

Stewardship

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[0 : 00] 1 Corinthians 4 verse 2.

1 Corinthians 4 verse 2.! Let's look at the doctrine of stewardship.! 1 Corinthians 4 verse 2.! It says, Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.

God calls us to be stewards, faithful. And wives. You are a steward. Every one of you are stewards. You might say, Who? Me?

A steward? What do you mean? You possess the property of God. Your body is God's property. Your body is given on loan to you. You're a manager, a steward.

The same goes for your time. What did you do with those 168 hours of time last week? Where did they go? It just goes so quick, doesn't it? God gave you that time for you to manage wisely.

[1 : 02] For its owner, Him, to use it wisely. Your money and possessions. They're His property in your care just for this short while. Your talents and abilities.

Really, God has loaned them to you to be used for Him. To manage for Him. You and I do not own anything. We are stewards of what God owns.

How are you managing God's property? The word steward and related words are some 20 times in the Bible. To be a steward, it means a servant, a keeper, a protector.

Someone who looks after the responsibilities in their charge. And so stewardship is management. It's looking after what belongs to someone else. How well are we doing it?

Julie manages me. She does a pretty good job of it. It makes Julie look good. When my clothes are nicely on open. She was telling me this morning that I need a bit of a dry clean and a bit of a tidy up.

[2 : 05] Julie manages me. She helps me keep looking good. And it reflects on Julie when I don't look good. And it's like us as Christians. We are stewards. Now some people say I am a Christian.

And I think some Christians that don't make God look too good. They are a poor steward. They are not very wise steward. Not very faithful. And so God owns everything in our lives. We are His.

Our very bodies. We are God's private property. And there are two reasons God owns us. Firstly, He has created us. He is our Creator. He designed us. It says in Psalm 100 verse 3.

Know ye that the Lord, He is God. It is He that hath made us. We, not we ourselves. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. He hath made us.

The Creator owns what He has created. It's like that in the world. When we see the designs of things. The people who design a particular product. They have ownership of that design.

[3 : 06] And they have copyright laws to protect their ownership. To patent those inventions. Those songs that they write. Those things that they have made. Inherent in design is ownership.

Inherent in design is ownership. That's what biblical stewardship is all about. He owns us. It says in Colossians 1.16.

For by Him were all things created. All things were created by Him and for Him. God is our owner. In Psalm 24 it says the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. In Psalm 50 it talks of how every beast of the forest is mine. The cattle upon a thousand hills.

What God makes He owns. So He's made us. And secondly God owns us because He has redeemed us. He has redeemed us.

[4 : 06] In 1 Peter 1.18 it says for as much as you know that you are not redeemed with corruptible things. The concept is of silver and gold. But with the precious blood of Christ.

Redeemed means purchased for a price. If you are saved this morning. God has redeemed you. He's not only made you. He's saved you.

He's bought you. He's redeemed you. He's set you free from the slave market of sin. God owns us and everything we have. So that makes us stewards or managers for the Lord.

And He has the ultimate ownership. David Livingstone said. I place no value on anything I have or may possess except in relation to the kingdom of God.

If anything will advance the interest of the kingdom it shall be given away or kept. Only as by giving or keeping of it I shall promote, most promote the glory of God.

[5 : 10] To whom I owe all my hopes in time or eternity. It's about treating everything that we have and are as what can I do to promote the glory of God with it.

So let's look at four ways that we can work with God in managing what He has given in our charge. Four things to look at today.

Our bodies, our finances, our talents and our time. Four areas of stewardship. Let's consider firstly God's ownership of your bodies.

1 Corinthians 6 19 through 20 it says. Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you which you have of God and ye are not your own.

For ye are bought with a price that will glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's. God's ownership of your bodies.

[6 : 15] How can I be a wise steward of the body that God has given me to walk around in?

Number one, glorify God with it. Each of us can choose the ways that we use ourselves to live.

Does it glorify God or not? Do we choose the wicked part or the holy? Glorify God with your body.

Secondly, present it to God. Romans 12 that familiar one.

I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies. Present your bodies a living sacrifice. Holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service.

Present your bodies a living sacrifice. Holy, acceptable unto God. You can pray like this. Lord, here's my feet. I present them to you.

Let them be beautiful feet carrying your gospel. Here's my hands Lord. I present them to you. Use them for your glory. May these hands welcome people to our church.

[7 : 19] May these hands care for others. Lord, here's my voice. I present it to you. Help that tongue that it not cause hurt but minister life and health.

That it might bless and not curse. That I might sing your praises, not my own. That I might encourage, not criticize. Present your body to God.

Thirdly, take care of your body. Give it proper rest and food. Exercise it. And use it wisely. There's much more we could say on such things.

Someone has said, with proper care the human body will last a lifetime. Well, it will anyway, isn't it? Whether it's proper care or not. But, you know, sometimes we shorten our lives by foolish things.

Let's face it. Tobacco is the number one preventable killer. Are you killing yourself? It's not a good use of that body that God has put on loan to you.

[8 : 19] Take care of it. Ask God to help you. Get free from that harmful habit that has taken you over. And get free from it. That you can live longer.

Surely that's God's best for you. And fourthly, guard your body from pollution. That includes pollution of the mind. You know, we've heard it, talked about this disturbance today.

That there's many ways. We've got to do great lengths to avoid polluting our bodies. You know, trying to eat right. But do we give thought to polluting of our minds? You know, there's that computer saying, garbage in, garbage out.

You know, what you feed in, you get out. That's right. Philipians 4, verse 8. That one. Whatsoever things are true. Whatsoever things are honest.

Whatsoever things are just. Whatsoever things are pure. Whatsoever things are lovely. Whatsoever things are of good report. If there be any praise. If there be any virtue.

[9 : 17] Think on these things. You know, if you were hiring a manager to look after a business for you. What sort of characteristics would you look for? You're only looking for an employee. Looking for someone who's going to manage that which you're going to give them temporary responsibility for.

You'd look for wisdom. You'd look for faithfulness. You'd look for reliability. That's what God looks for today. He says, moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.

Faithful. Faithfulness is something that stems the man of God. The woman of God. Faithfulness in your life. In how you live. In taking that responsibility seriously.

Of the temporary ownership. Really it's his ownership all the time. But a temporary stewardship that we have. For the meantime. Are you this kind of steward?

Faithful. Wise. Consistent. Dependable. Acting in accord with his will. Having those things of peaceableness. Of righteousness. Have you managed the resources that are on loan to you.

[10:23] Manage your body. Consider God's ownership of your bodies. Consider, secondly, God's ownership of your finances.

Finances. You know, people get nervous when preachers talk about these things. Finances. God owns really all of our financial resources, doesn't he?

All of our stuff. God owns it. How well do we manage the finances that God has put into our hands? In Matthew 6, the Lord says, Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and dust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal.

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through to steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. When we think about this life, this short span of human time that we all have some measure of. God owns us, and he owns everything that we have.

[11:27] We are the private property of God Almighty. So let's think about that when we consider our giving. Do we give by faith? Do we live within our means? Do we not waste those resources that are limited?

Do we take seriously how we give unto the Lord? The Bible teaches proportionate giving. In 1 Corinthians 16, 2 it says, Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.

As God hath prospered him. Give as you prospered. There is a principle there. In the Old Covenant, the Mosaic law, it was the tithe.

It was part of the temple system of the Levitical priesthood. It applied to the flocks, the herds, the fruit, the grain. There was a number of tithes. There was the Levitical tithe of 10%, the festival tithe of 10%, and the welfare tithe of 3.3%.

So a total of 23%. Some think even more than that. This was a part of the taxation system of Israel as a theocracy.

[12:35] It was part of the tax system. So there was elements there that were giving to the support of the temple, the Levitical priesthood, and also the government of the land, of the nation of Israel.

That was under the Old Covenant, the Mosaic law, the tithe. Now, under the New Testament, the New Testament pattern of giving, it's still proportionate. There's still that proportionate giving. Our giving is now under grace though. Under grace. It's purposeful. It's proportionate giving. For us, love is stronger than law. This doesn't mean we give less.

It doesn't mean that we try to be miserly and selfish, but we're under love, not law now. It's a different relationship. We give cheerfully, thankfully, abundantly, sacrificially, in a disciplined way. Not under some obligation, but out of love. Out of love. Out of cheerfulness. As the Lord says, freely you have received. Freely give. Matthew 10 verse 8.

[13:38] As Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 9. The ones who sow sparingly are going to reap sparingly. If you sow bountifully, you're going to reap bountifully.

Every man, according as he purposed in his heart, sow, let him give. Not grudgingly, or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver. God is able to abound towards us. So, there's principles there of stewardship.

It's something to consider prayerfully. Prayerfully consider. You know, some set a particular measure, but they could give much more than that.

Some can't give what they feel constrained to give. The Lord knows your heart. He knows your financial state. There's no heaviness in that regard.

There's liberty. Much liberty. Learn to be generous. Here's a funny story. There was a wealthy man who said this. He said, he came and preached to an audience of people one day about his faith.

[14:38] He said, I'm a millionaire. And I attribute all the rich blessings of God in my life. There was a turning point in my life when I went to a church service and I'd just had my first dollar and I went to that church meeting that night and the speaker was a missionary and he told us about his work and I knew that I only had one dollar.

And I had to either give it all to God's work or nothing at all. So at that moment, I decided to give my whole dollar to God. And I believe God blessed that decision and that is why I'm rich.

That's why I'm a rich man today. And everybody was just so enthralled and in awe of this man. He'd given his all. And that is how he became a millionaire. And as he sat down by this little old lady and she leaned over to him and she said, I dare you to do it again.

I dare you to do it again. You know, friends, sometimes we can get the wrong idea, can't we? We should be like that, the widow woman giving our all, shouldn't we really?

Because 100% is God's. Learn to be content with God's gifts to you. Sometimes we can get greedy and grasping. Paul says, I've learned in whatsoever state I am there with to be content.

[15 : 55] Let's learn to be content, not covetous. God owns me and all that I have, all that I have, all that I earn is God's. Do I consider that when I come to giving it?

Whether giving it to people in need? Whether giving it to get a good Bible to read? When I consider the edifying of my soul, whether there's a Bible course you can use some of your income to undertake.

In all those spending decisions, there's having that eye to what will please God with that money? Do I go and get something lavish for myself or is there something I can do that's more of benefit spiritually to myself or to others?

How can I spend what I have to please God? That is the question. Use the resources you have wisely and it goes beyond just the giving of money. It's about everything that we have. Our possessions, everything that we own.

Our cars, our homes, our possessions, let's use them for the glory of God. Our bodies, our finances, thirdly our talents. Your talents. God has given you talents and abilities.

[17 : 07] Be a most steward of what God has given you in your abilities, in your talents, whether natural or supernatural. Your talents belong to the Lord. Not for you to have some claim to them or to use them for your own vain glory.

If you can play a musical instrument, play it unto the Lord to glorify God. If you can do some practical things. You might be a caregiver, an organiser, a manual worker.

There might be things and skills that you have. There's people here who know how to tune cars up. God can use those skills. Whether you've got financial skills, whether you've got teaching skills, whether you've got gardening skills, cooking skills, child minding, you know, youth skills.

All kinds of manifold skills. And that's why as a church we want to see, I read a book one day called Unleashing the Church. That's what we want to do in this church. We don't want it to be a confined, select group that gets to do things.

We want the body to be working. We want the body to be functioning. We want everybody in whatever gifts and callings and abilities that God can be glorified through you in, that you use those gifts.

[18 : 23] Every believer has a spiritual gift. At least one. In Romans 12 it says, God has dealt to every man a measure of faith. God distributes gifts amongst us for His glory.

Discover them and use them, put them to use. God has designed Him to serve each other with those gifts. Being what God has called you to be.

It's like, you know, the foot wasn't made to kick dirt out of the eyes. The eyelashes work. The hand wasn't made to smell. It was made to touch things, to pick up things, to shape, to carry, to defend, to help.

Which part of the body are you? What function can you play? Consider God's ownership of your talents. And fourthly, consider God's ownership of your time.

Colossians 4 verse 5 it says, Walk in wisdom towards them that are without redeeming the time. Life is precious. Time is life. One person said this, Life is not just a few years to spend on self-indulgence and career advancement.

[19 : 29] It's a privilege, a responsibility, a stewardship. Live according to a much higher calling. Life is in a stewardship.

You've got only one life. It will soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ will last. I know my dad likes that one. Our life belongs to God. Our life, every breath, every second, every moment, our life belongs to God.

Aren't we my stewards of that time? Or do we carelessly waste God's 86,400 daily gifts? Those seconds of time.

Like sand through the hourglass. Just goes, doesn't it? Like the TV programs. The days of our lives. Where have they gone? Where have those days of youth gone?

I say. Life is not lost by dying. Life is lost minute by minute. Day by day. In all the thousands small, uncaring ways.

[20 : 33] We can lose time. We can lose it. Like sand through the hourglass. We can lose it. Friends, let's use those days. In Psalm 19 verse 12 it says, Lord, so tempt us to number our days, to apply our hearts unto wisdom.

Time is the substance life is made of. Every year you are given 525,600 minutes to live. Well, you may not get all of them this year.

That's a reality, isn't it? I can't guarantee that you're going to get 525,600 minutes this year. More than half a million minutes every year.

They're on loan to you. How do you manage them for Him? You know, someone said, they calculated this, they said, If you sleep 8 hours a night, you sleep 175,200 minutes.

So they're gone. You can cost them off. You can't do much with them. Although it's good to have a rest. And it's needful.

[21 : 41] If you work 36 hours a week, some would work much more than that. Allow for 4 weeks off. You work another 103,680 minutes every year.

So that leaves you 246,720 minutes to shop, drive, look in the mirror and come here. Do the laundry.

Clean the house. Play with your children. Do the everyday lives. The chores of life. The hobbies. The resting.

The reading. Whatever you do for relaxation. And then maybe, just maybe, we've got to squeeze God in there somewhere. Somewhere. Somewhere. Because how much time do we give to Him? How much time do we invest in spiritual growth? Including church attendance. Including witnessing. Including daily Bible reading. Or prayer.

[22 : 40] Time is life. How are you managing it? Someone said this, one life. A little gleam of time between two eternities.

No second chance for us. Forever more. God tells us to redeem the time. Redeem the time. Today is the only time we have.

Have you numbered your days lately? How many hours have you lived? How many minutes have you lived? It would be in the hundreds of thousands.

How many minutes? We would be in the billions. No wonder we are feeling tired this morning. No wonder you are feeling tired.

The brevity of life, it's soon gone, isn't it? It's soon gone. How will we manage it? Will we manage it with wisdom? I pray so. Start with today.

[23 : 43] Start with today. Today is the only time you have. Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow is not guaranteed. We have today. We have the right now. Use your now.

And consider eternal priorities. What is more important? Temporary or eternal? What is more important? Eternal. The eternal priorities. We live in a disposable world.

We have disposable nappies. We have disposable furniture. We have virtually disposable houses. We have our cars. We have no idea that they are falling apart from the minute we step foot in them. There are only two things that are eternal. The Word of God and people. Two things in the Bible. Two things in the Bible. Two things that are eternal. The Word of God is eternal.

Forever settled in the heavens. The Word of God and men and women. Eternal souls. Eternal things. What ought to be our highest priority in life. It ought to be those eternal things. The eternal things. They should shape our sense of stewardship. Eternity should shape us. Stewardship of time.

Use it wisely. In effective service. Your ability to be a good person. The Lord is eternal. The Lord is eternal. The Lord is eternal. The Lord is eternal. The Lord is eternal. The Lord is eternal. The Lord is eternal.

[24 : 39] And our highest priority in life. It ought to be those eternal things. Yeah. The eternal things. They should shape our sense of stewardship. Eternity should shape us. Stewardship of time.

Use it wisely. In effective service. You are accountable to God. One day all of us will give an account. It says it is appointed that there will be an accounting time.

Every one of us will give account of himself to God. You will be called to give account for your stewardship, for the way you've managed your body.

Don't wreck it. Use it wisely. Look after it. Exercise it. Keep fit and healthy. God helping you too. Use it wisely. Your finances. Give as unto the Lord. Give cheerfully, abundantly, sacrificially.

Give and keep on giving. And in such measure as you give, you will receive. Your talents. What has God given you that you've got an ability to do?

[25 : 40] You've got a stewardship there. You've got gifts and callings. You've got abilities. Natural and God-given. Friends, your time.

Accounting time is coming. You know, it's tax time of year. And people have to face an order. I know at work we're going through some orders at the moment. People are getting nervous. They're very nervous. They might fight something. Not that anything's being done deliberately. It's just a bit of a mess sometimes. And, you know, accounting things can sometimes get a bit... We can lose track. How are we tracking spiritually today? You know, how would you feel if the accounting time spiritually was now for you?

You were called to give an account of your stewardship. Would you be like some dishonest taxpayers when they suddenly get told, Oh, you've got a tax order. We're coming. Come and check all your books.

[26 : 43] Would you have a bit of trepidation there that you've got something to hide? That you've done something dishonest? What about spiritually? When it's auditing time. When it's accounting time.

Someone said this stewardship is the use of God-given resources for the accomplishment of God-given goals. That's a good way of thinking about it, isn't it? God-given resources are given to you to accomplish God-given goals.

Now, if you're here this morning without Christ as your Saviour, the best thing you can do right now is to use these temporary minutes to get ready for eternity. These temporary minutes that you have can make an eternal difference.

If you can call on the name of the Lord. If you're one of His sheep and you hear His voice, don't put it off. Trust Him now. Trust Him now. Your future outside of Christ is eternal loss and damnation.

The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life. Friends, God in mercy has made a way for you if you will call upon Him today. Trust Him now.

[27 : 51] Friends, to close, moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.

Friends, to close, moreover it is determined to sustain a man of sin.

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