

Being Good Stewards

Being a good steward of our resources is an important godly concept and part of living a blessed Christian life.

Introduction

Stewardship is an important concept in the Christian life. God provides all the resources we need to carry out the tasks he gives us, but it is our responsibility to be good stewards of these resources and not waste them. The great commission tells us to go and make disciples. God gives us the time, talents, and treasure necessary to continue to make disciples in the way he intends.

There are many ways to preach the gospel and make disciples and God gives us each the time, talent, and treasures necessary for the method he has gifted us for. We are also meant to use these resources wisely.

The Bible talks about money and other resources a lot. We are to be good stewards of the resources the Lord entrusts to us. Remember, the gifts we receive from God are for use in the plan and for the purposes he has for each one of us.

As we talk about being good stewards we are going to focus on using resources wisely, counting the cost, and preparing for the future.

Use Resources Wisely

The world is full of resources. Each resource's value is determined by the demand at the time. Currently, in the world, some natural resources are very valuable; oil, precious metals, clean water, and more. We must use these resources wisely so we do not waste them and have them for future generations. This holds true for money as well.

Money is a resource we have access to and it is used to do many things. Money is a universal resource because it can be used to obtain anything else necessary to perform a task or meet a need. Because of this money is often focused on. Jesus teaches about money often, but we are going to focus on a parable found in Matthew 25:14-30.

Matthew 25:14-30

(14) "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. (15) To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. (16) The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. (17) So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. (18) But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. (19) "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. (20) The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.' (21) "His master replied, '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!' (22) "The man with two bags of gold also came.



'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.' (23) "His master replied, '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!' (24) "Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. (25) So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' (26) "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? (27) Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. (28) ""So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. (29) For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. (30) And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Jesus is teaching us that we must be good stewards of what has been entrusted to us. In the case of this parable, he is referring to gold, but we believe we should use every gift and resource the Lord has given us wisely. The talents and money we have are gifts from God to use for his purposes, but we cannot waste them like the lazy servant who just hid his gold in the ground.

We should strive to be like the first servant who worked hard and used the resources entrusted to him and doubled them greatly. Even the second servant did this but to a lesser extent. When we respond to financial requests from Cell Life Church ministry leaders and pastors around the world, we often want to know how sustainable a project or outreach is. We want to invest our time, talent, and treasure into ministries and projects that have a return and can sustain themselves.

Projects like the sewing schools in Pakistan and the seed for crops in Kenya and Malawi allow the people there to learn something and produce something that can be sold or stored for the future. These bring more back into God's storehouse to help others and further his kingdom. If we do not adopt an attitude of sustainability with all our resources, we are setting ourselves up for failure.

When the question of sustainability comes up, being good stewards means we must count the cost.

We Must Count the Cost

No builder or project manager starts out without first putting together a project plan. A large part of the plan is determining the cost of the plan and putting together a budget. The days of manna raining down from Heaven each night are thousands of years behind us. God has given us the wisdom and knowledge necessary to count the cost of any project and be good stewards of our resources.

Jesus uses this as an example in another parable about counting the cost of being a Christian. Let's read Luke 14:28-30.

Luke 14:28-30

(28) "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? (29) For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, (30) saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.'



Jesus is teaching about the cost of discipleship, but uses the idea of planning and establishing a budget for a building as an example of that. Any project we desire to undertake must be thoroughly planned out and the cost calculated. This is being a good steward. This is being sustainable, not only of our natural resources, but also our financial resources.

Much like we are all called to go and make disciples, thus creating a growing Church, we must be wise about the way we use money so that it can grow and continue to be a resource for growth and provision for the Church and making disciples.

Providing seed for crops is great, but some of the crop should be held back so it can be used the following year as seed for the next crop. Providing sewing machines and sewing classes is wonderful to help families out of slavery, but a portion of the money earned by the sale of the clothes and other things produced should be donated back to the Church to help others. That is a sustainable ministry.

We must be wise about the things we do with the time, talent, and treasure the Lord gives us. We must use it to further his purposes and teach others to do the same. This is difficult in some cultures because they do not have a concept of saving for tomorrow. They only see the here and now. But, we must save for the future, or we will not continue to exist.

Being good stewards helps us prepare for the future.

Preparing For the Future

The moment God spoke the universe into existence, he had a plan. His plan started with creation and goes all the way to the new Heaven and the new Earth after Christ's return. God has made all the provisions necessary to carry mankind through the ages from creation to eternity. He also has given us the wisdom to live through good times and difficult times. He even uses people who do not know him sometimes to accomplish his purposes. Pharaoh is one of those people.

We read in chapter 41 of Genesis about a dream that Pharaoh has and it troubles him. Let's read this in Genesis 41:15-36.

Genesis 41:15-36

(15) Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." (16) "I cannot do it," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires." (17) Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "In my dream I was standing on the bank of the Nile, (18) when out of the river there came up seven cows, fat and sleek, and they grazed among the reeds. (19) After them, seven other cows came up—scrawny and very ugly and lean. I had never seen such ugly cows in all the land of Egypt. (20) The lean, ugly cows ate up the seven fat cows that came up first. (21) But even after they ate them, no one could tell that they had done so; they looked just as ugly as before. Then I woke up. (22) "In my dream I saw seven heads of grain, full and good, growing on a single stalk. (23) After them, seven other heads sprouted—withered and thin and scorched by the east wind. (24) The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven good heads. I told this to the magicians, but none of them could explain it to me." (25) Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. (26) The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven



years; it is one and the same dream. (27) The seven lean, ugly cows that came up afterward are seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind: They are seven years of famine. (28) "It is just as I said to Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do. (29) Seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt, (30) but seven years of famine will follow them. Then all the abundance in Egypt will be forgotten, and the famine will ravage the land. (31) The abundance in the land will not be remembered, because the famine that follows it will be so severe. (32) The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon. (33) "And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. (34) Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. (35) They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food. (36) This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine."

God knew what he was doing. God knew what he was going to do with his people, the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Joseph was Jacob's son and had been sold into slavery by his brothers. God blessed Joseph with wisdom and favor. Joseph used this wisdom and favor to help Egypt grow and survive. This would be very important as you continue to read how Jacob sent his sons to Egypt during the famine to get grain so they could survive.

The important thing to understand today is that we must use what God gives us strategically and sustainably. When we have resources, we must have a plan in place to grow those resources. We can, and should, give generously to those who have needs without expectation for payment, but we must also teach that it is our responsibility to be good stewards of our resources and find ways to grow those resources, whether they be time, talent, or treasure.

The only way we can accomplish this is by being like Joseph in Genesis. We must be good stewards of what God has given to us and use those resources wisely. Sometimes that means saying no to a request and other times that means giving generously to a request without expectation of repayment.

Conclusion

We should teach at all times everyone has a place, plan, and purpose and should contribute. There are no free rides. Everyone can do something and contribute. Whether that means making clothes and selling them in the market and donating a small percentage of the money earned back to the sewing school or the Church or it means planting seed and saving some of the crop back for seed for the next year so more people can be fed, or freely providing medical care to those who need it and hoping that they will, in turn, learn to help give medical care when needed.

This is being sustainable with our resources and being good stewards of God's resources entrusted to us.

