

STEWARDSHIP

Stewards were used by Jesus in many of his parables, which brings up two interesting questions: (1) What exactly is a steward? (2) Are you a good steward of Christ?

The word *steward* is synonymous with serving, with being a servant. But it really means more than that. A steward is a *profitable* servant, a servant whose purpose is to serve gainfully. For example, in our workplace we are more than just a hired hand. Our employer expects each of us to do something to help the company to get ahead. Likewise, in the Bible a steward is a lot more than just a slave or servant. He is a manager of a household or estate, like Joseph. He is an administrator, an overseer, and a treasurer. There are several characteristics that a good steward must have. We will examine those characteristics in this article.

A steward must 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. (1 Cor. 4:1-2)

The steward must be trustworthy and dependable. Can Christ count on us? Will I ever deny Christ? If there's a job to do, can I be trusted to do it?

A steward must SERVE WISELY.

And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. (Luke 12:42-44)

Serving wisely includes being ready and prepared for the second coming of Christ. One must know the Lord's will by studying God's Word and doing it!

A steward must be BLAMELESS, like a bishop.

For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; (Tit. 1:7a)

Blameless means not easily accused of wrongdoing. Some people always get the blame for certain wrongdoings. A steward will lead a clean life, before the world and before Christ. It is hard to find false witnesses against a steward, like against Jesus and Paul.

A steward must MINISTER TO OTHERS.

Use hospitality one to another without grudging. 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. 4:9-10)

That's where the part of servant comes in: ministering to others. Our top priority is Christ and His kingdom, and pleasing ourselves comes last. "*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*" (Matt. 6:33). For example, a company's priority is its customers. If it cannot satisfy the customers, then it will quickly go out of business. Likewise, we put the needs of others before our own. We need to please Christ by being unselfish.

Remember, a steward is NOT AN OWNER.

He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. (Luke 19:12-13)

Christ has given us the Gospel to use until He returns. We are stewards of it. We are to make a profitable gain out of it. We do not own the Gospel, therefore we have no right to change it. However, some people feel they can. Similarly, it is not up to man to run the church or control it because Christ is the Head!

Stewards have DIFFERENT ABILITIES.

For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. (Matt. 25:14-15)

Everyone has a different ability. But we all have enough ability to at least do something. Is there any normal person who can do absolutely nothing? I think not. Thus, we

must all do what we can with our different talents. We all can contribute! If we are a steward of God, then we have a talent!

A steward must realize his RESPONSIBILITY.

Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. (Rom. 14:4)

As stewards, there is always someone higher than us. Sometimes we tend to judge others and forget that God will judge us! *"For every man shall bear his own burden"* (Gal. 6:5). Instead of worrying about what everyone else is doing, let us act responsible. Don't criticize others too much. Mind your own business first.

Each steward will be held ACCOUNTABLE.

And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. (Luke 19:15)

Notice that the nobleman, the master, expected a gain from everyone! This parable represents the Day of Reckoning, when the Lord will see how profitable we have been as stewards. Each one of us will have to answer!

Consider also this parable:

And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. (Luke 16:1-2)

If we were accused of being a lazy, wasteful steward, could we produce enough evidence to show otherwise?

Now that we know what being a steward means, it is time to ask, "Am I a good steward of Christ?" Have I:

- Been faithful?
- Served God wisely?
- Been blameless?
- Ministered to others?

- Remember I am not the owner?
- Used my ability?
- Been responsible?

"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12). How does the account look concerning my stewardship?

Adapted from a sermon by RAY MCMANUS
(Deceased)

APOLOGIA

QUESTION: Considering 1 Corinthians 16:1, are the contribution funds only to be used for brothers and sisters in Christ?

ANSWER: The Scriptures encourage Christians to be concerned for ALL men.

"The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you." (1 Thess. 3:12)

"See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men." (1 Thess. 5:15)

Some brethren are of the view, however, that the church treasury can be used only for those who are members of the Lord's church. Consider verses used to sustain this understanding:

1 Corinthians 16:1 does specifically refer to "the contribution for the saints..." and then he states that he had given the same instructions to the "churches of Galatia." In verse 3 he speaks of this contribution as intended for those at Jerusalem.

Such is recorded in Acts 11:28-30,

And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth through out all the world; which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

While these passages were specific in that they specified a certain location where these funds were to be sent, this does not restrict the general contribution.

Note the specific in certain other passages which we acknowledge are not limited to the named specific situation:

In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus addressed the eleven (verse 16).

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.
(Matt. 28:19-20)

Does that mean that only the eleven were to teach and baptize?

In Mark 16:15-16 Jesus addressed the eleven (verse 14).

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. (Mark 16:15-16)

Were the eleven the only ones who were directed to "Go ye into all the world and preach?"

Titus was left in Crete to ordain elders.

For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: (Tit 1:5)

Does this authorize only an evangelist to ordain elders?

But while these passages were specific, note others which extend their application beyond the saints or brethren.

2 Corinthians 9:1-11 records in detail Paul's instruction and reasoning regarding assistance to those in need. Verse 5 clearly explains that this giving was beyond the individual's own personal responsibility and referred to that which he had written to the church in 1 Corinthians 16 and Acts 12:

Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make

up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness. (2 Cor. 9:5)

Note Paul's comments in these following verses:

For the administrations of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men. (2 Cor. 9:12-13)

Galatians 6:10 appears to answer the question very simply, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

HARRY COBB
(Wedowee, AL)

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
July 8 - 13	Temple Hill Smithdale, MS	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
July 9 - 13	2012 Camp Meeting Governor's Inn Pigeon Forge, TN	Various Speakers
July 13 - 15	Antioch Greenup, IL	Mike Daniel (Winston, GA)
July 15 - 20	Oak Grove Woodland, AL	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
July 22 - 25	Ashlock near Celina, TN	Harry Cobb (Wedowee, AL)
July 22 - 27	Napoleon Woodland, AL	J. D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)

July
27 - 29

Verona
Verona, KY

Joe Hill
(Hager Hill, KY)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Remember last month's questions?

1. How many more people did the Lord cause to die from a plague, because they complained that Moses and Aaron were allowing the Lord's people to die? 14,700 (Num. 16:49)
2. What was to be Delilah's reward for delivering Samson to the Philistine leaders? 1100 PIECES OF SILVER (Judg. 16:5)
3. According to 1 Kings, how did Ahab die? HE WAS KILLED BY A BOW IN BATTLE (1 Ki. 22:34-35)
4. In Luke's account of the Gospel, after Jesus raised Jarius' daughter from the dead, what advice did He give those attending her? TELL NO ONE WHAT HAS HAPPENED AND GIVE HER SOMETHING TO EAT (Luke 8:55-56)
5. In Paul's letter to the Romans, where did he say he planned to go before he could visit the Romans? JERUSALEM (Rom. 15:25)