

Growing in Generosity

To meet the needs of
individuals and families
and help them grow
into mature followers of Jesus

Learning to Give as Jesus Gave - A Theology of
Stewardship

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF KENNETT SQUARE

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At First Baptist Church our goal is to help recapture the true meaning of what it means for followers of Jesus to live as stewards of all they have been given. We want to help people grow in generosity in every area of their lives.

When the pastor or any church leader starts talking about Stewardship people quite naturally think that it is time to talk money. Language is important and over the past few decades church leadership has reduced the term Stewardship to mean nothing more than financial giving. This is one of the great tragedies of the institutional church and Christian faith in the recent past.

True Biblical Stewardship involves much more than finances.

As you read the scriptures it is clear that God has reached out to us, his creation, in grace and generosity time and time again. Jesus demonstrated generous giving as he offered his life for the forgiveness of sin so that we may know life, life to the full. Reflecting over our lives we see evidence of God's generosity poured into our very being. Looking around our community we see examples of God's generosity creating generous people have given freely of all they have.

Our goal is to find ways to help people grow in generosity. We believe that our generosity simply points people to the most generous one - Abba Father.

Four Principles of Stewardship: *

Stewardship involves the whole person. It involves our time, talent, and treasure. Stewardship is the place where faith, vocation, time management, our worldview, and financial realities intersect. We have identified four guiding principles that shape our view of good stewardship. Fiscal management is going to be one piece of good stewardship.

1. The principle of ownership

The psalmist begins the 24th psalm with,

The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.

In the beginning of Genesis, God creates everything and puts Adam in the Garden to work it and to take care of it. Man was created to work, and that *work is the stewardship of all of the creation that God has given him.*

This is the fundamental principle of biblical stewardship. God owns everything, we are simply managers or administrators acting on his behalf.

Therefore, stewardship expresses our obedience regarding the administration of everything God has placed under our control, which is all encompassing. Stewardship is the commitment of one's self and possessions to God's service, recognizing that we do not have the right of control over our property or ourselves.

Echoing Deuteronomy 8:17, we might say: "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." But Deuteronomy 8:18 counsels us to think otherwise:

Remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth.

2. The principle of responsibility

We are called as God's stewards to manage that which belongs to God. While God has graciously entrusted us with the care, development, and enjoyment of everything he owns as his stewards, we are responsible to manage his holdings well and according to his desires and purposes.

If we are to "manage his holdings well and according to his desires and purposes" we must grow in our ability to discern God's leading and directing. There is a large difference between planning how to use the resources entrusted to us and "discerning God's invitation to invest what has been entrusted to us." A large part of growing as generous givers will involve us learning to join where God is already at work within our world and investing resources to help accomplish His plans, not our dreams.

3. The principle of accountability

A steward is one who manages the possessions of another. We are all stewards of the resources, abilities and opportunities that God has entrusted to our care, and one day each one of us will be called to give an account for how we have managed what the Master has given us.

This is the maxim taught by the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30). God has entrusted authority over the creation to us and we are not allowed to rule over it as we see fit. We are called to exercise our dominion under the watchful eye of the Creator managing his creation in accord with the principles he has established.

Like the servants in the Parable of the Talents, we will be called to give an account of how we have administered everything we have been given, including our time, money, abilities, information, wisdom, relationships, and authority.

We will all give account to the rightful owner as to how well we managed the things he has entrusted to us.

4. The principle of reward

In Colossians 3:23-24 Paul writes:

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

The Bible shows us in the parables of the Kingdom that faithful stewards who do the master's will with the master's resources can expect to be rewarded incompletely in this life, but fully in the next.

We all should long to hear the master say what he exclaims in Matthew 25:21:

Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!

* Four principles adopted from the work of Hugh Welchel "Four Principles of Biblical Stewardship"
November 26, 2012: <https://tifwe.org/four-principles-of-biblical-stewardship/>

First Baptist Church, a Christ Centered, Holy Spirit led Community, employing our Gifts to meet the Needs of Individuals and Families, Empowering People to Grow into Mature Followers of Jesus.

Stewardship Principles to Guide our Conversations:

1. Stewardship is **spiritual** before it is **financial**. It is about our faith before it is about our finances.
2. Stewardship is not an end – it is a means to an end. We seek to be faithful stewards of all God has given us within the opportunities presented through his providence to glorify Him, serve the common good and further his Kingdom.
3. Stewardship must always be about funding mission, vision and ministry.
4. A true and proper understanding of biblical stewardship transforms people's hearts. Learning to live generously will change people and it will transform our church.
5. A true and proper understanding of biblical stewardship teaches a proportionate response. We learn to live as generously as we have been blessed.
6. A true and proper understanding of biblical stewardship always involves sacrifice.
7. Viewing life thru the lens of Abundance leads to Gratitude. When we are Grateful we learn to be at Peace, or Content with God's blessings. If we are Content, or at Peace with life we have the power to be Generous with all God has entrusted us with...we move as Good Stewards.

As Christians in the 21st century, we need to embrace this larger biblical view of stewardship, which goes beyond church budgets or building projects, though important; it connects everything we do with what God is doing in the world.