

Stewardship is More Than Finances: A Bigger View

When we think about stewardship, we think primarily about money. That's a good and right thing, because when we think and talk about money, we are patterning our messages after those of Jesus. When you look back to the recorded teachings of Jesus in Scripture, you find a surprising number of references to the subject of personal finance. That's not because Jesus wants our money; it's certainly not because He needs our money. It's because Jesus is after our hearts, and He knows that the clearest window into what we truly love, desire and pursue is visible through our bank statements.

Think about it – Jesus could have set up anything as the primary competitor to God in our lives. He could have easily said something like, “You cannot serve both God and power,” or “You cannot serve both God and sex,” but instead He chose money: *“No one can be a slave of two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot be slaves of God and of money” (Matthew 6:24).*

Money matters, because the heart matters. So it's good and right for us to think about stewardship in terms of money. At the same time, stewardship is not exclusively about money. Instead, it's a holistic view of God as the owner, and we as His servants who have been entrusted with all kinds of resources, each of which provides an opportunity for the sake of the kingdom of God. So while we should think deeply about the money God has seen fit to flow into our lives, our view of stewardship cannot stop there. It's got to be bigger.

In light of that, here are three neglected objects of stewardship for you to think about today:

1. Your home.

Hospitality was one of the hallmarks of the early church. These fledgling believers were marked by generosity not only in their money, but in the opening up of their homes to others, welcoming them in. Paul listed hospitality in his practical exhortations of gospel-rooted living (Rom. 12:9-13) and went on to say that hospitality is one of the characteristics that must be present in church leaders (1 Tim. 3:2). Our homes are a resource, and we should be joyfully generous with them. That can mean things like hosting a small group, but in a broader sense, it means asking the simple question of why God has given you the home you have in the neighborhood you have around the people who live there. If He has done so intentionally, the home is a resource that should be made much of.

Furthermore, when we practice stewardship through hospitality, we mirror the gospel. The word itself, hospitality, comes from a combination of Greek words – the word for “love” and the word for “stranger.” When we invite others in hospitably, we are loving the stranger, which is exactly what God has done for us. When we were enemies and rebels, strangers to the faith, God invited us into His home as His sons and daughters.

2. Your children.

This is difficult. It's perspective changing to think that you, and I, are stewards of our children. In many ways, it's easier to think of something like money or a home as resources for these are objects. But our children? This cuts to the core of who we are, and yet in this aspect of life, too, we are stewards. It is our responsibility to build into our children in such a way that they love and are active in God's kingdom by His grace.

The psalmist gets at this idea in Psalm 127:3-4: *"Sons are indeed a heritage from the Lord, children, a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the sons born in one's youth. They are arrows. The straightness of the arrow is determined by the skill of the warrior."*

The children in this passage aren't only pictured as a reward; they are seen by the psalmist as a weapon. As parents, our best opportunity to significantly impact the world might just be through our children. If we can raise them to be kingdom people, people who take great risks for Christ, and love Him more than they love their lives, then the world can be changed. They can change it, and I can change it vicariously through them. This is the great task that God has entrusted to us, the stewards of these children. We as parents have the greatest measure of influence as to how straight they are shot, and how sharp their blades are. We can raise them to understand the great purposes of the universe, and that a life given for those purposes is not one spent in vain.

3. Your pain.

Your story matters. So does mine. The experiences God has brought into our lives, painful though they may be, are an issue of stewardship, and as stewards, we have the choice about what we will do with our pain. Will we be turned inward and bitter because of it, or will it become another means by which God extends the gospel of the kingdom through us?

In 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, you see the progression of stewardship in our pain: *"Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. He comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any kind of affliction, through the comfort we ourselves receive from God."*

We experience pain. We are comforted uniquely by the God of all compassion and comfort. And then we in turn extend that comfort to others. In other words, we steward our pain through providing comfort to others who are in relatable circumstances. We extend the blessing of God's comfort to all those who suffer so they, too, might experience the tears of a Savior who suffers alongside His brothers and sisters.

God has entrusted much to us, and our resources go well beyond money. If we want to be faithful, then, we must not only be so financially, but instead come to a holistic view of God's ownership, and our stewardship, of all things.

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