Give Of Your Best
A Stewardship Message

We have chosen this Sunday as Stewardship Sunday. Although the word “stewardship” itself is not a biblical term, the notion of being good stewards is clearly presented throughout the Bible. The biblical term “steward” denotes “the manager of a household or estate.”

Stewardship can be defined as – Carefully and responsibly managing something entrusted to one’s care. Isn’t that what God did with Adam when He placed him in the Garden of Eden to tend it and care for it? Adam became a steward of what God had given to him. In the same way, I think we would all agree that we are to be good stewards, in the sense of managers, of what God has given us.

So What Is Biblical Stewardship?

To discover what the Bible says about stewardship, we start with the very first verse: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” [Genesis 1:1]. The world and all that is in it belongs to God. As the Creator, God has absolute rights of ownership over all things, and to miss starting here is like misaligning the top button on our shirt or blouse. Nothing else will ever line up. Nothing else in the Bible, including our understanding of stewardship, will make any sense or have any true relevance if we miss the fact that God is the Creator and has full rights of ownership.

The Apostle Paul explains it best by saying, “For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building” [1 Corinthians 3:9]. In effect, stewardship defines our purpose in this world as assigned to us by God Himself. Stewardship is not God taking something from us; it is His method of bestowing His richest gifts upon His people.

Stewardship impacts every aspect of our lives whether in our finances or in the management, of our home, family, or our environment. Stewardship acknowledges in practice that we do not have the right of control over ourselves or our property. God has that control and God is in control.

What I want to talk to you about this morning is our stewardship as it relates to the Family of God here in Sun Village.

Our Stewardship In The Body Of Christ

We read in the proverbs the words of Solomon, “Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase; So your barns will be filled with plenty, and

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1 Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words.
your vats will overflow with new wine” [Proverbs 3:9-10 NKJV]. Since all of what we have is given to us by God to manage, we honor Him as we manage all things well. Good stewardship has its reward.

Such has been the case from the very beginning of the church here in Sun Village. We have committed ourselves to following God’s direction as we plan our worship, our activities and events, and doing our part in the fulfillment of the Great commission through the support of missions. Our ability to provide a well balanced ministry to our immediate community and to the surrounding communities comes as a result of our stewardship including financial stewardship. God has given us a work to do not just in Sun Village, but around the world as we support His servants through our support of missions.

When Moses was preparing the people for the building of the Tabernacle he instructed them to take up an offering and dedicate it to the Lord.

5Take from among you an offering to the Lord. Whoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it as an offering to the Lord: gold, silver, and bronze; 6blue, purple, and scarlet thread, fine linen, and goats' hair; 7ram skins dyed red, badger skins, and acacia wood; 8oil for the light, and spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense; 9onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate [Exodus 35:5-9 NKJV].

The whole purpose of the offering was so that a place could be built where God could dwell among the people. The only way for the Tabernacle to be built and the necessary materials to be provided as God required was for God’s people to give generously out of what they had received. Notice that the offerings were to be given by those who were willing to give, even to the point of sacrifice.

Their willing and generous offerings made it possible for a dwelling for God to be built, and a place where the people could know that God was there in their midst. God blessed them for their sacrificial giving. That is how the work of God gets done in our day as well.

The Apostle Paul instructed the Christians in Corinth with an instruction that has become important to the work of the church – the body of Christ – worldwide today.

7So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. 8And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work [2 Corinthians 9:7-8 NKJV].

Four Aspects Of Giving [2 Corinthians 9:7-8].

There are four aspects to our giving that Paul makes clear:
1. Purpose - Our giving in whatever amount arises from what we purpose before God to give. Our giving can be done as both tithes and offerings. Tithes are what God required of His people, a fixed percentage of what God had blessed them with – one tenth – 10%. Its purpose was the same as it is today, to provide for the ministry and the furtherance of the kingdom of God. Tithing is a common theme throughout the Old Testament. For us here in Sun Village our tithe goes to cover the cost of the work and ministry of this church.

Offerings are over and above the tithe. King David set the example for the people to follow by giving generous gifts for the Temple. The people followed his example. When the offerings were gathered David offered this prayer: ¹⁶“O Lord our God, all this abundance that we have prepared to build You a house for Your holy name is from Your hand, and is all Your own. ¹⁷I know also, my God, that You test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness” [1 Chronicles 29:16-17 NKJV]. Our offerings go to provide assistance to the food bank, and other such special projects to which we contribute.

2. Pleasure – When, having previously determined how much we will give there is no reluctance in doing so – not grudgingly or out of a sense of duty, but joyfully, knowing the reason for it.

3. Provision – As we are faithful in our giving God is faithful in His blessing, returning to us sufficiently according to our needs.

4. Practice – Our giving enables us, individually and corporately, to fulfill the purpose for which we have been saved to do – the work of God both at home and abroad.

⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹not of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them [Ephesians 2:8-10 NKJV].

The very fact that we have something to give should be a point of thanksgiving to God for His blessing. In 1924 Kittie Louise Suffield, wife of evangelist Fred Suffield, penned the words to a song entitled “Little Is Much When God Is In It.” It spoke of their dedication as a couple to fulfilling the Great Commotion through evangelism. They never made a big name for themselves as evangelists but they remained faithful as they led small meetings in tiny Canadian towns. That song was the theme of her life – “Little is much when God is in it.”

What a fine example of biblical stewardship. Such was the case of the widow that Jesus observed who gave not out of her abundance as the rich did but out of the willingness of her heart and her love for God [Luke 21:1-4].
Principles Of Biblical Stewardship.

The Principle Of Ownership.

In the beginning of Genesis, we have recorded how God created everything and how He put Adam in the Garden to work it and to take care of it. The fundamental principle of biblical stewardship is that God owns everything, we are simply managers or administrators acting on His behalf. Deuteronomy 8:18 counsels us to, Remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth.

The Principle Of Responsibility.

The Apostle Paul reminds us that God gives us ‘all things richly to enjoy’ [1 Timothy 6:17]. With the enjoyment comes responsibility to be good stewards of what we have been given. Nothing really belongs to us. God owns everything; we’re responsible for how we treat it and what we do with it. Owners have rights; stewards have responsibilities.\(^2\)

The Principle Of Accountability.

Jesus told a parable of a steward who had been accused of wasting his master’s possessions [Luke 16:1-13]. He was called to give an account of his stewardship and was on the verge of losing his position as a steward. As the story goes, we find him going about diligently to correct the situation, so he could maintain his position, shrewdly obtaining from all who were indebted to his master at least a portion of what they owed. He then returned to his master what he had collected. Jesus concludes his parable with these words: “He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much” [vs. 10].

We said, a steward is one who manages the possessions of another. We are all stewards of the resources, abilities and opportunities that God has entrusted to our care, and one day each one of us will be called to give an account for how we have managed what the Master has given us. Like the steward in Jesus’ story, it would be a sin for us to waste the resources that God gives us. What God requires is faithfulness as stewards of what He has given us.

We are blessed here at Sun Village in one way in that we do not have a large operational overhead. That makes it possible for us to concentrate on ministry.

\(^2\) Bill Peel, *Leadership Is Stewardship.*
The Principle Of Reward.

In Colossians 3:23-24 Paul writes: “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”

The Apostle Paul reminds us that faithfulness is the hallmark of a good steward – “It is required in stewards that one be found faithful” [1 Corinthians 4:2-3 NKJV].

We all should long to hear the master say, “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!” [Matthew 25:21.]

Conclusion

As Christians in the 21st century, we need to embrace this larger biblical view of stewardship, which goes beyond church budgets or projects, even as important as all that is. Good stewardship connects everything we do with what God is doing in the world. We need to be faithful stewards of all God has given us and be diligent to use what He provides to accomplish His purposes on earth for His glory.

It has been said that stewardship is where the concept of faith and works intersect.

“Every faculty you have, your power of thinking or of moving your limbs from moment to moment, is given you by God. If you devoted every moment of your whole life exclusively to His service, you could not give Him anything that was not in a sense His own already.” ~C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity~