

Experiencing the Joy of Generosity!

The Joy of Managing God's Blessings

Daily Devotions for Week 2

Monday

Being a Faithful Steward

Scripture: *"Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy"* (1 Corinthians 4:7).

What if your pastor asked you to give a testimonial about your life as God's steward? If you were asked to share how you manage and care for God's property, what would you say? Perhaps you'd say that, as a God-pleasing steward, you acknowledge God as the creator and source of all things. As the creator of all, he owns everything. God's property is on loan to us. As stewards, we are to manage what he has entrusted to us responsibly, joyfully, and for God's purposes. You would go on to say that, as God's stewards, we are not to be passive managers but active and involved, that we are caretakers and managers of God's gifts so we are accountable for what we do with his gifts of time, talents, and money. You'd sum up your thoughts by declaring that stewards live lives expressing gratitude to God for both our created and redeemed lives. We live a life of saying "thank you" to God for his love and mercy. Stewardship is faith in action.

To answer the question, "Are we being faithful stewards with our lives and gifts?" we may want to check our calendars and check registers. Faithful stewards would have times marked on their calendars for helping others, church meetings, and Bible studies. We would be spending time in prayer and attending worship services. Through faith, we try our best to use our time doing God's will. Our check book registers would show weekly offerings being made to God through our church, and there would be some checks written to help the needy. Our calendars and check registers will show us where our priorities lie.

God has blessed us stewards with many blessings, but the decision is ours whether or not we will use those gifts for the work of the Lord. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, God enables us to use our gifts faithfully and joyfully for his purposes. May God help us all to be the faithful stewards that he wants us to be.

Prayer: Lord, grant me faith to be a committed and joyful steward of all you entrust to me. **Amen.**

Tuesday

Attitude toward Money

Scripture: *“You cannot serve God and money”* (Matthew. 6:24).

The primary issue with money is attitude. While it is important to have good spending plans, to be wise investors, and to control credit, what matters most is our attitudes toward money. Do we possess possessions or do possessions possess us? Acknowledging God as the owner of our money and we as the caretakers of what he entrusts to us is a first step toward ensuring that our possessions are tools for our use rather than things that control us. As Christians, we are not honest if we use the disclaimer, “Jesus can have our hearts but not our money.” We can’t compartmentalize the Christian life. Our relationship with Christ impacts everything we think and do, including our money management. Money, more than anything else, can separate us from our heavenly Father. Money can be Satan’s best tool to deceive God’s people. Money has the power to change us and may win the battle for our hearts as we are deceived by the thought that more money is the answer to our financial problems instead of God. Having money and possessions can make us proud, crowd out the real God, and cause us to place our security in our financial well-being instead of our God (Proverbs 30:8-10).

In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus said: *“...the thorns (deceitfulness of wealth) grew up and choked [the Word]”* (Mark 4:7). In Matthew 6:24 Jesus said, *“No one can serve two masters ... You cannot serve God and money.”* As God’s people, we can’t have a foot in each kingdom. It is impossible to have two masters, so we must choose between God’s kingdom and the kingdom of the world. It is one or the other, not both.

The world sees money as life’s report card and source of all happiness and security. In contrast, we, as faithful stewards, see money as a means to provide for our needs, to help others, and to further God’s kingdom.

Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, help me to hold money loosely and to have a proper attitude toward it.
Amen.

Wednesday

Being Rich toward God

Scripture: *“Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions”* (Luke 12:15).

In the Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:13-21), Jesus warns us about the problem of greed. In this parable, Jesus tells about a wealthy and successful farmer who produced such a big crop that he made plans to tear down his existing barns and build bigger ones to store his abundant harvest. Basking in his success, he had no worries about his future as he looked forward to an easy retirement of eating, drinking, and being merry. We might admire him for his success, but God called him a fool, because God saw him as selfish and greedy. He ignored God as well as his neighbors, and God called him to account for his greed. The Rich Fool forfeited his life. *“So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God”* (verse 21), Jesus said.

Jesus did not condemn the rich farmer because he had wealth, but he did condemn his wrong attitude toward his riches. His wealth had become the most important thing in his life. Through this parable, God is warning us about the problem of greed and our need to use our wealth properly. Rather than being rich toward money, God wants us to be *“rich toward God.”* In Luke 12:21, Jesus is telling his listeners that, if we store up things only for ourselves and are not *“rich toward God,”* we will have the same fate as the Rich Fool. In order to be *“rich toward God”* with our money, we need to acknowledge that God is the source of all that we have and to glorify God through the use of our money.

Prayer: Dear Lord, help me to be rich toward you in how I view and use my money. **Amen.**

Thursday

Learning to Be Content

Scripture: *“...in whatever situation I am to be content”* (Philippians 4:11).

The Apostle Paul had learned the secret of contentment, of being satisfied in every circumstance in which God placed him. Paul was in prison when he wrote the book of Philippians. He had been at the point of death several times. If anyone could have said he was in need or want, it was Paul. He had suffered much, yet he learned to be content *“facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need”* (Philippians 4:12). Like Paul, we, too, can learn contentment. The secret of contentment is gratitude for what God gives.

Because many people are infatuated with things and have the desire to acquire more and more, they fall victim to discontentment. There is a correlation between “having more” and “wanting more.” Even though we are surrounded by material abundance, we don’t believe we have enough, so we are discontented.

There are two ways we can strive to have enough. We can try to accumulate more, or we can learn to be satisfied with less. If we pursue the first way, accumulating more, we will discover that more is never enough. Those who have followed that route have found that money can't buy lasting satisfaction. As hard as it is, we need to curb our desire for more by concentrating on the blessings we do have. Being satisfied with less and being willing to use what we have in God-pleasing ways are attitudes that contribute to our contentment. Those who have less and are content are better off than those who have much and always want more. But how can we be satisfied? The answer is found in the words of Jesus: *"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you"* (Matthew 6:33).

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the wonderful blessings you have given to me. Help me to be content. **Amen.**

Friday

Keeping our Focus

Scripture: *"... for it is the time to seek the Lord..."* (Hosea 10:12).

Have you ever felt that life is so full of distractions and that there are such pulls on your time that you have lost your focus? As God's stewards, our goal is to live our lives for God's purpose according to his grace given us by the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacrament. Getting our priorities straight and sticking to them is one of the most difficult tasks we face. We are called to be faithful and not misdirected by the world, our flesh, or Satan. *"As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do"* (1 Peter 1:14-15).

It is challenging, but, with God's help, it is possible to keep God at the center of our busy lives. Because God promises that, when we call on him, he will give us the strength to overcome any temptations, we are able to say "yes" to him and "no" to the temptations of the world. God does not shield us from temptations, but he sustains us while we are facing them (1 Corinthians 10:13). With God's help, we are able to recognize that much of life is meaningless when compared to the times we spend in God's Word, prayer, and worship.

We may ask ourselves the question, "Does the way I live my life reflect the importance of my relationship with God?" We may also ask, "Does my faith help focus my life or does my faith get lost in the blur of busyness and day-to-day routine?" Our goal is to keep "the main thing the main thing," which is to love, serve, trust, and obey our heavenly Father.

Prayer: Lord, help me to use my time wisely so I may glorify you. Guide me in your path. **Amen.**