

DOCTRINE OF STEWARDSHIP

- I. Introduction.
- A. Although the term **stewardship** is used in different contexts by a number of different organizations, it is a concept that may not be well understood.
 - B. In many cases, the concept of stewardship, particularly in religious circles, has been reduced to a yearly emphasis, which is designed to get members to increase the amount of their financial participation.
 - C. While we are not against believers evaluating their finances and the level at which they support the teaching of the truth, there is far more to stewardship than simply the financial aspect.
 - D. While stewardship encompasses the issue of how we handle money and the details, it also extends far beyond the single matter of finances and has relevance to many areas of the believer's life
- II. Vocabulary.
- A. Although there are no specific term for stewards or stewardship in the Hebrew Old Testament, the phrase עַל-בֵּיתוֹ ('al beytho—over his house, over a house) is used of the chief officer that was in charge of a man's household. Gen. 43:16,19
 - B. Greek vocabulary.
 - 1. ἐπίτροπος (epitropos), m.noun, 3X, a manager, guardian, foreman, or steward. Matt. 20:8; Lk. 8:3; Gal. 4:2
 - 2. οἰκονομέω (oikonomeo), verb, 1X, to manage a household, to plan, manage, regulate, or administer any project.
 - 3. οἰκονόμος (oikonomos), m.noun, 10X, one that is entrusted with the management of that which belongs to another; the manager of a household or an estate; one that administers funds, a treasurer.
 - 4. οἰκονομία (oikonomia), f.noun, 9X, the responsibility of managing or directing the affairs of a household or estate; the work of a steward.
- III. Definition and description.
- A. A stewardship is first defined as the responsibility of a steward; therefore, it involves the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care.
 - B. A steward is one that manages, organizes, administrates, and otherwise has been entrusted with authority over the property, finances, or affairs of another,
 - C. It is to be understood that the steward is to perform his tasks with the best interests of his master in view. Lk. 16:1-2
 - D. The term steward is applied to the chief employee within a household, whose job it was to order and administrate the affairs of the household according to the will of his master.
 - E. We will define biblical stewardship as the responsibility of believers to manage the resources that God has created and whatever has been placed at their disposal.

- IV. The master/steward relationship is characterized by delegated authority and trust.
- A. In that regard, the master is always the authority; he delegates his authority to the steward.
 - B. The master is the owner of all the assets; the money, the house, and all it contains; further, if the steward was a slave (Matt. 24:49), he is the master's property as well.
 - C. Therefore, since all things belong to the master, he has the right to do with what is his as he pleases. Matt. 20:15
 - D. The decisions of the master are binding since the authority in the relationship with the steward resides with the master. Matt. 20:13-14
 - E. The master delegates his authority over his money and possessions to the servant; consequently, the servant has been entrusted and empowered by the master and is expected to act in a responsible fashion.
 - F. The master has the right to expect obedience from the servant, as well as a reasonable expectation of benefit from the service of his slave. Matt. 25:14-17
 - G. Likewise, the steward is expected to demonstrate obedience within his realm of delegated authority.
 - H. The steward should never lose sight of the fact that he is not the owner of the things that have been entrusted to him; he is the manager or administrator only. Lk. 16:1-2
 - I. He is expected use whatever assets that have been entrusted (not given) to him to care for and benefit his master's household
 - J. Therefore, the steward is to demonstrate his commitment to the task assigned to him by means of diligent and industrious application. Prov. 10:4; Matt. 25:26
 - K. Since the steward is aware of the fact that his master has legitimate expectations, he should the proper respect for his master and recognize that failure to be diligent may result in discipline. Matt. 25:28-30
 - L. Finally, it should be evident that a major issue for the steward is faithfulness in regard to the responsibilities have been entrusted to him. Num. 12:7; ICor. 4:2
- V. Stewardship is one principle that God established at restoration.
- A. The concept of stewardship begins with the fundamental understanding that God created all things and that they belong to Him Ex. 9:29, 19:5; Deut. 10:14; Job 41:11; Ps. 50:10-12
 - B. In that regard, any theory of origins that does not acknowledge the fact that God is the Creator of all things (like evolution) effectively undermines other truths that flow from this reality. Heb. 11:3; Rev. 4:11
 - C. The principle of mankind's stewardship over the Garden was established at the time of the restoration of planet earth; He delegated authority in Eden to the man, who was to effectively serve as steward over the Garden. Gen. 1:28-30
 - D. Since God owns the entire physical creation, which He created through His power, mankind has been delegated the authority to manage what God has provided. Ps. 8:6-8
 - E. Although there was a change in the diet of mankind. after the flood, the authority to rule the physical creation (to manage it wisely) was reiterated to Noah and his sons. Gen. 9:1-3
 - F. God has provided what man needs through His grace; therefore, applying spiritual common sense, mankind is to wisely govern God's creation for God's glory, the good of the creation, and for the benefit of the human race.
 - G. Along those lines, God provided instruction in the Mosaic Law to indicate that Israel was expected to practice good stewardship in the land of Promise. Lev. 25:1-7
 - H. Another principle that must be considered is that God will hold man accountable for the manner in which he conducts the stewardship that has been entrusted to him. Lk. 16:2; Eph. 6:8; Rev. 11:18

- I. In that regard, men should aspire to please God by properly administering those things that have been delegated to them. IICor. 5:9-10
 - J. In Leviticus 26, the implied but unstated reality is that the Jews failed under their stewardship of the land and came under God's judgment. Lev. 26:34-35
- VI. Specific areas of stewardship for believers.
- A. Paul viewed the good news of salvation as a most important responsibility with which he had been entrusted by God.. ICor. 9:17; Gal. 2:7; IThess. 2:4; ITim. 1:11; Tit. 1:3
 - 1. Paul recognized that he was also the recipient and custodian of the doctrines of the faith. ICor. 4:1
 - 2. Similarly, all those that have been prepared to teach doctrine are viewed as stewards of the **good deposit**, which they are expected to guard and teach during their generation. ICor. 4:1; ITim. 6:20; IITim. 1:14
 - 3. Timothy, as well as others that have been entrusted with the truths of Bible doctrine, have an obligation to prepare the next generation for its stewardship. IITim. 2:2
 - B. All those placed by God in positions of authority within the Church should recognize that they have a stewardship entrusted to them, which is to result in the benefit and blessing (spiritual growth) of the Church. Eph. 3:2; Col. 1:25; ITim. 3:15
 - C. Since both the physical and spiritual life of the believer is a grace gift from God, each believer is expected to conduct his life according to the will of the Master.
 - 1. The physical body in which the soul resides is viewed as the possession of God and is not our own to do with as we please. Rom. 14:7-8; ICor. 6:19
 - 2. Our spiritual life, which was provided at the point of salvation, is to be offered each day to the Master as a living sacrifice. Rom. 12:1
 - D. The spiritual gift each believer received at the point of salvation is viewed as a stewardship, which is to be properly exercised for the good of others in the local body. IPet. 4:10
 - E. In that regard, God has provided different spiritual gifts to believers in order to promote a wholesome balance and maturity within the body. Rom. 12:4-6
 - F. Each pastor-teacher is viewed as a steward of the local church, where God the Holy Spirit established him. Tit. 1:7; IPet. 5:1-4
 - 1. He is to perform the duties that are incumbent upon him by doing all that is required of a shepherd.
 - 2. He is to administrate the household of God, those that have been allotted to him according to the will of His Master.
 - 3. He is to lead believers willingly, not because he is compelled to do so, by exhibiting an earnest desire to make the sacrifices necessary for the best spiritual interests of his flock.
 - 4. He cannot concern himself with the issue of money; he must serve whether financial support is there or lacking.
 - 5. He should not attempt to use his authority in inappropriate ways to bully believers into application or spiritual growth; he must content himself with teaching the Word of God to believers and allowing it to work within their lives. ITim. 1:5; Isa. 55:11
 - 6. He should consistently seek to improve his example before the congregation. ITim. 4:12 Tit. 2:7
 - 7. He should keep before him the reality that His Master will return and that He is prepared to reward any service the faithful pastor-teacher has rendered. ICor. 9:25; Rev. 22:12
 - G. Each believer should recognize that the most important matter in regard to stewardship is that he demonstrate himself to be faithful to discharge His Master's will. Lk. 16:10; ICor. 4:2