



SOUTH CAROLINA
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Stewardship...
God's Way

Senior Adult Edition

How can you prevent the blessings which surround most of our lives from being an obstacle to serving God?

Praying for Guidance

Thinking of our things as *not* our things is unusual for many people, and may be a new way of looking at your life. It helps to pray for God's guidance, and for our eyes to be opened to His truth. Perhaps we could make this our prayer today:

***F**ather, I see in Your Word that my life is not mine, my things are not really mine, even my time and talents are not mine. Help me to realize this in my heart, and to build my life around this knowledge. Open my eyes to Your ownership of everything I am and have. Show me today ways I can begin to use what You have loaned me as things meant not only to provide for my needs, but also to serve Your purposes. Give me the opportunity to dedicate something I have to the service of others, and to the service of the Lord. And let all I have be used to show my love for Jesus Christ, in whose name I pray, Amen.*

The possibilities are limited only by your own investigation and involvement.

Do you have a Will? Many senior adults feel they do not need a will unless they own a lot of property or other assets. Even youth can plan toward making Wills, and young adults will be wise to have a simple Will — especially if you're married. Does this Will provide for Christian ministry, for a bequest to your church, or to something like the Baptist Foundation?

These are “big” items, the more obvious things we connect with stewardship. But when you get right down to it, the things around you in your house, your house itself, your car, everything, are things to be managed for the Lord. That means setting them apart *from* sinful uses, and setting them apart *for* godly uses. Do you use your internet connection for godly purposes? — Did you ever think it could be?! Do you use your car for godly purposes? Like what?

- Taking someone to church who needs a ride.
- Volunteering to take a group to a church activity.
- Use a spare room to house a BSU summer missionary or a missionary who is in the states for a short time.

Strong biblical corollary to the Shunamite couple who showed Christian hospitality toward the prophet Elisha (2 Kings 4:8-10). There is an office at IMB that handles missionary housing issues when they are stateside

This is what *personalizing our stewardship* means: finding ways to dedicate our things to God's purposes. After all, they're not our things, anyway, not ultimately.

Condemnation or Commendation

One lesson of the parable in Luke 19:12-26 is that our *things* can be a source of condemnation or commendation. Read the following passages, and decide which option resulted from these persons' possession of “goods.”

Matthew 25:14-30
Luke 12:18-21

Stewardship is More than Money

Group Study - Part 1

Background Passage: Luke 19:12-26

Focal Passage: Luke 19:13

Bible Truth: “God has given us our lives and possessions to provide for our needs and serve His interests.”

Chances are, if your church has an annual stewardship emphasis, especially involving the budget promotion, you might think to yourself, “They need us to put a few more dollars in the offering envelope.” For most people, that's what stewardship is — envelopes and offering plates.

Maybe we got the idea from church, or from the Bible. Sometimes we're reminded in church Jesus had a lot to say about money. And He did. He told parables about money. He criticized the common attitudes of the rich. He warned them they were going to have trouble ever getting into heaven. Maybe we got our ideas about money and stewardship from the teachings of Jesus.

But Jesus used money to talk about much larger things. Take for instance the background passage for today's study, the parable Jesus told about the servants who were given “minas” of money (“pounds” in King James Version). It seems to be all about money. But read it with your heart! It's about life, and everything we are and have.

The proof of this is in Jesus' application. He said, “I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away.”



No mention of money. He was talking about the total product of our lives and energies. If we don't produce fruit for God and His kingdom, we have nothing.

Point of Our Study Today

This passage in the Bible focuses on this statement of truth: ***Everything belongs to God, who shares it with us, to bless us and to bless His world through us.***

We're going to look at some important principles in the Bible which prove this truth, and some ways we can put those principles to work in our own lives, so we can fulfill God's purpose for us.

It All Belongs to God

Before anything else, we need to understand that everything in the world belongs to God. He made it. It's His. Here's our first principle:

God owns everything, including all we are and have, both by creation and by redemption.

The Bible begins with the words, **"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth"** (Genesis 1:1). He is the sovereign of the universe. That means He is ruler of it all, as its maker. Read Bible passages like Psalm 50:10, Leviticus 25:23, Ezekiel 18:4, and Psalm 24:1, and see how God declares that everything in the world is His.

There are two sides to this ownership, a bright side and a dark side. The bright side is God is in charge of it, and can see it is directed toward us in blessings. The dark side is if we abuse or mismanage what is God's, He will hold us responsible.

A woman who had not been in church for years finally returned, after the pastor had encouraged her on numerous occasions. It turned out she didn't come back because of his reminders. Her son had been put in prison because he had fallen behind on child support. Her grandchildren by his first marriage had been calling her complaining that their mother was misusing her child support. Her other grandchildren were getting into trouble. Her new daughter in law was not a Christian, was conceited and greedy, and had influenced her son into a lifestyle of "the rich and famous." This woman saw her children headed off in any direction but a godly one, and her own life with her husband was dwindling down to their last days with little to live for. When she finally felt the dread of it all, she thought about church. She came back to church because she realized she had lived for everything but God in the years gone by.

How can we keep from falling into the temptation to derive more pleasure from things and money than from the Lord we serve?

Many people find that a budget helps. Look at money coming in, and analyze the money going out. How is it spent? Good stewardship will mean first figuring a proportionate return to God through offerings. Since stewardship is more than that, ask yourself what you're doing with your money to do something other than bless *yourself*. Are you providing for any charities? Do you plan "ministry" to neighbors, money for community help?

One Christian money management expert suggests that our budgets have a category for "ministry." The idea is to be able to respond to calls for help or donation, or to think of ways to spend money which will help other people with human needs, or open doors to Christian witness. You might consider simply planning to spend \$250 — or \$2,500! — per

year on things like "scholarships" for youth to go to a Christian camp or on weekend rallies for spiritual purposes.



- To become a great people, many saved persons enjoying new life and bringing glory to His name.
- To magnify His work in His people, so the world sees how He has saved and blessed us.
- To be used as missionaries to the world, so many others are brought to Christ.

Sanctifying Our Things

In the very way we live, we must learn to sanctify everything to God. To sanctify means to make holy — to set apart *from* sin and set apart *for* God.

What we're really talking about is **personalizing stewardship**. God has made us managers of what is His, so we must each personalize this realization by disciplining ourselves to make everything in our lives holy for His purposes.

In Jesus' parable, study carefully verses 16-23. Notice each servant reported on his work by saying, "Sir, here is your mina." They reported on what they had done—or not done—with their master's wealth.

The Christian must acknowledge Christ's Lordship of everything, and constantly seek ways to use possessions to serve Christ's purposes.

This is the discipline of sanctifying our things.

We must be careful to avoid becoming alienated from God because of things. We must put safeguards in place in our lives to keep us from getting our eyes off God and on the things which surround us or lure us.

Not only does God own everything because of creation, but also because of redemption.

1 Corinthians 6:20: You were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

When Christ died, He purchased a people out of the earth for His special possession. Revelation 5:9 says, "**With your blood you purchased men for God.**" Not only are Christians affected by this redemption, but the entire creation. Paul says in Romans 8 that the whole creation groans in anticipation of being emancipated by the redemptive work of Christ (vv.19-21). So everything belongs to God by redemption as well as creation.

Does this mean that God owns it all? For one thing, it means that we are no longer able in good conscience to think of our money as beyond the authority of God to direct what is to be done with it. If we are committed to the concept God owns what we have, we will start all our plans with an inquiry into His will for us. We will find we have to be generous and responsible, because *it's not our money! Or anything else!*

Once we realize everything belongs to God, it will have an impact on the way we think of "our" possessions. It's important to know although God owns everything, He doesn't act the way we might have acted if it all belonged to us!

There are many rich people in the world, some of them very stingy, but some quite generous. Probably most rich people spend their money on themselves. Everyone knows of wealthy persons who give great amounts to charities, and do wonderful things for communities and individuals with special needs. It's one thing, then, to have wealth, and another thing to use wealth for something other than yourself.

God expects us to be generous. He begins by giving us an example. Not only does everything belong to God, but:

He Shares It With Us

This is the principle of the divine source of everything, and we can state it this way:

God is the ultimate source for all our needs, including the energy and ability by which we appear to be sustained.

In Jesus' parable of the ten minas (our text in Luke 19), the nobleman supplied his servants with all they would need in his absence, telling them to **put this money to work until I come back** (Luke 19:13). This is an image of the divine source of all we have.

Ecclesiastes 6:2 tells us that God gives people riches, wealth and honor. Deuteronomy 8:18 tells us that God gives us even the ability to succeed and acquire things.

Paul builds on this teaching in 2 Corinthians 9:8 where he says that **God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.**

God supplies our need is the direct teaching of Philippians 4:19: **My God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.**

Through a process we cannot begin to understand, God sees to it that the enormous wealth of His creation is directed toward the needs of those under His care. This is what we call God's providence — God provides for us. He shares what is His.

Applying the Realization

Learning the principle that God is the divine source of everything, and He shares what is His with us, isn't just a matter of theory. It should have a practical and profound impact on our lives.

When the United States was founded, it was common for people to refer to God, especially in public and in written documents, as "Providence." George Washington and Thomas Jefferson made many such references to the Lord. This was a respectful title. It was more than that. It was a confession that there was a great realization in their hearts God had led them and supplied them. It was an indication of their acknowledgment of God in their everyday approach to living.

The Christian absolutely must begin to realize God is intimately involved in every area of their life, is working to guide and use their life, and has plans for every day and hour of their life. To that end, He puts in our lives what abilities we have, and what opportunities we come upon, so we may do His will and bless His name.

Where is the ultimate source of our intelligence and talents? We can talk about getting this or that from our parents, but that's only a part. The primary cause and source is God. We must not develop the idea that what we have and are is ours, gotten by our own hands. If that is your mindset, get rid of it. We must never be stingy with God, unwilling to give Him our lives, our all. He certainly has not been stingy with us!

So how do we apply our understanding God owns it all, but shares it with us?

Why God Shares With Us

Deuteronomy 8:18 says God gives us power to "get wealth." Why? The verse also says God's purpose is "that He may establish His covenant which He swore unto thy fathers" (KJV). This was the old covenant going back to Abraham, and continued in a new form under Moses. But Jesus established a new covenant in His blood, and Christians are also a covenant people.

The principle is still true God gives us power to build and succeed — but for what?