

Stewardship of Time, Treasure, and Talent

The biblical doctrine of stewardship defines our relationship to God. It identifies God as owner and our role as manager. God makes us his co-worker in administering all aspects of our life. The apostle Paul explains it best by saying, “For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building” (1 Corinthians 3:9). Starting with this foundation, we are then able to accurately view and correctly value not only our possessions, but, more importantly, human life itself. In essence, stewardship defines our purpose in this world as assigned to us by God himself. It is our divinely given opportunity to join with God in His worldwide and eternal redemptive work (Matthew 28:19-20). Stewardship is not God taking something from us; it is his method of bestowing his richest gifts upon his people.¹

Stewarding Our Time

From Genesis, we learn that God made the world and everything in it. He made humanity not out of boredom or neediness but out of the overflow of his goodness. He made us in his image, as men and women, to be co-laborers in stewarding the Earth. Time, and life itself, is a good gift from God. Yet, because of the Fall, our life this side of heaven is limited and finite. Time, then, is our experience of the duration of life in a broken world. So, while time is a good gift from God—it comes in short supply. As Psalm 39:5 says, “You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Each man’s life is but a breath.”

To steward our time well requires us to redeem our time. Ephesians 5:16 says, “Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of time.” We are prone to be unwise and abuse the time that God has so graciously given us. As a result, we tend to hoard our time selfishly. To steward our time well requires us to deny ourselves and follow the way of Christ. We see this way of Christ in his obedience, service, and rest.

Jesus Lived a Life of Obedience

Jesus obeyed his parents (Lk. 2:51), knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21), and submitted himself to the will of the Father (Phil. 2:8). It is through the obedience of Christ that we can be made righteous (Rom. 5:19). It’s this same Jesus who says to us, “If you love me, keep my commands (Jn. 14:15).” To steward our time well requires a life of obedience.

Jesus Lived a Life of Service

¹ Adapted from GotQuestions.org: <https://www.gotquestions.org/biblical-stewardship.html>

Jesus says in Mark 10:43-45, “But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Self-denial and service is woven into the fabric of Christian living. Jesus says in Matthew 16:24, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” Of course, Jesus modeled this sort of life perfectly even unto death. To steward our time well requires us to deny ourselves and live the cruciform life.

Jesus Lived a Life of Rest

Jesus was busy but he was never rushed. He was never hurried. And he took time to withdraw and spend time with the Father (Lk. 24:15). We are called to rest because God himself rested. We learn from Genesis that God rested on the seventh day after he had made the world and everything in it. This word *rested* in the text is the Hebrew word *shabbat* and it's where we get the word *Sabbath* from. This word means a deep rest, a deep peace. It's a near synonym for shalom—a state of wholeness and flourishing in every dimension of life. In this word is a sense of stopping, ceasing, and completion but also celebration. To steward our time well requires us to create rhythms of rest in our lives just as Jesus did.

Stewarding Our Treasure

Giving of our treasure, like any other human act, is meant to give glory to God (1 Cor. 10:31). Yet, like any other good gift from God, our finances can be idolized and abused. God has much to say through his Word regarding how we steward the financial resources he has given us. As a part of our stewardship, we are encouraged and commanded to be generous with our finances. In surveying the Bible, we see that God teaches us to give: responsively, freely, regularly, locally, sacrificially, and cheerfully.

Give Responsively

Psalm 24:1 says, “The Earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it...” When we understand that all things were created through him, by him, and for him (Col. 1:16-17), our view of ourselves changes from *owner* to *steward* of our finances. A steward is a person who has been entrusted with another’s resources and who seeks to manage those resources according to the owner’s vision and values. With this in mind, we strive to worship God by releasing our finances instead of hoarding and clinging to them. So, when we give, we do *not* give in order to earn something from God but instead give in response to all that he’s given us.

Give Freely

We are no longer required to give a tenth of our income (as the Israelites did) as we are no longer under Mosaic covenant law. The New Testament teaches that we should give as we are “able and even beyond [our] ability” (2 Cor. 8:3). Additionally, we are commanded not to give reluctantly or under compulsion. How then are we to give? We are to give freely as we have decided in our hearts (2 Cor. 9:7). This requires wisdom, discernment, and prayer.

Give Regularly

The early church gave each time they assembled (1 Cor. 16:2). Additionally, in order for the church to care for the needs of the body (Acts 2:45-46) and to pay pastors (1 Cor. 9:14; 1 Tim. 5:17-18), a regular offering was collected. This is the normal pattern established by the early church to care for its members, its pastors, and other local and global ministry.

Give Locally

As mentioned above, believers are to give in support of their local church (1 Tim. 5; Gal. 6:6). A believer’s giving should not necessarily be limited to the support of their local church. There are many other ministries and causes worth supporting and funding these causes should be done prayerfully. The primacy of our giving should reflect the community where we invest most of our time and where others are investing in us.

Give Sacrificially

The story of the widow’s offering in Mark 12:41-44 displays that God is less interested in the amount one gives and more interested in the posture of our hearts as we give. The widow gave sacrificially and she was commended by Jesus. Likewise, the churches of Macedonia gave “beyond their means” and were praised by Paul (2 Cor. 8:1-4). Our giving should not be done out of the excess of abundance. Rather, we should commit to give generously, lavishly, and sacrificially.

Give Cheerfully

Our God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9:7-8). In the act of giving, we should overflow with joy at participating in God’s work in the world. “He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.” (2 Cor. 9:10-11)

Generosity

To give responsively, freely, regularly, locally, sacrificially, and cheerfully requires planning and the longer one waits to do so, the harder it becomes. While giving generously is the normative practice for all believers, there are seasons in life when doing so may be unrealistic. Nonetheless, this sort of generosity should be the goal for all who follow Christ.

Stewarding Our Talent

Each of us has received grace-gifts from God. And “as each has received a gift,” we are to “use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace” (1 Peter 4:10). We are given these gifts for the “progress and joy” of one another’s faith (Philippians 1:25).

1 Peter 4:10 says, “each has received a gift.” This needs to land on us with appropriate weight. God wants us to know that our gifts are not an accident of genetics and experience. He knew what he was doing when he made each of us and he has *intentionally* given us the gifts we have *in* the measure we have them.

Therefore, we are stewards of the gifts God has entrusted to us. And he has entrusted them to us primarily for the benefit of others (1 Peter 4:10; Romans 12:4–6). Our gifts are not intended to be platforms where we try to gain our sense of significance from the esteem of men. Our real significance comes from God choosing us in Christ, gifting us, and deploying us in his kingdom for his purposes. There is more significance there than we can fully comprehend and appreciate. The praise of men is usually vicarious fluff.

Live Your Assignment

You are on assignment from God. This is why Paul says, “Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him” (1 Corinthians 7:17). “You are not your own” (1 Corinthians 6:19). You are “a bondservant of Christ” (1 Corinthians 7:22) and a steward of the gifts you have received. Others need your gifts. That’s why you have them.

So, live your assignment. Steward your gifts to the utmost for the sake of others. Aspire to be the very best and most fruitful you that you can be for God’s glory. Don’t dishonor God by devaluing the gifts he’s given you. Don’t waste valuable time grumbling about gifts you don’t have or resenting others for the gifts they do have, or even for the sinful pride they might exhibit. They’re stumbling, recovering selfaholics just like you and God knows how to graciously oppose them (1 Peter 5:5). Pray for them.

“So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God” (1 Corinthians 7:24). There is no higher calling for you than to be you, and God will reward you beyond your wildest dreams if you faithfully steward your gifts for others.²

² Adapted from Jon Bloom, Desiring God:
<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/steward-the-gifts-god-has-assigned-to-you>