

STEWARDSHIP IN MINISTRY

SCRIPTURES: Genesis 39
Luke 16:1-13

MEMORIZE: 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2

WORD STUDY: oikonomos

STEWARDSHIP. The word usually brings to mind the annual fund-raising drive by churches to get members to sign a financial pledge for the next year. If a church does not use the fund-drive and pledge method (and many Bible-believing churches do not) it still brings to mind only financial responsibility. But stewardship involves much more than wealth, finances or material possessions. Stewardship involves all of life. Everything we have has been given to us by God to manage for His glory. Stewardship thus involves the use of our mind, body, language, employment, lifestyle, spiritual abilities, as well as time and wealth.

The first topic for consideration is stewardship in ministry. Every Christian is to be involved in ministry and will be held accountable before the Lord as to how he discharged that ministry—Ephesians 4:11-16. As we each contribute to the growth of the Body of Christ and its unity, we also become more effective as witnesses in the world—John 13:34, 35. We must learn that we cannot be credible evangelists until we demonstrate the love of God in our relationships within the local church.

1. Read the story of Joseph as the steward over Potiphar's house (Genesis 39:1-23) and the parable of Christ about the unrighteous steward (Luke 16:1-13). These two stories will become the basis of contrast between good and poor stewardship in each lesson on stewardship. On the basis of these two stories and your word study, write a definition of a steward and list his duties.
2. How did Joseph regard his stewardship responsibilities as a ministry?
3. How did the unrighteous steward regard his responsibilities?

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THE CHURCH AS GOD'S HOUSEHOLD

To properly understand stewardship in the New Testament, one must have a proper concept of the church as God's household, God's people, God's community. Each Christian, as a member of God's family, is a steward. Everything he has belongs to God; every area of his life must be managed as a resource for which he is responsible to God. He must recognize that he will be asked to give an account of his stewardship, as were Joseph and the unrighteous steward. There will be no false accusations before God and no unjust evaluations.

Although the Christian will give an individual account of his stewardship, he is not a steward in isolation. His stewardship is discharged in the corporate setting of God's household.

4. How does membership in God's household affect our position?
Ephesians 2:19

5. How should our membership in the household of God affect our lives?
1 Timothy 3:14, 15

6. Enlarge upon this concept, using 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17. ("You" here is plural and refers to us corporately, not individually.)

7. What is our stewardship responsibility toward God's household?
Galatians 6:10

8. How does 1 Peter 2:5 describe our stewardship in the family of God as a ministry?

STEWARDSHIP REQUIREMENTS

9. List the qualifications for stewardship in each text below:
1 Corinthians 4:1, 2

Titus 1:7 with
1 Timothy 3:7

1 Timothy 3:4, 5, 12;
Titus 1:6

10. Does this apply to everyone or are you exempted if you are not an elder or deacon?

STEWARDSHIP IN MINISTRY

Even though we are not apostles and the apostolic period is over, we do have the same ministry committed to us. The mysteries of God relate to the gospel as encompassing both Jews and Gentiles in one body, the fact of our being in Christ and Christ in us, the nature of the New Testament church, and the hardening of Israel to the gospel—Ephesians 3:3-6; 6:19; Colossians 1:27; Romans 11:25, 26; 16:25, 26.

MYSTERY: something in the plan of God not previously revealed.

11. How do we discharge our responsibility as stewards of the mysteries of God?
1 Corinthians 4:1, 2
12. What was Paul's attitude toward the stewardship of the Gospel?
1 Corinthians 9:16, 17
13. What is your personal attitude toward the stewardship of the Gospel?

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14. The word "oikonomia" in Ephesians 1:10 is translated "dispensation", "administration" or "put into effect" in different versions. What is God's purpose in the stewardship of this mystery? Ephesians 1:9, 10

15. What is God's purpose for the church in the stewardship of this mystery? Ephesians 3:8-10

16. What is God's purpose for ministers? Ephesians 4:11, 12. Who is to do the work of the ministry?

17. What is a primary responsibility of the minister in discharging his stewardship? Colossians 1:24-27

18. Combining the thoughts of Ephesians 4:11, 12 and Colossians 1:24-27, how might a minister most effectively fulfill his stewardship?

19. Write a brief essay regarding your attitude toward the household of God and your stewardship responsibility for ministry. Discuss areas in your life that need development and how you plan to change them.