

Reality and Responsibility

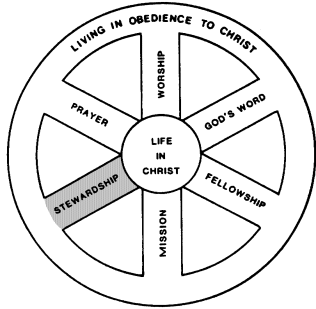
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INTRODUCTION

I've been getting a reputation down at the shelter lately. The reputation has been built while I've been giving more time. The reputation is that I'm soft. At first that annoyed me, but then I realized that it can be a good thing. As a pastor I want to be known for someone who errs on the side of compassion.

For this reason the subject of today's message is a little difficult for me. I want to be nice to everyone, but at the same time, some of you are having issues with today's subject. To help me with this I've been interviewing candidates for a new staff position for the Corps. The first interviewee sent in this video for me to watch.



(watch Barry Bates – Offering Linebacker)

In all seriousness, today's message is not simply about giving your tithe to the church. We want to talk about the broader issue of stewardship. This is another spoke in our discipleship wheel, meaning it is another area of the disciple's life that needs to be in order for one to live in obedience to God.

What is Stewardship?

In a nutshell it is what we do with all that is entrusted to our care. There is a reality in which we must know what we have and there is a responsibility to use those things appropriately.

First let's talk about the reality. Although King David never gets the opportunity to build the temple there is a point in his story where we find him gathering all the needed supplies for it. In 1 Chronicles 29 he offers a prayer of thanks to God for the abundant resources God has provided.

1 Chronicles 29:14, "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes for you and we have given you only what comes from your hand."

The reality is that every time we give back to the Lord we are giving Him something He has already given to us. This involves the money, time and gifts we have to offer. It all comes from the Lord. Without Him we would have none

of it. When we can acknowledge that in our hearts it makes giving a lot easier to do.

In addition to that reality there also is responsibility involved in stewardship. Jesus told a classic story that helps us in our understanding. Let's look at Matthew 25:14-30 again. (READ)

It is our responsibility to use what has been given to us. Not only to use it but to use it well. God will hold us accountable for our stewardship of all that He has given to us.

Areas of Stewardship - 5 T's

Title

When I say "title" I'm talking about who we are as a person. It involves our integrity and our reputation. It includes how others perceive us. As people who proclaim allegiance to God it is important that we protect our reputation by not squandering it. The other day I heard someone say, "Any of you god [beep] idiots who don't believe in God are a bunch of stupid [beep] morons." I cringed.

Temple

We need to care for our bodies. This includes the things we eat, the exercise we get and even the times of rest we need to take. In 1 Corinthians 6 there is a passage of scripture dealing with sexual immorality. In verse 16 Paul reminds us that our bodies are the temple of God. God abides within His children as the Holy Spirit. When we defile our bodies in immoral ways, we are defiling the temple of God.

Time

This has to do with our daily allotment of more than 86,000 seconds. What do we do with them? How are they used? We need to be careful how we use them. We must make sure we allow time on a regular basis to develop all the spokes of our discipleship wheel. We need to take time to re-charge our batteries through rest, relaxation and recreation. We need to give our time to accomplishing the mission God has given us. We need to give time to our families, work and schools.

Talent

Talents are those abilities and skills that we are given at birth, but that develop over a lifetime. We need to develop them and use them for God's purposes. Some people have their gifts buried or froze out due to external circumstances. But God calls us to put them to work. Paul speaking to the Colossian church in chapter 3, verse 23 said, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men."

Treasure

Treasure means our money and all our material possessions. It is interesting to note that 12 out of the 38 parables given by Jesus relate to money. Jesus was not troubled by money, but He knew we would be. There is no question about money being a necessary factor in modern society. Money and choices about its use are a daily part of life. Christians who acknowledge the Lordship of Christ over all of life, including money, must be careful to use money and not let it use them. Scripture clearly states that we cannot have two masters. We are to choose God or Mammon (Luke 16:13). How we spend our money is an indication of what we believe about God. This includes our giving our 10% tithe to the church to support the church God has called us to.

Conclusion

I don't think stewardship has to be as scary and intimidating as some people make it. If we remember the reality and responsibility idea we started with it becomes a very simple thing. The reality is that all that we have belongs to God. Our responsibility is to use our Title, Temple, Time, Talent and Treasure to glorify God and live the life He has called us to live.