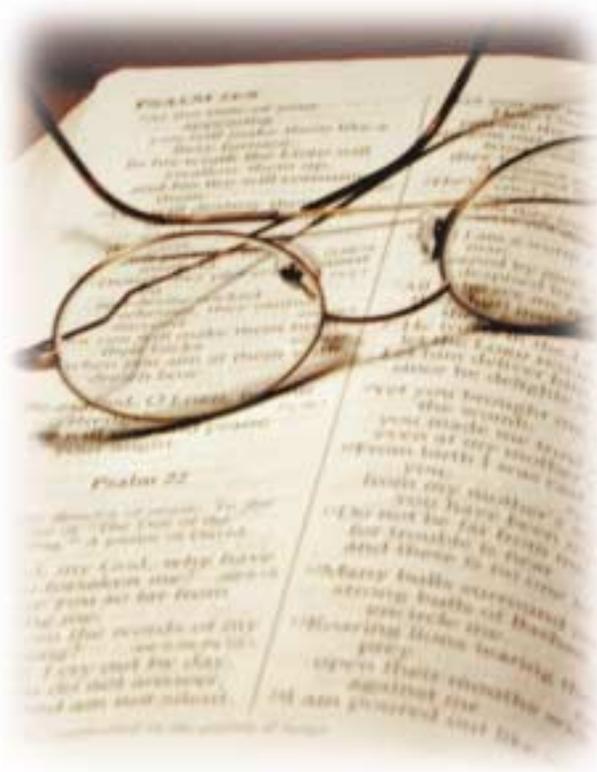




CONGREGATIONAL
STEWARDSHIP
WORKBOOK

Biblical Stewardship Principles



**Congregational Stewardship
Workbook 2000**

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Notes

- 1) God's stewards are God's stewards.
- 2) God's stewards are managers, not owners.
- 3) God's stewards are saints and sinners.
- 4) God's stewards are uniquely singular, yet profoundly plural.
- 5) God's stewards are in the world, but not of the world.
- 6) God's stewards are loved and loving.
- 7) God's stewards are served and serving.
- 8) God's stewards live with an awareness of the present and the future, of time and eternity.

This is LIFE—the life of God's stewards. It's the life of people whose response to the Good News of Jesus Christ is to live as God's stewards managing all of life and life's resources for God's purposes!

A Quick Overview

Here is what you will find:

- An interesting, true story of a steward.
- A short summary and some insights related to each of the eight (8) principles.
- An exercise for reflection on the principles.
- A bibliography of other resources.
- A “stop—start—continue” series of challenges for your congregation.
- An appeal for designing a plan for accountability for stewardship leaders.

Go ahead! Look further! Don't stop here! You'll enjoy it!

A Story

Joe was an immigrant. Most considered him a low-class, immigrant foreigner. He had been through some terrible times. He did not like the place he now lived. He missed his family, especially his father, and even his brothers who had hurt him deeply.

In the course of time, Joe reflected on what his father had modeled for him in his childhood. He remembered the trust in God the family shared. His employers noticed a gradual difference in Joe's attitude, work habits, vocabulary, demeanor and relationship with others.

Something was going on inside Joe. His bitterness began to subside. His smile became more evident. As he reflected on the meaning of his life, what was happening, where he was, and his occupation; he became increasingly grateful to his father, especially for the principles, the integrity, that shaped his heart and soul.

Joe truly knew who and Whose he was. There were some basic principles provided the grounding, the roots for his life. He discovered them.

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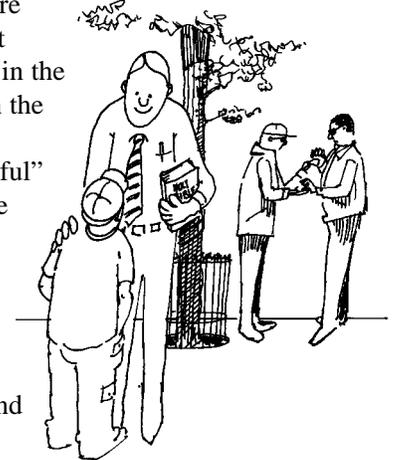
from learning all we can about everything: human beings, science, medicine, space, history, communication, etc. We use those gifts to honor God, to serve and draw others closer to Him by the way we live, speak and act. It is a part of how “having the mind of Christ” is revealed. Our witness as God’s steward is seen in the decisions we make in our daily life, in home, family, school, in our profession, on the job, in the community, in public and in private.

This principle has implications for the need to balance the time we spend in service in the organization called our church, and the time we spend serving others in the name of Christ in the community, among the ones in need.

Being God’s steward is not limited to “church-related” activities. We remember that “God so loved the world...” That includes all the people in it, those who are not yet a part of God’s church, but need to be! Being God’s steward goes beyond the church or school property line.

God’s stewards dare not resort to underhanded, unethical means to achieve their goals, or the goals of the church organization in this world. Our witness is diminished and integrity compromised when, or if, we resort to “pressure tactics,” laws, regulations, or demands that might “work” in order to get the job done in the church just because it is done that way “in the world.”

Beware of legalisms, disguised as “useful” or “workable programs” that creep into the thinking of God’s people. Demands and manipulation may get immediate or short-term results, but they leave a long residue of resentment and hostility. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the continuing motivation and power for renewed heart and lives (Phil. 2:5-11; Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 5:14-6:2) *God’s stewards are in the world but not of the world.*



God’s stewards are loved and loving.

This means that God’s stewards recognize that their stewardship flows out of God’s act of love for them in Christ. This empowers them, in turn, to love others in acts of Christ-like love.

“We love because He first loved us.” That is how St. John puts it (1 John 4:19). It is true. The greatest evidence of the love of God is in the giving of His Son, Jesus. His life of obedience (of keeping the Law in the stead of all of God’s law-breakers, sinners); His sacrifice of himself; His atoning death on the Cross for all people; His rising to life again on Easter. Well, there is no greater evidence of divine love than this! (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8-11; Gal. 4:4-5; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; 1 John 3:16-18)

The passages listed above, and many others, tell the story of God’s great love for human beings, all kinds, in all places. Reflecting on that truth enables people to find new hope, new significance, new meaning for life

Notes

this truth: “whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave...” (Matt. 20:26-28).

God’s stewards are not bound by the organization of the church in serving. Stewards live a life of serving because we have been served by the Chief Servant, the Chief Steward. Service done in the community and world for the benefit of all God’s creatures and creation is a part of our total stewardship of life. The use of talents, gifts and skills for the well-being of others is a way we stewards live out our lives.

Stewards challenge and encourage one another to fulfill the acts of compassion, kindness and charity that bring honor to God. We learn how to serve the more we get to know the will of The Servant, Jesus. Paul instructs us, “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—death on a cross! (Phil. 2:5-8)

That is being a servant! It is also why God’s stewards have servant attitudes. Spend time with Jesus and He will serve you—and you will serve others in your household, community, neighborhood, business, government in like fashion. *God’s stewards are served and serving.*

God’s stewards live with an awareness of the present and the future, of time and eternity.

This means that God’s stewards live intentionally in the light of the Lord’s eternal purpose while being firmly committed to His rule in the here and now.

When you know you’re going to heaven, you can do a lot of good on earth. The Christian faith begins with God. God did what was and is needed for our eternal destiny. The comments and Biblical references in the previous sections have made that abundantly clear. Because of God’s action in Christ, the steward’s eternal destiny is certain. Therefore God’s stewards are set free to live fully for God in this present world (Gal. 5:1, 13; 1 Peter 2:16).

God’s stewards are not escapists, thinking only of leaving the troubles of this world and escaping to heaven. We do not have a religion of escapism. Christianity is the most “physical” of all world religions. In the Incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ we learn to understand the preciousness of life, of this world, and our privileged calling as God’s stewards.

Stewards belonging to God live and serve in this world, yet are mindful of eternity. Stewards know we are blessed to be a blessing (Gen. 12:1-3). Stewards are not merely consumers, accumulators of things. The stewards true “treasure” is in doing the will of God with all we are and have (Matt. 6:19-21). The purpose of the life of God’s steward is to make a contribution to others in the name of Christ. We do that in the here and now, while we live, and as we have opportunity in service to other people, to the society around us, and the world in which we live (Gal. 6:7-10).

Stewards can also continue to do some of that even after we have been

