

Stewardship Principles

Christian stewardship is the free and joyous activity of the child of God and God's family, the church, as response to God's love in Christ. in managing all of life and life's resources in God-pleasing manner in partnership with Him towards the ultimate purpose of glorifying Him by making disciples of all nations

The "we" mentioned in the "will" and "will not" statements that follow refers to those who serve the above-mentioned groupings as they relate to and deal with God's stewards.

I—GOD'S STEWARDS ARE GOD'S STEWARDS.

This means: God's stewards are stewards by virtue of creation and their re-creation in Holy Baptism; therefore, they belong to the Lord.

Guidance from God's Word

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Gen. 1:1)

But now, this is what the LORD says—he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. (Is. 43:1; see also vv.2-3a)

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. (Rom. 6:4; see also vv. 1-11)

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! (2 Cor. 5:16-17; see also vv. 14-15)

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Eph. 2:8-10)

Implications

As God's children through faith in Christ with the Holy Spirit's help we will:

- Recognize that we are made stewards by God's activity;
- Respect Christian stewards for Who they are; and,
- Remind stewards that they are God's new creation each day.

As God's children through faith in Christ with the Holy Spirit's help we will not:

- Use short-cut methods that consider stewards to be merely "donors," "clients" or "customers" or means to an end;
- Neglect to name the name of the Lord who is The Source of all stewardship; or,
- Present stewardship as limited to a single area of life, such as money.

II—GOD'S STEWARDS ARE MANAGERS, NOT OWNERS.

This means: God's stewards have been entrusted with life and life's resources and given the privilege of responsibly and joyfully managing them for Him.

Guidance from God's Word

The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. (Gen. 2:15)

The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it. (Ps. 24:1; see also Ps. 89:11)

But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. (1 Chron. 29:14; see also vv. 1-20)

And they [Macedonian Christians] did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. (2 Cor. 8:5; see also vv. 1-7)

• *See also Luke 12:41-48; 1 Tim. 6:17-19.*

Implications

As God's children through faith in Christ with the Holy Spirit's help we will:

- Encourage proper management of all life and life's resources for God's purposes;
- Promote materials and approaches to stewards that are firmly grounded in the Owner/manager understanding of stewardship;
- Encourage cheerful, firstfruit, proportionate (including, but not limited to, tithing) living and giving in all areas of life by Christian stewards; and,
- Receive and use God's gifts with thanksgiving.

As God's children through faith in Christ with the Holy Spirit's help we will not:

- Approach the steward as if he or she is the Owner;
- Neglect to remind the steward of Who the Owner is;
- Forget the Owner for the sake of the interests of the entity being represented; or,
- Fail to remind Christian stewards that greater blessings call for greater responsibility to manage them according to God's purposes.

III—GOD'S STEWARDS ARE SAINTS AND SINNERS.

This means: God's stewards rejoice in and live out what the Lord has declared them to be through the cross. At the same time His stewards recognize they are sinners who fight sin and its consequences each day.

Guidance from God's Word

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. (Eph. 4:22-24; see also Col. 3:5-17)

So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin. (Rom. 7:21-25)

• *See also 1 John 3:1-2; 1 Peter 2:9-10*

Implications

As God's children through faith in Christ with the Holy Spirit's help we will:

- Recognize that the potential for great good, or great evil, lies in the way stewardship is presented and received;
- Evaluate carefully all communication, oral or written, according to the proper distinction between Law and Gospel and in keeping with the biblical truth that each steward at the same time is saint and sinner; and,
- Offer varying opportunities for Christian stewards to grow, recognizing that they are at different points of spiritual maturity.

As God's children through faith in Christ with the Holy Spirit's help we will not:

- Assume that, because we are dealing with Christians, we can set aside the proper application of Law and Gospel in serving God's stewards;
- See all Christians as being at the same maturity level; or,
- Use any approach to stewards that appeals to the sinful nature, selfish interest, or something other than faith active in love.

IV—GOD'S STEWARDS

ARE UNIQUELY SINGULAR, YET PROFOUNDLY PLURAL.

This means: God's stewards recognize that their lives of stewardship are not solo performances but are personal responses to God, lived out within the community of faith to benefit the whole world.

Guidance from God's Word

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. (Rom. 12:4-5)

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. (1 Cor. 12:12-13)

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. (1 Peter 4:10)

- See also 2 Cor. 8:13-14; Gal. 6:7-10.

Implications

As God's children through faith in Christ with the Holy Spirit's help we will:

- Emphasize the privilege and the accountability this privilege entails of being unique children of God with specific gifts that honor the Lord and bless others;
- Recognize the personal and sensitive nature of the steward's response; and yet
- Emphasize the truth that Christian stewards are members of the Body of Christ and are in kingdom work together with fellow Christians; and,
- Remind Christian stewards that God showers blessings upon those who manage them wisely and well for the common good.

As God's children through faith in Christ with the Holy Spirit's help we will not:

- Emphasize one aspect or area of church work to the exclusion or detriment of others;
- Teach or influence in ways which minimize the stewards' connections to and need for the rest of the Body of Christ; or,
- Equate stewardship with merely meeting an organization's budget or financial goal.

V—GOD'S STEWARDS

ARE *IN* THE WORLD, BUT NOT *OF* THE WORLD.

This means: God's stewards recognize that the Lord sets them apart from the world and by the transforming power of the Gospel sends them into the world to live out the Gospel.

Guidance from God's Word

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Rom. 12:2)

My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. (John 17:15-18)

- See also John 20:21-23; Genesis 12:1-3; John 16:33.

Implications

As God's children through faith in Christ with the Holy Spirit's help we will:

- Emphasize how the Gospel transforms stewards' attitudes in, about and toward the world;
- Emphasize the Christian witness of stewards in the decisions that are made; and,
- Encourage the support of appropriate projects and activities both within and outside the church.

As God's children through faith in Christ with the Holy Spirit's help we will not:

- Limit the scope of Christian stewardship only to "church-related" projects and activities;
- Use spiritually defective approaches and motivations from the world that are based mainly and primarily on the criterion that they "work"; or,
- Forget the daily tensions and struggles of being God's stewards *in* but not *of* the world.

VI—GOD'S STEWARDS ARE LOVED AND LOVING.

This means: God's stewards recognize that their stewardship flows out of God's act of love for them in Christ which empowers them, in turn, to love others in acts of Christ-like love.

Guidance from God's Word

We love because he first loved us. (1 John 4:19; see also v. 11)

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. (1 John 3:16-18)

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. (John 13:34-35)

- See also 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Gal. 5:6b

Implications

As God's children through faith in Christ with the Holy Spirit's help we will:

- Emphasize that all activities of Christian stewards done in faith and love are properly Christian stewardship;
- Honor the choices God's people make as they exercise Christ-like love; and,
- Use only those approaches, strategies and methods that reflect the Gospel and build up the stewards' faith active in love.

As God's children through faith in Christ with the Holy Spirit's help we will not:

- Employ techniques and fundraising techniques that fail to emphasize God's love in Christ as the basis and motivation for Christian stewardship;
- Minimize the bringing of regular offerings as a part of worship and a loving response to God's love for us; or,
- De-emphasize or set aside God's love and our response in order to meet budgets, quotas and goals.

VII—GOD'S STEWARDS ARE SERVED AND SERVING.

This means: God's stewards recognize that their stewardship involves a Gospel-powered style of life which is demonstrated in servanthood within all the arenas of life.

Guidance from God's Word

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—death on a cross! (Phil. 2:5-8)

Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Matt. 20:26b-28; see also Matt. 25:31-46)

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet. (John 13:3-5 see also vv. 15-17)

Implications

As God's children through faith in Christ with the Holy Spirit's help we will:

- Recognize that service done for the benefit of the community and world is also a part of Christian stewardship;
- Emphasize that just as Jesus came to serve, stewards are privileged to serve others through their abilities and resources; and,
- Adopt the attitude of a servant in our relationships with others.

As God's children through faith in Christ with the Holy Spirit's help we will not:

- Set aside servanthood for the sake of merely reaching an organizational goal;
- Fail to encourage stewards to be *God's* servants in any decision or action; or,
- Fail to challenge stewards to serve the Lord with personal acts of compassion and service as well as financial gifts.

VIII—GOD'S STEWARDS LIVE WITH AN AWARENESS OF THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE, OF TIME AND ETERNITY.

This means: God's stewards live intentionally in the light of the Lord's eternal purpose while being firmly committed to His rule in the here and now.

Guidance from God's Word

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matt. 6:19-21)

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life. (1 Tim. 6:17-19)

See also: Phil. 3:12-14,20; 2 Peter 3:11-12a; Rev. 14:13.

Implications

As God's children through faith in Christ with the Holy Spirit's help we will:

- Point out the eternal dimensions inherent in all that stewards decide to do or not to do;
- Pursue good planning for the present and future as part of stewardship education; and,
- Rejoice in knowing that what God's stewards do now can have lasting benefits.

As God's children through faith in Christ with the Holy Spirit's help we will not:

- Be so intent on the here and now that the possibilities for extending the kingdom after death are neglected; or,
- Be so intent on plans for the future that the possibilities for extending the kingdom here and now are neglected.