

Section: Walking With Jesus
Category: Christian Lifestyle
Action Item: Stewardship



The Stewardship of Money – Part 1

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART 1

• Introduction	2
• Session 1: Stewardship	3
○ What is Stewardship?	3
○ Qualities of a Good Steward	3
○ The Steward Ought to Remember That:	3
• Money Matters	4
○ Love Not the World	4
○ Financial Success	4
○ Some Biblical Examples	4
○ Putting God First	6

INTRODUCTION TO SERIES

In this series we will explore the concept of stewardship, with a focus on money. It is said that our use of our *time* and *money* are true indicators of our devotion to God. But how can we manage our resources as *God* wants us to? This series seeks to answer that question and not only looks at the biblical materials on the subject, but is packed with simple, practical help for the modern person. With input from financial experts, you will find useful guidance and tips in areas such as tithes and offerings, debt, budgeting, Christian education, owning a home and estate planning. Your eyes will surely be opened to some amazing insights concerning money.

SESSION 1

STEWARDSHIP

A. What is Stewardship?

- A steward is someone who takes care of another persons' property or affairs.
- In Gen 1:26 God gave man the responsibility to look after nature
- Stewardship is really a broad term that involves wise management of things God entrusted to us such as:
 - Life
 - Health
 - Time
 - Talents & Abilities
 - Money
 - Etc.

B. Qualities of a Good Steward

- Trustworthiness
- Responsibility
- Accountability
- Faithfulness (1 Cor. 4:2).

C. The Steward Ought to Remember That:

- God is the rightful owner of the earth and everything in it (Ps. 24:1, 2; 50:10, 11; 89:11; Hag. 2:8). We are therefore not owners, but only stewards of what **God** owns.
- God is self-sufficient (see Rev. 1:8 cf. 1:4) and therefore not dependent on us. His administration of what He entrusted to us does not enrich Him in any way.
- God gives the power to get wealth (Deut. 8:17, 18). Without his gift of life and strength man could do nothing. Therefore what man earns is rightfully God's.
- Stewardship is a position of trust and honour
- Stewardship is a lifetime requirement
- Stewardship is not about what we give but about what we are.
- God is not interested in our *things* but in *us*.

Thought Question

What qualities would you expect to see in someone you entrusted with **your** property?

MONEY MATTERS

Jesus said more about money than any other single thing because, when it comes to a person's real nature, money is of first importance - Richard Halverson

Money is one of the acid tests of character and a surprising amount of space is given to it in Scripture. Whether a man is rich or poor, observe his reaction to his possessions and you have a revealing index to his character. - Oswald Sanders

Did you know how much God talks in the Bible about...

Baptism? 40 verses

Prayer? 275 verses

Faith? 350 verses

Love? 650 verses

Finances/Material Possessions/Wealth? 2,350 verses

Money, wealth and finances therefore have a great deal to do with our Christian experience. Martin Luther said: There are three conversions necessary: the conversion of the heart, mind and the purse.

A. Love Not the World¹

We are encouraged not to place our affections on this world for the following reasons:

1. World conditions [rampant evil, recessions, wars, natural disasters, etc.] are deteriorating (see 2 Tim. 3:1-5).
2. Escalating bankruptcies (Ps. 37:21) – personal, business and national
3. Concerned politicians - "Those who hold the reins of government are not able to solve the problem of moral corruption, poverty, pauperism, and increasing crime"²
4. This world is not our permanent home (cf. Heb. 11:10) and will soon pass away.

B. Financial Success

Worldly goal—fame and accumulation of assets

Christian goal—the success of God's kingdom

Note what the Bible says in Luke 16:13 regarding money:

"No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon [money]"

It is not just hard to serve God and money—it can't be done.

C. Some Biblical Examples

Look up the following stories about Bible characters and their relation to money:

1. Lot's wife - Luke 17:32 (Gen. 13-19)

2. Achan (Josh. 7).
3. Gehazi (2 Kings 5)
4. The rich young ruler (Matt. 19).
5. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 4; 5).
6. Abraham (Heb. 11:9, 10; Gen. 12-15).
7. Moses (Heb. 11:24-26).
8. Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10).

How did each of the above people relate to money?

It is important to understand that God is not against riches or rich people. Note the following:

- Abraham's servant said of him: "The Lord has blessed my master greatly, and he has become great; and He has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female servants, and camels and donkeys" (Gen. 24:35)
- God said to Solomon, "I will give you what you have not asked for—both *riches* and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings" (1 Kings 3:13)
- Of Job it is said: "He had seven sons and three daughters, and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East" (Job 1:2)
- We are told that Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea were men of "wealth and influence"³

So wealth is not a sin. It is an entrusted talent, which if wisely used, can be a great blessing to the cause of God.

D. Putting God First

Putting God first helps us place God in true perspective. Here are a number of representative texts that call for putting God first. Read each one of them and summarise them in your own words:

- Ex. 20:3
- Prov. 3:5-6
- Matt. 6:33



One way that God has chosen to teach us the concept of 'God-first' is through our tithes and offerings:

“The first fruits of the wool when the sheep were shorn, of the grain when the wheat was threshed, were set apart for God.... The first fruits were to be presented before the Lord at the sanctuary and were then devoted to the use of the priests. **By this system of benevolence the Lord sought to teach Israel that in everything He must be first.**”⁴

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¹ The next 4 sections are a summary from sections of Ed Reid’s book, *It’s Your Money, Isn’t It?* (Hagerstown: Review & Herald, 1993)

² E.G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 9, p. 13

³ E.G. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 773

⁴ E.G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 337