

BIBLE STUDIES – WHO ARE YOU?

SERIES: **NAMES GOD USES FOR CHRISTIANS**
“A good name is to be more desired than great wealth.” (Prov. 22:1)

Lesson #10 **“STEWARD”**

1 Peter 4:10

“As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

The early Methodist leader, John Wesley, said, “When the Possessor of Heaven and earth brought you into being and placed you in this world, He placed you here not as owner but as a steward.”

He articulated two inescapable principles: God’s ownership and our stewardship. If we get those two truths settled in our minds once and for all, we will have a fruitful and enjoyable life. So, let us answer the question, what and who is a “steward”?

I. **THE EXPLANATION OF STEWARDSHIP**

We begin with a brief introduction to the subject of stewardship by asking two questions:

A. **What Is A Steward According To The Bible?**

1. The Biblical And Greek Meaning.

The Greek word translated “steward” in the N.T. is “*oikonomos*” and comes from two Greek words “*oikos*” which means “house” and “*nemo*” which means “to rule” or “to Manage.”

The two words combined mean that a steward is a ruler or manager of another’s house or property. In Luke 12:42 Jesus asks, ***“Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household?”***

The steward or manager, then, was responsible to his master and also for his master’s business, household or property.

2. The Modern-Day English Meaning.

Etymology: The word “steward” comes from the old English word “*styward*” - the one who kept the pig-sty was called the sty-ward! It evolved to “*steward*.” Webster’s Dictionary says a steward is “one who is a manager, supervisor, administrator or keeper of a trust; one to whom a trust has been given for the purpose of managing that trust responsibly for the owner and for which an account must be given.”

3. A Biblical Example Of A Steward.

In Genesis 39 Joseph becomes Potiphar’s steward and this is the account:
“So Joseph found favor in his sight and became his personal servant; and he made

him overseer over his house, and all that he owned he put in his charge. It came about that from the time he made him overseer in his house and over all that he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph; thus the LORD'S blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field. So he left everything he owned in Joseph's charge; and with him there he did not concern himself with anything except the food which he ate." (Gen.39:4-6)

B. Who Is A Steward According To The Bible?

Every Christian is a steward. I Peter 4:10 makes that very plain: "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

I have heard it said by many Christians, "I can't serve in any capacity. God hasn't called me to any specific ministry", etc. I believe that is the way many feel and there are at least two reasons for that kind of response. First, there is a misunderstanding about what constitutes Christian ministry, and, second, there is missing a recognition of ones giftedness. And we will touch upon those two areas as we continue with this study.

II. THE EXECUTION OF STEWARDSHIP.

"As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God". (I Peter 4:10)

The carrying out, the performing or executing of stewardship, is the theme of I Peter 4:10. This verse has many facets to it. It should put to silence any and all Christians who use any excuse not to serve the Lord in some capacity. Let us examine the various parts of this verse as follows:

Here are five different translations of I Peter 4:10 -

NKJV - "As **each** one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

NASU - "As **each** one has received a **special gift**, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God".

KJV - "As **every man** hath received **the gift**, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

ASV - "According as **each** hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

NIV - "**Each** one should use **whatever gift** he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms."

This verse tells us at least 6 things about stewardship:

- (1) **It is personal** - "as **each** one"
- (2) **It is special** – "has received a **special gift**"
- (3) **It is practical** - "employ it"
- (4) **It is beneficial**- "in serving one another"
- (5) **It is essential** - "as good stewards"
- (6) **It is monumental** – "of the manifold grace of God."

Each Christian has at least one spiritual gift that must be used for the glory of God and the building up of Christ's Church. It is now up to us to discover what our giftedness is and to utilize it for the glory of God and the good of others.

Notice what follows verse 11 of I Peter 4 – “*Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*”

It is not the purpose of this study to detail all the gifts God gives to us. However, I would encourage you to make it a priority in your life to discover what your gift or gifts are and use them. There are speaking gifts and there are serving gifts. Paul speaks about them in several passages such as Rom. 12:1-13; I Cor. 12 and Eph. 4:7-16. Both speaking and serving gifts are needed in the church.

Not everyone is a public speaker. There are the many who are unseen behind the ministries of any church. All are important , no one is more important to God than another. God gives us the gifts and we are to use them when we have the opportunity and give God the glory.

This leads us next to the.....

III. THE EXHIBITION OF STEWARDSHIP

Stewardship is the use of God-given gifts, talents,abilities and resources for the accomplishment of God established goals.

The conscientious Christian, desirous to be a good steward, will ask, “what do I have entrusted to me to use for God’s glory and the advancement of His church?” The Bible answers with a number of instructions:

A. First Of All, We Have Bodies.

What a tremendous gift this is that God has entrusted us with! Emotions with which to love; wills with which to choose to do God’s will; hands with which to serve; voices with which to witness, praise and encourage. Therefore, “*present your bodies a living sacrifice*” (Rom. 12:1)

B. We Have Influence.

“*none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself.*” (Rom.14:7)

Everyone has influence, either bad or good. Christians should have a good influence. We are to be salt and light. Salt is influence, light is radiance. We influence others by the way we live, the way we talk, the way we react to various circumstances, etc. The question is “how are we influencing others?” Do we recognize that we are stewards of our influence?

C. We Have Time.

How are we using it? **Eph. 5:16** says, “redeem the time because the days are evil.” “Redeem” means “to buy back or buy up”. Time is a precious commodity which should not be wasted. While the world speaks about spending time, the Bible speaks about buying up time by the proper use of it. Are you spending time or buying up time – buying up opportunities?

D. We Have Possessions.

Luke 6:38 “Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure--pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.”

Of course, we should not say “our possessions” at all, for all that we have is God’s, we are only stewards. Do we have a bank balance, some investments? We are only stewards of these things. Do you own a house? You are only a steward of it. Have a car? It is not yours really, it is God’s. All these things we are to manage for Him.

E. We Have Our Individual Abilities, Talents And Giftedness.

Rom 12:5-8 “We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.”

1 Cor 12:1 “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.”
v.4-7 “Now God gives us many kinds of special abilities, but it is the same Holy Spirit who is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service to God, but it is the same Lord we are serving. There are many ways in which God works in our lives, but it is the same God who does the work in and through all of us who are his. The Holy Spirit displays God’s power through each of us as a means of helping the entire church.” (TLB)

F. We have The Gospel.

Acts 1:8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Witnesses to what? The Good News as it is in Jesus Christ – the Gospel!

I Cor. 4:1 tells us that we are “stewards of the mysteries of God.” **AND in Eph.6:19** Paul speaks of “the mystery of the gospel.” It is a mystery to those who do not know it.

Phil 1:27-28 “.....let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”

I Thess. 2:4 Paul writes, “we have been approved by God to be entrusted with with the gospel.”

What if the Lord asks us at the judgment, “what did you do with my Gospel?” Some would have to answer, “I believed it and then buried it.” Others would be able to say, “I both believed it and broadcast it.”

G. We have God’s Grace.

Concerning “grace”, **I Cor. 15:10** in **The Message**: “*Because God was so gracious, so very gracious, here I am. And I am not about to let His grace go to waste.*”

Stewardship covers all of life: our bodies, abilities, talents, testimony, children, possessions, time, the Gospel, God’s grace All have been entrusted with us to use for God’s glory and the advancement of His church. Are we being good stewards in all these areas?

Then there is another matter related to stewards:

IV. THE EXPECTATION OF STEWARDSHIP -1 Cor 4:2

“*Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.*” Or, as in the **NIV**: “*Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.*”

God is not going to reward us on the grounds of our success. Faithfulness is the measuring stick that God uses when evaluating our stewardship. Many Christian stewards are considered failures by the world’s standards. A good illustration of this principle is seen in the person Saul. God said to Samuel, “*Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.*” (I Samuel 16:7)

Luke 12:42-44 “*And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions."*”

ILLUST. When I got out of the Naval Aviation branch of the military and before I returned to finish college, I took a summer job as night watchman at a food warehouse. It was a huge three-story building covering an entire city block.

When I interviewed for the job, the owner asked me many probing questions. Questions like, “Can I depend upon you to guard my company?”; “Are you trustworthy?”; “Can I count on you to faithfully show up for work?”; “Have you ever been arrested for thievery?”, etc.

Then he gave me this bit of news: “The previous watchman has been arrested for stealing from me.” I assured him I would be a good employee and I got the job. The man who preceded me was later convicted and sent to the State Penitentiary. The owner was trusting his property to me. His requirement was that I be faithful. God expects no less in His stewards. We must not forget that there is coming a day when we must give an account of our stewardship.

V. THE EXAMINATION OF STEWARDSHIP

Romans 14:12 - "Everyone of us shall give account of himself unto God."

II Cor. 5:10 "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

What God expects, He inspects! The very concept of stewardship implies responsibility and with responsibility comes accountability. Jesus underscored this truth in the parable that He gave in **Luke 16:**

"He (Jesus) also said to His disciples: "There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. So he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.'" (Luke 16:1-2)

At the Judgment Seat of Christ, every believer must give account of how we conducted business as the Lord's stewards.

VI. THE EXALTATION OF THE STEWARD.

God is a good Employer – He rewards His servants generously. The principle of rewards for faithful stewardship is seen in the parable Jesus spoke in Matthew chapter 25. These verses emphasize the importance of faithful stewardship and underscore the reward that awaits a good steward. Jesus had been speaking about the responsibility of serving well and He said:

"Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.' "His master replied, '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!' "The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.' "His master replied, '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!' "
(Matt 25:14-23)

Notice that each servant was given money according to their individual abilities, to invest for his master. A “talent” was equal to \$1,000 dollars. Eugene Peterson’s

expanded translation, *The Message*, reads as follows: “*He called his servants together and delegated responsibilities. To one he gave five thousand dollars, to another two thousand, to a third one thousand, depending on their abilities.*”

Two of these stewards were faithful in a few things, so the Lord trusted them with many things. The 3rd servant was unfaithful and therefore was unrewarded. The parable is set against the background of the Lord’s coming. It teaches us to love the Lord’s appearing, to look for His appearing and to labor faithfully until He comes, using the abilities, gifts and opportunities that He gives.

Among Jesus’ final words are these: “*Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.*” (Rev 22:12) May it be said of us as it was said of Mary of Bethany, “*She has done what she could.*” (Mark 14:8)

SUMMATION:

1. A Christian is a steward, one who has been given a trust, gift, talent, ability to use for God and who, if he/she manages well, will be rewarded!
2. That being so, surely every Christian should seek to discover and develop that which God has entrusted her/him with and to use that trust to bring glory to God and to advance the cause of Christ in the world.
3. To be a good steward in God’s eyes is more important than being a great success in the world’s eyes, and the rewards are beyond comparison!
4. **ILLUST.** Jim Elliot, the martyred missionary in Ecuador, famously said:
“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” Good stewardship is giving back to God what He has given to us to manage for Him, having managed well the trust.

JdonJ