



GUIDELINES for Christian Stewards

PART THREE

The Witness of Life: The Stance of a Christian Steward

Stewardship is what we do in the Name of Christ after we say, “I believe in Jesus.” It is our continuing response to the grace of God in Jesus Christ affecting daily decisions in all areas of life. It is our “stance,” our view of life, style, purpose, direction and calling (Rom. 12:1–2).

“Christ died for all, that we who live might live no longer for ourselves, but for Christ who died and for our sakes was raised” (2 Cor. 5:14).

Believing that our Creator has also redeemed us and named us “disciples” in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism our entire life is a witness. “We were buried with Christ by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4).

*“... lead a life worthy of your calling...”
(Eph. 4:1)*

1 The stance of remembering whose we are: gratefully being and becoming what God desires us to be and do. We are:

1. Created in the image of God, reflecting our Creator (Gen. 1:27; Ps. 8:5; 2 Cor. 3:18).
2. Redeemed by God, in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8–10).
3. Named as God’s own in Holy Baptism (Matt. 28:18–20).
4. Sent on God’s mission in this world (Gen. 1:28–30; John 20:21; Eph. 3:8–12).
5. Empowered as God’s stewards, caregivers, managers, trustees (1 Corinthians 12–14; Romans 12).

Our Christian calling for life, our vocation, is to be God’s steward. Our occupation is one of the ways we live out our calling, our stewardship. It’s not a matter of “have to” but of “we get to!” The Christian steward is a totally free person and at the same time is servant of all (Luther).

2 The stance of knowing what is important: the witness in daily life.

A. Relationships:

- Our relationship with God (Is. 40:31; 43:1–3; 55:1–3; 1 John 4:19).
- Our relationship with self (Rom. 12:3; Phil. 2:3–5; 1 Peter 2:9–10).
- Our relationship with others (Rom. 12:18; Gal. 5:13–14; Eph. 4:15–32).
- Our relationship with creation (Psalm 8 and 24:1; Gen. 1:26–31; Apostles’ Creed).

B. Attitudes:

- An attitude of gratitude (Rom. 1:14–16; Col. 3:15–17; Psalm 103 and 118).
- An attitude of giving (Acts 20:35; Rom. 12:1–2; Gal. 6:1–10).
- An attitude of serving (Mark 10:42–45; 1 John 3:16; Gal. 5:13; Matt. 16:24–26).

C. Growing in knowledge and developing skills to seek justice and show kindness and mercy.

- Micah 6:8: what the LORD requires...
- Is. 58:5–7: the true good...
- James 2:14–17: a living faith vs. a dead faith...
- Eph. 4:31–32: be kind, tenderhearted ...
- Deut. 15:1–11: care for the poor ...
- Gal. 6:1–10: bearing burdens...
- Acts 2:43–47 and 6:1–7: caring for each other ... while not depriving others of opportunity or responsibility.

3 The stance of the Christian steward in money management: *the witness of life.*

In modern society money is power. In the Christian faith power is a servant.

Money is owned by God, managed by the Christian steward, as a servant for the *honor of God and the common good.* (Genesis 12 ... “blessed to be a blessing!”)

Financial contributions given directly to the ministry of the Church are one part of the stance of the Christian steward. They witness to eternal values and commitments, reflecting an attitude of thanksgiving for



the gift of God's eternal love in Jesus Christ. Tithes, offerings, sharing gifts (food, water, a bowl of rice, coconuts, clothing, medicine, etc) enable others to bear witness to Christ and meet many needs among all of the people of God.

Biblical Principles for Christian Giving

1. GIVE TO GOD THE FIRST PORTION.

"Honor the LORD with your substance, whatever you have, and with the first portion of all your returns" (Prov. 3:9).

2. GIVE REGULARLY.

"On the first day of the week, each one of you, set aside some money for the offering in proportion to what you have earned" (1 Cor. 16:2).

3. GIVE A PERCENTAGE.

"... set aside some money for the offering in proportion to what you have earned" (2 Cor. 16:2).

4. GIVE THANKFULLY.

"Always and for everything give thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father" (Eph. 5:20).
"The LORD loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7).

Ultimately Christian stewards are privileged to manage all of God's gifts and resources. How we do it, when, and from what posture or stance makes a lot of difference. It's not that "we have to" but "we get to!" We give, as we love—because He first loved us (John 3:16 and 1 John 4:19)!

Decisions about finances have strong motivations in the life of a steward:

- St. Paul says, "... show that your love is genuine. You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:8–9).
- "I appeal to you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1).

Giving the tithe (10 percent) and more was the common way of life in Old Testament times. It was a sign of faith, trust and responding to God's covenant promises. It still is today!

Consider:

- Gen. 14:20: Abram's unique gift
- Lev. 27:30–33: instructions about the tithe
- Deut. 14:22–29; 12:6; 26:12ff: divine guidance
- Ex. 19:23: putting God first
- Mal. 3:10: some abused the standard

Growing in life with God, stewards also grow in the grace of giving. Examine 2 Corinthians 8–9.

The New Testament moves stewards beyond rules and laws!

Take a moment to say in your own words what these passages mean for a steward.

- John 13:34–35: Love
- Romans 12:1–2: Mercy
- James 2:14–17: Faith and deeds

Reciprocity in one's stewardship; "God blesses our giving so that we often receive back more than what we give."

- Luke 6:38: give and it shall be given to you...
- Gal. 6:7–8: reaping follows sowing...
- 2 Cor. 8:13–14: "... others should not be eased, and you burdened ... but your abundance should supply their want, so that their abundance may supply your want, and there may be equality."
- Matt. 7:12: whatever you wish men would do to you, do so to them.

Generosity blossoms as confidence in God grows.

Discuss Matt. 6:25–34.

"God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work" (2 Cor. 9:8).

Some examples:

- 2 Cor. 8:1–5: they gave ... but first ...
- Acts 2:41–47: an uncommon kind of care ...
- Luke 21:1–4: a trusting widow ...
- Luke 19:1–10: a man who really changed ...
- 1 Chron. 29:1–13: an exemplary leader ...
- Eph. 4:27: takers become givers ...
- Acts 20:35: the blessed way ...



The way we function as stewards affects the larger community. “As we have opportunity let us do good for all people especially those of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10).

Which of these will do/we support? Why? How? When?

- Clothing banks
- Medical research
- Libraries
- Hospitals
- Food banks
- Scientific projects
- Family or children’s agencies
- Boarding schools
- Community agencies
- Educational institutions
- Prisoners
- Shelters for the homeless/abused
- Homes for the aging
- Groups influencing government policy
- Projects for the poor
- Nursing homes, etc.

The way we function as stewards affects the Church locally and worldwide. We are “the body of Christ” together. We do not function in isolation. We share a “partnership in the Gospel” (Phil. 1:3–11). How, when, where have you/we see this in action?

Our offerings are a part of our worship of God (Rom. 12:1–2). Our offerings are not limited by “rules and regulations.” Neither Old Testament laws (Lev. 27:30) nor modern tax regulations determine our response to God! We are set free to serve (Gal. 5:1; Col. 2; 1 Peter 2:16) and to follow our Lord in trust and in loving compassion (John 13:34–35), without limits! (Matt. 5:21–34).

Jesus says, “Give and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap” (Luke 6:38). As God is gracious and generous, so are God’s stewards (Luke 12:48). Consider 2 Corinthians 8–9.

Our offerings and financial planning enables us to “be the church!” Together we:
share the Gospel
help teach the Word of God
care for children
assist the elderly

- offer guidance to families
- provide missionaries, pastors, teachers
- help the homeless
- witness to the love of Christ
- clothe the naked
- feed the hungry
- train the young
- visit the prisoner
- celebrate the Sacraments
- assist the persecuted
- visit the lonely
- honor our Lord ... serve people!
- plan our estates ...
- ... and this is only a start!

4. The stance of the steward: thinking GLOBALLY, acting LOCALLY.

Christian stewards share some common concerns for humanity and creation with others who may or may not share our Faith commitments. We can find ourselves working side by side with other people of good will who may have a different motivation for living and serving as they do, but also share our concern for all God’s people and the inarticulate creation too.

Being involved in community, national, international groups with common concerns for God’s world—environment, justice, nuclear, food banks, Red Cross, World Relief issues—is a way stewards say “This is *our* Father’s world ...” (Ps. 24:1; Jer. 29:7; Acts 17:24–31).

5. The stance of a steward in a material world and consumer society: the witness of daily life.

“Take heed, and beware of all covetousness; for a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” Jesus (Luke 12:15).

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” Jesus (Matt. 6:19–21).

The false gods of plenty, position, power and prestige are always with us. Maturing stewards live in an increasing awareness of the dangers of playing Owner when God made us “managers.” We are creatures, not the Creator.

Being a steward is not merely having a list of duties to perform or fulfill. It is a continuing, daily response to living with God in Jesus Christ. For some people there is no easy way to lead a “simple life,” or “simplify their style of life.” For others, life is lived on a simple level of trust in God each day. Being a steward is an adventure in discipleship. It involves a joyful discipline, a decision-making process that seeks divine direction ... and blessing! ... and follows it!



As a steward, consider the following areas of daily decision-making.

1. Stewardship of body and soul
 - regular prayer, meditation
 - regular worship, Bible study
 - proper diet, eating habits
 - proper exercise and rest
 - What habits need to be changed?
 - What stance needs to be developed?

“... your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which you have from God” (1 Cor. 6:19).

3. Stewardship of possessions/position:
 - Do we need what we can afford?
 - What do we have that will last?
 - What do we do that will last?
 - What is the purpose of our possessions?
 - Can we live more with less?
 - How do we serve?
 - What do we buy? Why?

2. Stewardship of people: (by)
 - reducing worry, stress, anxiety
 - assisting children, elderly, ill
 - developing skills, abilities
 - encouraging support groups
 - promoting peace/justice/care
 - strengthening families.

“... you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Cor. 12:2).

4. Stewardship of nature:
 - How are we using the land, water, air?
 - What are we leaving for our children?
 - What does technology help / harm?
 - How much energy do we consume?
 - What can we recycle, use again?

“The earth is the LORD’S ...” (Ps. 24:1)

A suggestion:

Review your records from purchases, contributions, and payments for the last two years. What do they reveal about our attitudes, values, stewardship, priorities and commitments?

COUNSEL FOR STEWARDS

“Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its mold, but let God remold your minds from within” (Rom. 12:2 Phillips).

6 ♦ **The stance of a steward:** *living more meaningfully, joyfully, with satisfaction!*

Stewards are motivated by the love of Christ to fulfill God’s purposes in life. Our Creator and Redeemer is Owner of all! We belong to God and are instruments in the hands of God for the good of all! As managers for God we have opportunities and responsibilities in many areas of life.

Adopting and practicing the stance of a steward in daily life is challenging! The pressures of daily life, living, surviving, serving, caring for family and friends, the poor, the needy or the sick seldom relax. Sometimes the pressures can overwhelm us!

However, in the light of God’s Word and promises (Rom. 12:1–2) we grow to take a stance that is reflective of Jesus, the Chief Steward.

- We celebrate life with others and value it!
- We seek a fairer use of the world’s resources!
- We share with others the gifts of God!
- We consider the long-term effects of poverty, injustice, pollution, alienation.
- We try to supply resources and services that will meet human and social need.
- We try to think corporately, remembering our human and planetary frailty.
- We examine our priorities in the light of the Word of God, repent where needed and receive the forgiveness Christ gives.
- We are people of hope and confidence in God.

The stance we take and the style we use to share our understanding of the meaning of life with God, in Jesus Christ, can have a significant effect on those around us. Our world is shrinking as our universe expands. However, we continue to be God’s stewards!

Counsel for stewards:

As a result of the biblical insights we have shared, the reflections we have made on the world in which we live, the prayers we continue to pray and the discussions in which we engage, will we do anything differently in our lives in the days and years ahead? It is a meaningful question!

How will we go about it, individually and corporately as human beings, as members of the Church, “the body of Christ”? Please share your thoughts together now!

- Pray about these things.
- Think on these things.
- Act on these things!

Being a steward is living all of life for God’s purposes! “Rejoice in the Lord!” (Phil. 4:4)

