

Basic Training: What Does It Mean? Lesson 8-1
What Is the Meaning of Stewardship, Part 1

1 Corinthians 4:1-2, 7

1 Let a man so account of us [regard us], as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

*2 Moreover it is required in **stewards**, that a man be found **faithful**.*

7 For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?

I. Review

1. So far in this series of Basic Training, What Does it Mean? we have studied seven different topics.
2. Lesson 1: What does it mean to receive the Holy Ghost? The beginning of a relationship with God in you leading to a changed life.
3. Lesson 2: What does it mean that God wrote a Book? He preserved His Words and Will for us to grow our relationship.
4. Lesson 3: What is the meaning of prayer? (3 parts) How to deepen our relationship with God
5. Lesson 4: What does it mean that there is one God? That the one God, known as Yahweh in the OT, came as Jesus, God in flesh, to establish the closest possible relationship.
6. Lesson 5: What is the meaning of worship? An expression of physical acts that lead us into the greatest depths and highest heights in God.
7. Lesson 6: What does it mean to live godly? (2 parts) Being transformed from worldliness by the Holy Ghost to conform to God's will as expressed in His Word.
8. Lesson 7: What is the meaning of family? We looked at God's original plan for family, a husband and wife with a strong love for each other, patterned after Christ's love for the church, and being a secure, dependable place to love, protect, and prepare kids for their calling and for loving the Lord.

II. Introduction

1. Today we will begin with the 8th and final topic, Stewardship.
2. Verse 7 tells us that all we have is what was given to us. We should not be boastful of what we have because we acknowledge that in the end, it was God that gave to us.
3. As an example, the job I have at the university was given to me. I did not MAKE it happen for myself. What I contributed was a work ethic that brought me a certain reputation, but the job offer did not come because of reputation only.
4. The office had urgent needs. But it was in an amazing course of events that, due to construction some office spaces were shuffled, more than once, and through these moves, God had placed me nearby the office.
5. So that job was given to me by God's gracious hand. And since that is the case, I need to be grateful and must be a good steward in that position.

1 Cor 4:2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

6. So we are called to be faithful stewards with the things we are given.
7. The Bible is full of principles dealing with what it means to be a good steward, and we will be looking at some of those principles.
8. **stew·ard** *n.* One who manages another's property, finances, or affairs. American Heritage Dictionary
9. In a discussion about Biblical stewardship, we first address the principle of ownership. Who does my stuff belong to?
10. **The biblical principle can be stated like this: All belongs to God and what we have comes from him.**

III. Attitudes towards ownership

1. The first issue to tackle is ownership and finances and how God would have us to be good stewards of our money.
 2. When Jesus saved us, He didn't intend to just save a little part of us and leave other parts of us unsaved. He wants to save the whole person, and also make us a whole person.
 3. So as it pertains to our finances, let us look at some attitudes toward money we see and compare them to the Word of God.
 4. It boils down to who is the owner and who is the caretaker?
- A. I have what I have because I worked for it and I am entitled to it!
1. A moment ago we read from 1 Corinthians 4 a principle that applies to our finances. *1 Cor 4:7 For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?*
 2. The Word of God is full of admonition to work diligently to improve our skills. That is all a part of what it means to be a Christian worker.
 3. But we are not to proudly boast of that, but rather be thankful for what we have received.
 4. And even after we have done our best, Jesus encourages us to not feel as though we should be demanding. Listen to this story Jesus told: *Luke 17:7-10 NLT - 7 "When a servant comes in from plowing or taking care of sheep, does his master say, 'Come in and eat with me'? 8 No, he says, 'Prepare my meal, put on your apron, and serve me while I eat. Then you can eat later.' 9 And does the master thank the servant for doing what he was told to do? Of course not. 10 In the same way, when you obey me you should say, 'We are unworthy servants who have simply done our duty.'"*
 5. What I have is something that God has given to me so I am going to be grateful for what I have received and not act like I feel entitled to it.
- B. But it is MY money!
1. Another common attitude about money is, "This is my money and I can do with it whatever I want.
 2. Well, falling right in line with the last principle, God claims that even that is His: *Hag 2:8 The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts.*
 3. It may be in my wallet and my bank account, but according to God, my wallet and my bank account contain God's money.

4. And how we handle that truth reveals our attitude as a steward.
 5. If God moves on our heart to help someone or a cause, we can more easily oblige when we see it as God wanting some of His money to go in that direction.
- C. But these are my possessions!
1. A similar attitude is often expressed about how we feel about our things, “This is MY stuff!”
 2. Well at a time when wealth was measured by the amount of cattle one possessed, the Lord said:
Ps 50:10 For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.
 3. My name may appear on the deed or title, but according to God, my possessions belong to Him.
 4. How do you respond when you feel God urging you to give something to someone who needs it? My stuff or God’s stuff?
- D. But this is my land!
1. Another indicator of wealth, is the amount of land one possesses. We may stomp both feet on our property and proclaim, “This is MY land!”
 2. Really? For how long do you think you can make that claim?
 3. Can you own the earth? God lays claim to that too:
Gen 14:18-19
18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.
19 And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:
 4. God claims ownership of our money, our possessions, and our land. Not only does He claim ownership of all of our physical stuff, He even claims us.
- E. I am my own person
1. What about the attitude you may hear stated this way: “I am my own person!”
 2. What is funny is how that is often spoken by a youth who claims to be their own person because they want to dress like someone else or do what someone else is doing, so they can be their own person.
 3. It is more likely they wish to be accepted by someone else and they think who they are doesn’t measure up to their standard.
 4. But they want to be their own person.
 5. But adults can express the same attitude. Perhaps they feel the tug of God on their heart and they fight it by saying, “God, just leave me alone. I am my own person. I am not accountable to you.”
 6. Well, God has another opinion:
Ezek 18:4 Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.
 7. Because God claims all money, possessions and even our souls, the proper attitude for a child of God concerning possessions is that we are stewards or caretakers of the Lord’s property.

8. When we give Jesus Christ the position of Lord in our life, we become stewards of His property.
 9. As our relationship with Jesus grows, the more we will align with the principles of His Word that declare how to take care of His property from our souls, to our bodies, to our money.
- F. “What about all my hard labor? I did work for this!”
1. Let’s look at just one more attitude toward possessions and ownership.
 2. “What about all my hard labor? I worked for and earned all this!”
 3. As we have already pointed out, it is a biblical concept to work hard and reject laziness. But even that must be kept in perspective.
 5. In order for you to work hard to earn your wages, remember that,
 - a. our strength comes from God
 - b. our breath comes from God
 - c. our health comes from God
 6. What I have earned by working has come to me because God graciously allowed me to get a job, and also graciously allowed me to be granted the strength, breath, and health to do it.
 7. Before you get too puffed up about your strong work ethic, keep in mind that an accident or sickness could make it so you are unable to work at all, so it is important to acknowledge God as the giver of our health, strength and abilities.
 8. The Christian knows the source of his abilities and skills, so he realizes that all he possesses does indeed come from God.
 9. God is the possessor of heaven and earth, so whatever we have, we must recognize that we are not truly the owners, we are the stewards of His possessions.
 10. Life itself is lent to us for only a time—and eternally speaking, only a brief time.
 11. We are His stewards and acknowledge Him as Lord of all—even of our finances.

IV. Four giving principles

- A. What we give to God, men give back to us
1. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught many basic kingdom principles pertaining to living for God, like “Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.” (Luke 6:27-28)
 2. And among those basic kingdom principles, Jesus spoke about what happens when we give:
Luke 6:38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.
 3. There are two principles we learn from that statement. First, what we give to the kingdom of God, men will give back to us, and in large measure.
- B. The blessing is proportionate to the giving
1. And second, we see in the last part of that verse, the more we give, the more that comes back to us by way of blessing.

2. What Jesus is saying is that the same measuring cup we use for dipping out our offerings to the Lord, that is the same sized cup that will be used to dip out blessings back to us.
 3. Paul restated that principle to the church in Corinth:
2 Corinthians 9:6 But this [I say], He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.
 4. We can take note that not only did Jesus teach that principle, but it was also being taught in the early church.
 5. One final point on what bountiful giving looks like—it is not bountiful in comparison to what others give, but in comparison to what you have.
 6. Jesus illustrated this principle in an observation He made at the temple treasury:
Mark 12:41-44
41 And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.
42 And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.
*43 And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That **this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:***
44 For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.
 7. We may give more than others even when giving less. It seems like in Jesus' view, it is not how much we give that matters, but how much we have left.
 8. That is what proportionate giving, or sowing bountifully, is about.
- C. Give purposely from the heart
1. But then back in 2 Corinthians, Paul adds a third principle about giving:
2 Corinthians 9:7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, [so let him give]; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.
 2. When we give from the heart, it is on purpose, not accidental. It is planned giving, not left over giving.
 3. For instance, some may be like I used to be, when I decided to give to the kingdom of God what was left over after all their living expenses are taken care of—if there was anything.
 4. But the priority principle found in this verse shows that giving to God is predetermined, planned, and on purpose.
 5. The word we use today to describe a spending plan is “budget.” So when it comes to giving to God, include it in your budget and don't give on the basis of what is last and left over.
 6. Another way this principle is stated in scripture is honoring God with the firstfruits of our increase:
Proverbs 3:9 Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:
 7. Giving should be planned, purposeful and from the heart, and not from the leftovers.
- D. Give with cheer

1. The fourth New Testament principle on giving is found in the last part of that verse we looked at a moment ago:
2 Corinthians 9:7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, [so let him give]; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.
2. Even though our giving is planned and budgeted, it is not done because of coercion imposed by a duty, as Paul said, “not grudgingly, or of necessity”, but based on the cheerfulness of our heart to give willingly from our heart to God.
3. The word “cheerful” is translated from the Greek word, “hilaros,” and it means cheerful, joyous, and prompt. We are prompt, or quick to give with joy and cheer.
4. Our English word, hilarity, comes from the Latin, hilaritas, another form of the Greek hilaros.
5. So give with hilarity! And give promptly!
6. Bro. Cheatham does his best to make offering time a time of cheerful giving by coupling it with praise. Give with a hallelujah! Give with a laugh!

E. Summarizing all four

1. So these four New Testament principles are:
 - a. Give with cheer
 - b. Give purposefully from the heart
 - c. A blessing in proportion to your giving will be returned to you
 - d. When you give to God, men will give to you.

V. Conclusion

1. It is important to remember that all that we have was given to us. We are recipients of God’s blessings.
2. All the money is His, all our possessions are His, our land is His, and even our soul is His.
3. If we say it was our hard work that got us what we have, we need to remember that our health and ability to work are also gifts from God.
4. So our appropriate response is to live as good stewards of the things that God has given us.
5. And in terms of finances, the faithful giving of individuals in the church is how the church is able to keep going.
6. So as a church, we determine to give purposefully, from the heart, and cheerfully.
7. And with our giving, it shall be given back to us:
Luke 6:38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.
8. Do you want to be under God’s blessings? Start off by giving yourself to Him.
9. The point of being a good steward is not really about giving money, it is more about giving ourselves to God.
Matthew 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.