

## We Are God's Stewards By Rick Benjamin

### Classic Christian Writings:

Two members of the households of Jesus' time who are not common today are servants and stewards. Servants were vital members of the household who took care of the natural needs of all the others. Stewards in the household were those who, in many respects, held everything together. A steward had great responsibility and authority. And the Bible also compares us as Christians to this person – the steward.

The word “steward” literally means “house manager,” coming from two words meaning “house” and “law.” The steward was in charge of the master's house, his housekeeping, his finances, his servants and often his children.

A steward wasn't just one of the slaves – although he could have been a slave. Instead, a steward's was a position of honor, one earned after many years of proving faithfulness, reliability and honesty. Such character traits were absolutely required. The slightest flaw could topple one from his position.

A steward first had to understand that nothing he managed belonged to him. Stewards did not even own themselves in many cases.

Here's an example of what it means to care for something that is not your own. Before Solomon's temple was built, the people willingly gave millions of dollars' worth of gold, silver, cedar and all manner of valuables. David looked upon their gifts and said to God,

“Of Thine own have we given Thee. For we are strangers before Thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding. O Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared to build Thee an house for Thine holy name cometh of Thine hand, and is all Thine own” (1 Chron. 29:14-16).

Because we are God's stewards, we, too, must realize that everything we ever give belongs to God already. Everything that we have – everything that we are – is really God's.

“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 Cor. 6:19-20).

“Though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel. For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me!” (1 Cor. 9:16-17).

### Each Of Us Has A Specific Job

“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 Pet. 4:10).

Hospitality, showing love, speaking, serving, these are all things we are to do faithfully as stewards every day. Each of us has been given a special grace – not just to be saved, but to enable us to perform specific jobs for God. One translation of the Bible calls it “the many-faceted grace of God.”

Not only has God entrusted each of us with a job to do, but also He has provided us with the necessary abilities and talents. So in order to do the job, each must be a good steward of the abilities God has given.

Overseers in the church are given a special grace, for example. They are entrusted with the care of the people of God. They are responsible to watch for the souls of the people. No overseer owns the flock that he has been entrusted with, but he is responsible for it. That is why “a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God” (Titus 1:7).

### There Is No Self-made Man

Think for a minute of everything you own. “For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what has thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” (1 Cor. 4:7).

What do you have that you've really created for yourself or provided for yourself? Everything you have has been given – or entrusted – to you by the master.

That includes your very life. It is not your own to do with whatever you will. Your future, your goals, your plans, your visions for yourself are not yours to choose. You belong to the Lord.

Jesus said that if you try to save your life you will lose it, but, if you let go of it and acknowledge that your life is not your own, then you will really find your life.

Sometimes people make comments like, "How are you going to spend your time this weekend?" As God's stewards we know that the time is not ours at all. Let us not entertain thoughts of ways to "pass some time," or worse yet "kill some time." This is a terrible attitude to have toward the precious commodity entrusted to us by God.

### Stewards Of The Gospel

The Gospel is a priceless thing committed to each of us to care for. This is the good news about Jesus. The Bible says that Jesus reconciled us to Himself, but He committed to each of us the word of reconciliation. If the world doesn't hear about it from Christians, they won't hear it at all. God is trusting us to spread the Gospel through the world. It's not a task that we are to do if we feel like it; it is our responsibility.

God gave us the gift of salvation by His grace, not because we earned it. But along with that great salvation came the responsibility to share it with others.

What we do as stewards is of great consequence to God. He watches whether we tithe and if we give offerings. He knows what we are saving His money for – remember that our money is His! – and how we use His time. God wants us to use those things wisely.

God has given the gift of children to many in the church. They are called the heritage of the Lord. It is a sacred trust to raise up other human beings.

Men are given the responsibility to care for their wives. The Bible says each husband is to follow Jesus' example, laying down his life for his wife.

Your job is not really yours, either. When you work for someone else, you are responsible to do the job you were hired to do. As a dedicated Christian, you are to be a good steward of your employer's time, money and materials. You can't be a good steward if you come late and leave early or if you waste time when you should be working productively.

There are countless areas in which God is asking you to be a good steward of something He has deposited. Perhaps it is a gift of the Holy Spirit that has been given to you for the good of the body. If you don't use it for its intended purpose, you are not being a good steward.

### Be Faithful

"Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord" (1 Cor. 4:1-4).

No one wants to trust a steward who squanders or hoards the valuables placed in his care. God would rather entrust His riches to a remarkably faithful person than to a remarkably talented person.

If a steward of God finds himself falling short in faithfulness to his ministry, family, job or money, he must repent. He must begin to be dependable, consistent and faithful in every area of his life.

Of course, that means being in church – and on time for every service! It means doing all that is required of him in his ministry, whatever that may be. It means praying and reading the word of God regularly. It means being honest, dependable, punctual and careful in the way he handles possessions and even in the way he handles relationships.

## Day Of Reckoning

As Christians we have been given great liberty. We enjoy God's mercy and grace, but there is a day of reckoning coming when God will ask us what we've done with those things He's given us. It's called accountability.

Jesus said, "Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not" (Lk. 12:40).

This servant – like every servant – had two options: to be a good steward or not. We have the same choices. The person who doesn't know what he's been given isn't a steward; he is ignorant, deserving of a few stripes. But the one who knows what he should do but doesn't will be held accountable.

Accountability puts backbone into people who might otherwise let their responsibilities slip.

"As we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts" (1 Thess. 2:4).

We are accountable to God and therefore to men who have been placed in authority by God. They watch for our faithfulness in our ministries, our families, our jobs. If one does well, then when it is time for an accounting – in this life and in the final judgment – he will be entrusted with more, and he will be used to do greater and more important things for God. On the other hand, if he is found wanting, what responsibility he has will be taken away...

God doesn't base His reward on how much one has, but on what he does with it. Those who do well will be privileged to hear Him say, "Well, done, thou good and faithful servant," instead of being called a "wicked and shameful" one.

The best way for a person to start preparing for that accounting is to find a small thing in which to be faithful. Whether it is working in the church parking lot or some other seemingly insignificant ministry, he should do it consistently and faithfully. Others may seem to not notice, but God does and He'll make sure others do in time...

Whatever God has entrusted to us to do, we should view as great opportunities to show our stewardship. We should be faithful in the way we administer them. We will be held accountable for our actions!