this process.

God has given each of us 168 hours per week. We should look at our time as a gift that can be invested to further God's Kingdom. However, this can only be done with intentionality.

Out of our 168 hours, we sleep about one-third, we work about one-third, and in the remaining third, we must prepare meals, eat, do housekeeping, help the kids with homework, and have some physical and leisure activity. As a steward of the time that God has given us, we must also intentionally set aside time to further His Kingdom.

As a minimum, we should be willing to implement the "1+1+1" principle that our church encourages: one hour of worship, one hour of Bible Study, and one hour of volunteering in a church ministry. Three hours out of 168 is a very small percentage of our time! But in the economy of God, those three hours are multiplied many times over in a variety of ways.

The lessons you learn during that one hour of Bible Study will impact how you work as an employee or employer. That one hour of Bible Study will impact how you wake up and say, "Good morning, Lord" instead of saying, "Good Lord, it's morning." Bible Study will connect you with other like-minded believers to build community as individuals or family units.

The one hour of worship allows you to do exactly what believers have done for millenniums, pause from a daily routine, and focus exclusively on God, the Creator, the Provider, the One who loved us so much He gave His Son to this world. Attending worship allows you to corporately worship with others in music, prayer, hearing the expounding of the Word of God, and giving.

The one hour of service is a way to give back to God and give out to the church and community. There are numerous opportunities to serve in and through our church. Second Baptist helps support 78 local missions, many of which need volunteers to help them as a non-profit ministry. If you are not comfortable going to some of those locations outside the walls of our church, there are ways to serve in our church. Our children's ministry constantly needs willing, able, and quality volunteers to serve in all sorts of roles. This allows the Gospel to be taught to the next generation.

God has the ability to take 3 hours of your week and multiply it to impact His church, our city, and the Kingdom of God. There are other opportunities, such as "investing" in the lives of a Bible Study class community group, a group of students, your neighbors, your co-workers, a widow, or an orphan. You could volunteer to serve at Beach Retreat or at one of our summer camps. The possibilities are numerous and growing.

If you struggle with "carving out" a few hours for ministry, simply pray out loud Psalm 90:12:

So teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom.

Allow the Holy Spirit to help you evaluate your current use of time. This honestly does not have to be a pious and overly religious exercise. Some "time wasters" could include too much television, too much internet, and social media, too much video gaming, too much time invested in a hobby, or too much time "working out." Ask God to reveal to you some areas of your current schedule that He might want you to adjust. The days of our lives are numbered; make them count.

+ Stewardship of Our Talents

In Matthew 25:14-30, Jesus teaches the "Parable of Talents." Because of the terminology, many people immediately think of the talents we have, such as singing, playing the piano or a particular sport. In the days of Jesus, "talent" was a form of currency. However, the concept and principle can be used with what we know in our vernacular as "talent," not regarding money but rather ability. God has gifted us with our natural talents, abilities, intelligence, and our spiritual gifts. All of those were given to us with a purpose in mind.

Consider these passages.

1 PETER 4:10 *Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve others, as good stewards of the varied grace of God. (CSB)*

ECCLESIASTES 9:10 *Whatever your hands find to do, do with all your strength, because there is no work, planning, knowledge, or wisdom in Sheol where you are going. (CSB)*

It comes down to a choice. God has entrusted each of us with some sort of gift, talent, and ability. For some, it is much more obvious than others. It is difficult to ignore the musical gift and talents of those leading us in worship each week. It is difficult to ignore the athletic talent of those competing in the Olympics. Most of us are not going to be on the platform leading music or on the Olympic platform. However, all of us have gifts, talents, and abilities that are to be used and not squandered, as in the Parable of the Talents told by Jesus.

If we choose to utilize that which God has entrusted, He will not only be honored, but He will magnify it to others. As a teenager, David was willing to use his giftedness as a slingshot thrower for the glory of God. As a young man literally discarded by his brothers, put in slavery, and even in prison, Joseph was willing to use his intellectual and management gifts for the glory of God during the direst of circumstances. Joseph eventually became second in command over all of Egypt (Genesis 39:1-41:49).

God wants each of us to be involved in furthering His Kingdom with our giftedness. As we do so, we will be strengthened and blessed here on earth, we will be a blessing to others, and our reward in heaven will be great. Take an inventory of your giftedness, thank God for each element, and then ask Him how you can use your giftedness for His glory.

+ Stewardship of Our Treasure

JAMES 1:17 *Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. (NASB)*

Everything we have is from God. Our houses, our vehicles, our clothing, our bank accounts, our retirement accounts, our family, our church. It has all been given to us by our loving Heavenly Father. Too often, we forget that biblical truth. We tend to get into the routine of buying various things,

celebrating when there is a bonus or raise in our jobs, and rationing when there is a setback or layoff. We typically do not intentionally ignore that God has provided all things big and small; we simply get caught up in the tangible and forget about the power and provision of God.

Everything we enjoy here on earth will be left here when we transition to our life in eternity. Jesus tells us not to store up treasures here on earth, but to store up treasures in heaven: Matthew 6:19-21 says, *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”* (NASB)

Question: Where are you storing up treasures?

Since God is the Owner, and we are mere managers, we need to get input from Him as we manage His resources. The primary ways that we hear from Him are through prayer, through His Word, and through the promptings of His Holy Spirit.

The principle of “tithing” back to God started before the Law was given to Moses and continued into New Testament teaching. The first instance is seen when Abraham tithed (gave a 10th) to Melchizedek, King of Salem, after his God-given victory over the kings that had taken his nephew Lot captive. Genesis 14:19-20 says: *“And he blessed him and said, ‘And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.’ He gave him a tenth of all.”* (NASB)

The practice of “tithing” our income does not make sense to our human minds. How can we live on only 90% of our income? The bottom line: God wants us to obey Him and trust Him. When we tithe, we tell him that His ways are best, and we will honor Him by obeying Him. It may help not to think of it as about the money as it is about the behavior. It is an act of obedience. The question then becomes not “how can we live on only 90% of our income?” to “how can I only give God 10%?” This behavior and obedience also allow Him to *“open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing until it overflows.”* (Malachi 3:10)

Here are some key Scriptures that will help us better understand:

PROVERBS 3:5-10 *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. ⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and turn away from evil. ⁸ It will be healing to your body and refreshment to your bones. ⁹ Honor the Lord from your wealth and from the first of all your produce; ¹⁰ So your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine.”* (NASB)

MALACHI 3:10 *Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,” says the Lord of hosts, “if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.”* (NASB)

The principle of tithing is so important to God that He said the people of Israel were “robbing” Him when they did not do so. It was an act of disobedience.

MALACHI 3:8-9 *"Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. ⁹ You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you!"*

We also see an incident recorded by Mark where we see that Jesus observes what is given back to Him.

MARK 12:41-44 *And Jesus sat down opposite the treasury, and began watching how the people were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large amounts. ⁴² And a poor widow came and put in two lepta coins, which amount to a quadrans (about one cent). ⁴³ Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; ⁴⁴ for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on."*

Tithing is a principle that God still expects us to obey. When we do, He blesses us and allows us to live better on 90% of our income than we ever could on 100%. Why? Because God rebukes the "devourer" and opens up the windows of heaven. That sounds like a great deal for all of us "stewards" that are simply managing the Master's resources!

+ Conclusion

Here are some practical ways we can apply these principles to our lives:

- **Evaluate How You Spend Your Time** – Is there something God wants you to change in order to invest more of your time in developing His Kingdom?
- **Take an Inventory of Your Talents, Abilities, and Spiritual Gifts** – Are you using these to further God's Kingdom and be a blessing to those around you?
- **Commit to Tithing** – Study God's Word for yourself and confirm that this is a principle found in it; then, make a commitment to be a steward of God's resources by tithing. This will require faith and trust on your part.

HEBREWS 11:6 *"And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for the one who comes to God must believe that He exists, and that He proves to be One who rewards those who seek Him." (NASB)*

- **Manage well the Remaining 90%** - The best way to be a good manager of the other 90% is to develop a household budget and stick with it. There are many great resources available to us today. One of the best is Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University. Periodically, this is offered on our Second Baptist Church campuses.
- **Learn to Live on Less Than You Make** – This one principle will help you achieve many goals in your life, like getting out of debt, saving for the kid's college expenses, paying off your house, saving for retirement, etc.

- **Learn to Live a Life of Contentment** – Since God loves us, knows everything about us, has provided salvation and eternal life, has said He wants us to have an abundant life here on earth and has promised to meet all of our needs, we need to live a life of contentment. As Paul encourages us,

I TIMOTHY 6:6-10 *“But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. ⁷ For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it, either. ⁸ If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. ⁹ But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”*

Sources

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