

# Stewardship

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Stark Road Gospel Hall

1. Stewardship defined
2. Stewardship as modeled by Christ
3. Stewardship of the truth

## 1. Stewardship Defined (1 Cr 4:1-2; 9:16-7; 1 Pt 4:10)

- a. A steward is entrusted with managing property, finances, and other affairs not his own. Originally, the Greek word *oikonomia* (stewardship) meant the management (*nomos*, law) of household affairs (*oikos*, house) by a trusted servant or freedman.
- b. As Creator, God is the owner of everything. He gives men their bodies and minds, time on the earth, and many other gifts. All of these are intended to bring Him glory, and all men will be held accountable for their use of what God has provided. This is doubly true of Christians—we are also God's by redemption (1 Cr 6:19-20; 7:23).
- c. Example: Joseph. He was faithful "in little" while in Potiphar's house (Gn 39:6) and in prison (39:22-3), so God made him faithful "in much" as steward of the entire realm of Egypt (41:39-45).
- d. Faithfulness is the paramount feature of stewardship (1 Cr 4:2; Lk 16:10-12). Related concepts: Dedication, Loyalty, Commitment, Responsibility, Integrity, Industry, Self-Denial. In Mt 20:8 and Lk 8:3, the word steward means guardian.
- e. Special meanings of stewardship: 1) God's own administration of the ages (Ep 1:10; 3:9); Paul's stewardship to teach truths about Christ and His church that would complete earlier stages of revelation (Cl 1:25; Ep 3:2-8); 3) Those who preach the gospel and teach the Word of God are stewards in a special sense (1 Cr 4:1); 4) Elders also have a special stewardship (Tt 1:7-9; Hb 13:17).

## 2. Stewardship as Modeled by Christ (Jh 17:1-10)

Christ is the great example of stewardship. Although He is Master of all, He nonetheless is the perfect Servant, and although He is Owner of all, He is the perfect Steward. He said, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father" (Mt 11:27). It is clear that He saw every facet of His life as a stewardship:

- a. His Authority. "Thou hast given Him power [authority] over flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him" (Jh 17:2).
- b. His Work. "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do Thy will O God" (Hb 10:7). "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (Jh 17:4). "I must be about my Father's business" (Lk 2:49).
- c. His Body. "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, 'Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me'" (Hb 10:5).
- d. God's Truth. "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world" (17:6a). "For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me" (8a). Although He Himself is the Word and the Truth, He received divine truth as a gift, and He faithfully lived it and taught it. See Ps 40:9-10
- e. His People. He took responsibility for His followers as God's gifts and charges to Him. "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word" (17:6b). "I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine" (v 9).
- f. His Time. "Mine/His hour is/was not yet come" (Jh 2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 13:1). "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (Jh 9:4).
- g. His Mother. "Then saith he to the disciple, 'Behold thy mother!' And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home" (Jh 19:27).

### 3. Stewardship of the truth

All truth is God's truth, and He has given it to us as a stewardship. Man can determine natural truth to an extent observation and reasoning, but his mind is too weak and prejudiced to work at truth unaided, and without divine revelation, he cannot know spiritual truth at all (1 Cr 2:9-15). Revelation is the surest truth.

#### a. Believing the Truth (Jh 14:6)

- Absolute Truth. Christ was not merely claiming to speak truthfully, but rather to be the ultimate reality. There is no other way, no other truth, no other life.
  - Relativism sees truth as a matter of personal opinion or preference, whatever "works for you." But to assert that there is no absolute truth is to assert an absolute truth.
  - If sin, hell and an objective atonement are not absolutely true, the gospel is irrelevant—and people quickly realize that. If all people hear about the gospel is how fulfilling and exciting it is to be a Christian, they will misunderstand the gospel as just religious way to feel good.
- The Completed Revelation. "Thy word is truth" (Jh 17:17). "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

#### b. Living the Truth (Ep 4:25-32)

- Truthfulness in Word and Deed. "All that Jesus began both to do and teach" (Ac 1:1; cf 2 Tm 3:10ff). "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth (3 Jh 4).

#### c. Teaching the Truth (2 Tm 2:1-7)

- Christ's commission to teach and making disciples. In His commission to the disciples, the Lord Jesus instructed them to "make disciples" (Mt 28:19) and to "teach" (v 20). God has chosen to use us to propagate the truth contained in His Word to others.
- The apostles' pattern in the Acts. From the outset, the disciples expounded "the apostles' doctrine" as a vital part of assembly life (Ac 2:42). In Antioch, "a whole year they assembled themselves with the church and taught" (Ac 11:26). In Ephesus, Paul was "disputing daily...by the space of two years" (19:8-10). This suggests intensive teaching for young believers, both by dialog and discourse, to establish them in the faith. Personal study is required (2 Tm 2:15-6) but not sufficient.
- The teaching in the Epistles. He who prophesies speaks to edification [building up], exhortation [stirring up], and comfort [binding up] to men" (1 Cr 14:3). "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other [of the same kind] judge" (14:29). "He gave teaching pastors...for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ep 4:11-13).

#### d. Guarding the Truth (1 Tm 6:20-1)

- The role of the Levites who camped around the tabernacle (Nm 1:53) and the doorkeepers/porters assigned to the temple (1 Ch 15:23-4) illustrates this facet of stewardship.
- Doctrinal error requires discipline (Gl 1:8-9; 5:9; 1 Tm 1:18-20).
- Failure to keep the charge will lead to loss of capacity to serve God in the highest way, both now and in eternity (1 Cr 3:11-5; 2 Cr 5:10). This is illustrated by privileges reserved for the sons of Zadok in the millennium (Ez 40:45-6; 44:10-6; Ez 48:11).