



Stewardship Primer 8

The Chief Steward and Stewardship Champions

1 Corinthians 4:2

“Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.”

Stewardship in the congregation must begin with the pastor as chief steward and with leaders who are (or will become) stewardship champions.

In *Net Results Magazine* Tom Bandy writes, “One of the hardest stewardship challenges for the church is the recognition that ‘leaders lead.’ It is not that leaders have to be perfect. If that were so, we wouldn’t have any...Yet leaders must lead. They lead the fervent prayers; they open themselves to serious accountability; they model spiritual discipline. If the average gift by members to the church is 2 percent, then leaders double it, or triple it, or more. If members pray ten minutes a day for the mission of the church, leaders pray an hour a day for the mission of the church. If members walk one mile for the sake of God’s mission, leaders walk two miles for the sake of God’s mission. The pastor holds them accountable for it. They hold the pastor accountable for it” (page 12, May/June 2008).

*The first
responsibility of
the leader is to
define reality.
The last is to
say thank you.
In between the
leader is a
servant.*

-Max De Pree

Pastors are the chief stewards in the congregation. J. E. Herrmann writes in *The Chief Steward*, “It is the privilege and responsibility of the pastor to teach the broad Spiritual conceptions of Christian stewardship to his people. He is also to lead them to a practical and fuller expression of the principles as individual Christians and as members of a Christian congregation. Stewardship belongs to the whole counsel of God. The levels of Christian stewardship in a Christian congregation are set in the main by the pastor...The principles and practice of Christian stewardship must become the absorbing passion in his life. He should endeavor to become the number one steward in his congregation. His entire activities as pastor, his personal life, must be convincing proof that he practices what he preaches” (page 19).

So of necessity the first thing the chief steward does is to examine his own stewardship life in the light of God’s Word. He will begin by asking, “What kind of steward am I” of my relationship with God, of my relationship with those around me especially those closest to me, of my relationship to myself (caring for body, intellect, emotions, etc.), and of my relationship to all of God’s creation.

Roy Bleick, in *Much More Than Giving*, writes, “To help each member be a good manager of what God has entrusted to him is one of the functions of the Christian church. Pastors are God’s gifts to the church to perform this service...Christian growth takes place through the Holy Spirit’s activity in the means of grace. As the pastor seeks to help people become better stewards, he needs to remember that two things are required for growth to take place. The first

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is to confront the believer with God’s expectation for his life; the Scriptural truth that everything belongs to God; the need for a personal examination of his attitude toward God’s Word, of his individual stewardship performance, and of his future goals and objectives; and the Gospel’s strong, unequivocal promises of grace and mercy. The second requirement for growth is a commitment to living according to the will of God, specific measurable objectives, and a strategy for reaching those objectives” (page 26).

Congregations need pastors who take the calling of chief steward seriously. Congregations also need lay leaders who are stewardship champions. Stewardship champions understand and live out their identity as Christian stewards. They understand that they are stewards not owners and model their identity as Christian stewards. They manage what God has entrusted to them with joy and generosity so that God’s will is carried out in their lives and in the life of the congregation. Stewardship champions are zealous for good works. Stewardship champions desire that every member would grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. Stewardship champions work with the pastor(s) to plan and implement intentional, ongoing, whole-life, systematic stewardship education in the congregation for all ages.

Steward leaders whether they are clergy or lay understand who they are in Christ. “As steward leaders we have no need to seek to increase in our position of power. We have no desire to build our own kingdoms and advance our own reputations. Our lives are ‘hidden with Christ in God’ (Colossians 3:3), and therefore it is no longer we who live, but Christ who lives in us (see Galatians 2:20). It is only with this kind of godly integrity that we can seek to decrease as we look away from ourselves to see Christ increase in and through our work as leaders” writes R. Scott Rodin in *Steward Leaders*, page 17.

Reflection:

Richard Borg, writing in *Chief Steward*, says, “American Christians are trapped in a morass of consumer debt, and the pastors and spiritual leaders who ought to be prepared to lead them into a better way are unable to speak into their condition because they’re bogged in the very same mire” (page xiii). How do you respond to Borg’s assessment of congregational leaders?

What priority does Biblical stewardship have among the leaders of your congregation?

Borg writes, “The challenge of changing your church’s stewardship culture will not be overcome quickly or easily, but quietly and incrementally. Ultimately, however, it will be worth the journey” (page 22). What can be done quietly and incrementally to change the stewardship culture of your congregation?

Digging Deeper:

Read *The Chief Steward* by J. E. Herrmann. Available at faithaflame.lcms.org

Read *The Steward Leader* by R. Scott Rodin.

