

Stewardship

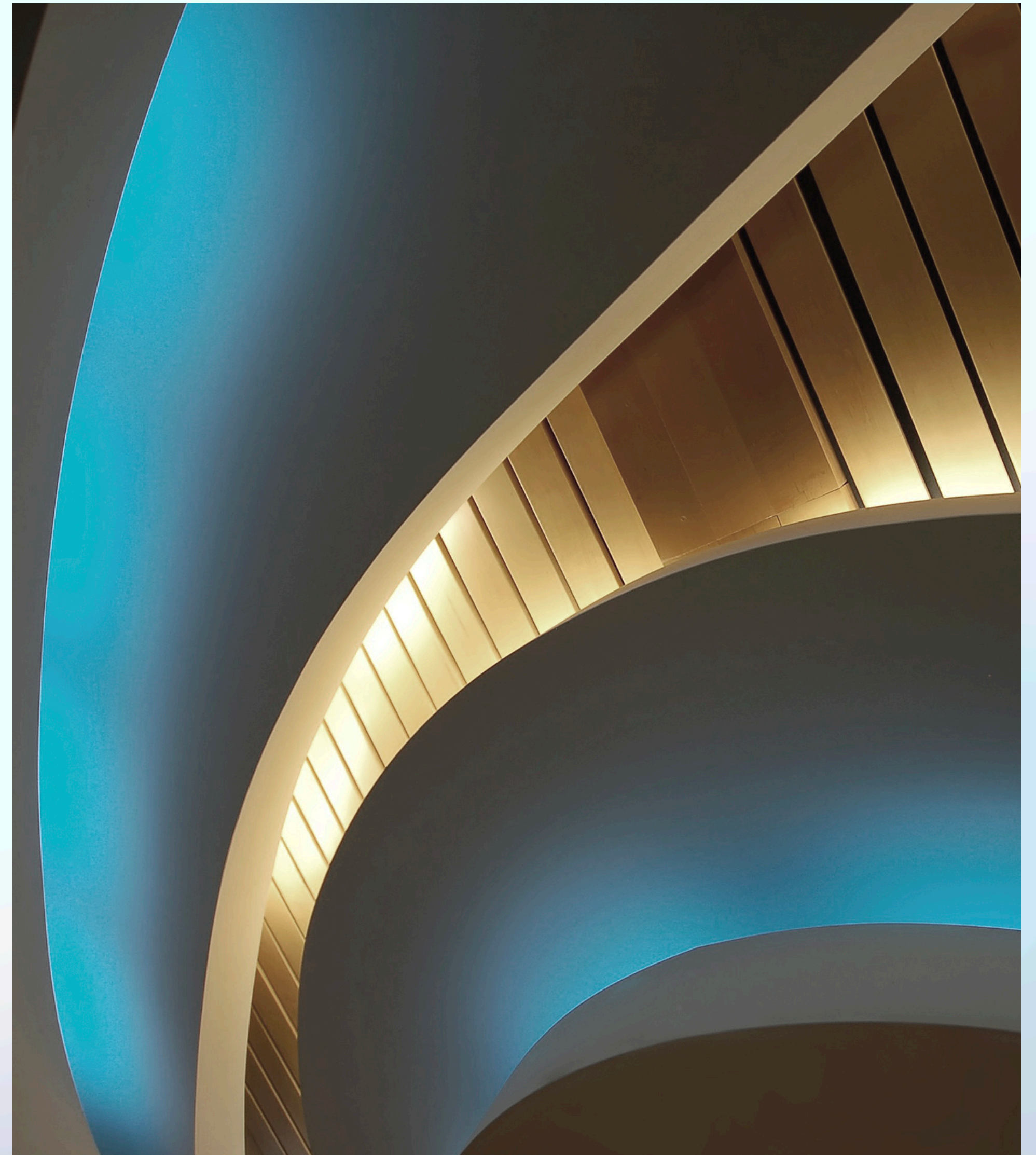
Duty and privilege

What do you think about when stewardship is mentioned?



Key passages

- Mark 12:30
- Gen 1:26-28/ 2:15
- Mat 23:23
- 2 Cor 9:1-15



General Summary

- God is the creator of everything and as such has the right to ask anything from us (1 Cron 29:14)
- Part of our creation purpose was to be wise stewards of all creation (Gen 1:26-28/ 2:15)
- Stewardship covers all aspects of life and not only the financial (Mat 23:23)
- Not preparing for bad times (saving) is irresponsible (Proverbs 21:20)
- Love of the material is idolatry and a sin against God (1 Tim 6:10, Mat. 6:21, 1 John 2:15-17)

Concept of Stewardship

- The essence of stewardship is that of **safekeeping** and **managing** someone else's resources for their benefit (not commission)
- While in our world this role is commonly associated with investors, bankers or financial advisors (outsourced services) it doesn't quite capture the OT idea
- In Biblical times the administrators of an estate were not mere employees but usually became integral members of the household and would have a very personal access to the head of the family often influencing major decisions. The most well known example of this was Eliezer in Abraham's family

Concept of Stewardship

- Trust was an expected necessity of such relationship but above all there had to exist an innate knowledge of the mentality of the owner as it seems that the steward was often expected to make most decision with little supervision (Matthew 25:24-26 / Luke 16:1-8)
- This same expectation translates to our relationship with God and our responsibility as stewards. While the Bible speaks extensively about the wise use of funds there are other aspects of stewardship that are not as clearly outlined and it is expected that the Christian will infer from God's revealed will how to best proceed in these situations.

Principles of Christian stewardship

- **Love and Care:** Because God is love, in managing the resources He has entrusted us we must be careful to emulate the character of our Father
- **Selflessness:** Stewardship is given as an exercise to depose selfishness and is one of the functions of the image of God in human beings. Because putting self above all is the ultimate sin, stewardship is a gift from God to safeguard against this temptation
- **Detail:** In all He did in creation God made sure it was done perfectly. It is only reasonable that we imitate His careful work when managing the resources

Christ's value system

- In our interconnected world, trade has established that the value of a product or currency is dependent on the desire of other people to attain it. The more people want it the more valuable something is and vice versa
- For the christian, value is assigned by what we dedicate more of our mind, strength, heart and spirit. Jesus outlined this in Matthew 6:21 - **“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”**
- Understanding that value is a subjective thing and can change easily, Jesus motivated His followers to prioritize that which wouldn't pass away to ensure the durability of their investment. (V.20)

Areas of stewardship

- Finances
- Time
- Relationships
- Talents and Opportunities
- Body



Finances

- When addressing financial stewardship something not mentioned often is that money is just a **medium** to a goal. Other definitions of money assign value to it, making it an objective in itself and even an obstacle to serve Christ (Matthew 19:24)
- Proper stewardship of finances is using money towards the ultimate christian goal while living the abundant life that God has called us to live. This means we seek to grow the kingdom by properly managing the financial blessings that God has equipped us to handle. Many people forget that God is glorified in the success He enables us to achieve (Deuteronomy 28)

Finances - Deuteronomy 8:18

- Returning to God a tenth of what He has provided is the first part of christian stewardship of finances (Matt 23:23)
- Second we must provide for the **needs** our family both in the present and future (1 Timothy 5:8 / Proverbs 13:22).
- Third is helping those in the family of God that are in need (Proverbs 21:26).
- Lastly if we can multiply what the Lord has given us without sacrificing our principles and time for God and family in that endeavor then we are by all means to do so (Deuteronomy 8:18)

Time - 1 Corinthians 10:21

- This is arguably the most valuable resource we have because it can't be regenerated like the other resources. The limited amount of time we have in life is a consequence of sin so the Word calls us to make good use of it (Ephesians 5:16).
- Based on the value measurement Christ gave us, we can easily discern what is most important to us by what we use most time doing.
- Work and sleep consume the largest portion of our time (about 66%). We can't eliminate either as we definitely need both however we shouldn't over do neither. (Mark 6:31/ Eccl. 3)

Time - 1 Corinthians 10:21

- In as much as we can, we should use our time working to glorify God. This can be accomplished by doing our absolute best and by being examples to those we work with and for. (Colossians 3:23) Obviously using our energies and time for enterprises that dishonor God is contrary to wise stewardship.
- As for the time we aren't working or sleeping it most clearly identifies our priorities. Whether family time, entertainment, exercise, or friends; we are either using our time to serve God or to serve ourselves. The outcome of these activities help us to discern whether they are worth doing or not. Do they move us towards our purpose here on earth and our eternal destination?

Relationships

- It is odd to think of relationships as a resource to be managed but it is another of the Divine gifts that must be cared for. (Genesis 18:19) God created us to live in relationships with Him and others. Within those relationships He gave us responsibilities to ensure all the involved would benefit from the relationship.
- The most common relationships are family, friends, neighbors and coworkers (church family for those who attend). Most of these we don't get to choose and yet they are an integral part of the person we become and permanent observers of our faith and calling.
- At their most basic level, relationships are transactions and as such they will never be neutral; they either add or subtract to our value and journey.

Relationships

- Because most people don't tend to estimate the value of relationships outside of business (networking) and maybe marriage, we often allow ourselves interactions that are not truly beneficial to us.
- A common justification of non-productive relationships is that we mean to help the other person and yet due to the improper valuing of relationships these imbalances (unequal yoke) eventually become parasitic.
- As with other aspects of stewardship, we must be highly pragmatic with how we manage our relationships. When not adding to our calling or elevating us towards our ultimate destination they are doing the opposite and must be cut off for our own safety.

Gifts (talents) and Opportunities

- The best thing about stewardship is that it encompasses the unrealized possibilities. Daily we have hundreds of chances to glorify the name of God, what does it say about our love for Him if we don't take them?
- No one can claim that they have not been gifted with something. Even when there are significant disadvantages everyone has at least one gift and we are responsible for what we do with that. As these small decisions add up, our life leans in one direction or the other and it affects our eternal destiny.
- Because of their unrealized nature, special care must be taken to be good stewards of the chances that God gives us. (Eccl 9:10)

Body

- As we discussed in our study of the Christian Lifestyle our decisions about our body play a part in our testimony. The total time we get to serve God can be shortened or negatively affected by the choices we make about our body.
- When discussing making wise decisions about our body diet and exercise dominate the conversation but there are other aspects of managing our health that are just as important like sleep and taking time off work for recreation, relaxation and recharging. (Prov 17:22 / Mark 6:31)
- Exercise and rest are often relegated to secondary roles in the health reform message when they are most influential to our mental health and the effectiveness of other aspects of a healthy lifestyle.

Misconceptions and lies

Tithe is an OT concept, not for the NT

- This confusion stems primarily from a unspoken desire to avoid having to tithe. It is unclear why preachers have endorsed such a fallacy (perhaps wanting more than 10% or from discontent with “the establishment”).
- The absence of explicit instruction on tithing in the NT is often cited as support for this lie. This shortsightedness ignores the fact that the Bible doesn't explicitly describe every single responsibility for christian living.
- It is true that there is a difference between the tithe of Israel (Leviticus and Malachi) and that of Christians but one cannot say that the concept doesn't transfer at all.
- Answer: Mat 23:23 / Genesis 28:22

Not tithing is stealing from God

- The flip side of the previous lie is a “confused” overreach of the gratitude principle. Much like indulgences in the medieval period, its ultimate intension is to manipulate (guilt) believers to give money to the organization.
- Unlike indulgences this lie claims to have biblical foundation. A careful hermeneutical analysis finds a misunderstanding of the Mosaic law’s validity over gentiles. As discussed previously God’s covenant with Israel (tithing included) doesn’t apply to Gentile Christians and therefore the warnings for those who dont tithe are not applicable
- Answer: Hebrews 8:7-13 / Luke 22:20 / 2 Corinthians 9:7

Tithe recipients answer to the givers

- This accountability concept has been a longstanding confusion among believers. One of the most famous examples is the time of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram challenged Aaron's leadership authority as if his calling came from their approval or support.
- Their actions reflect a mistaken "principle" of accountability that has transferred from "democratic" governments into the church. This concept is not in the Bible, because God exists as the ultimate judge and it is He who puts people in power and punishes them accordingly.
- Monetary punishment (a.k.a boycott or canceling) has become a common social tool to coerce "accountability" and should not be employed by God's followers to exact justice on authority by their own hand. Isn't God able to punish evildoers without our help?
- Answer: Romans 13:1-6 / 1 Peter 2:13-17

Tithe should be directly given to pastors or missionaries

- This confusion is also enunciated as send the tithe where it is most needed (in the eyes of the giver). The concept is not necessarily wrong but historically in the OT and NT personal discretion as the path through which God's servants received their living doesn't find support. (Paul actually called out those who gave to some preachers and not to others based on their "credentials")
- In the OT it is unclear how Jacob or other faithful handled their tithe but if Leviticus is any indication, tithe was centralized to be distributed by the religious authority of the time. Likewise in the NT, finances seemed to have been centered in Jerusalem from which they were distributed to those in need. Relief efforts were also centralized for ease of organization.
- Answer: 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 / Acts 5 / 1 Corinthians 9:1-16

Tithe only if you can afford it

- This idea is primarily a misunderstanding of 2 Corinthians 9. When Paul said that each gives according to their heart, many in their minds reason that if they "can't afford it" then they are justified in not giving.
- This of course ignores two pillars of giving 1) God blesses abundantly, not scarcely so if we "can't afford it" we are denying God's provision 2) Good stewardship places gratitude towards God at the top of priorities.
- Because in the NT tithing is not compulsory this lie about giving has secretly taken hold of many and only a personal experience with the Lord can convince them otherwise
- Answer: Genesis 4:3-7 / Genesis 28:20-22 /

Tithe should be taken on all (taxable) income or only on profit

- This is a debate in which, as gentiles, we have no biblical directive to guide our decision. **Ultimately it comes down to the heart of the giver**. If we were to use the Israelite model we would tithe on all our increase (Deut 18:22) but we are not Israelites and therefore are not held to their standard
- In business accounting only profits are taxable and this is often cited as indications that wise stewards will tithe on that which the Lord has added. This of course is only human reasoning and as such no standard (See Belief 22) should be cited from the pulpit.
- There is no concrete Biblical answer to this question

Tithe can be used for any church expense

- As established earlier there is little biblical guidance for non-Jews like ourselves on how to manage our voluntary tithe. However the principle seen in the Mosaic law gives us some indication as to how it should be employed.
- The primary tithe in the tabernacle and temple was used for the sustenance of the levites and priest and not for the upkeep of the temple. Other “tithes” were for the feasts and for the poor but not for the temple expenses. This surprising allocation of funds meant that the temple building and reparations came from offerings alone (2 Kings 12 / 1 Chronicles 29)
- There is no concrete Biblical answer to this question

Tithes serve to enrich pastors and administrators

- Critics have a point on this one because the greed of many false teachers has defamed the reputation of the clergy profession as a whole. Historically the people of God have been plagued with constant a bevy of counterfeit prophets, teachers and messiahs. These have embezzled the money, hope and faith of many sincere but gullible believers.
- However these sad cases of corruption don't excuse the believer from their gratitude towards God through the means He set out. Despite these wolves in sheep's clothing not being true representatives for God, the gratitude shown by the believers has been taken into account by God and He doesn't leave a good deed unrewarded
- Answer: 1 Samuel 2:12-36 / Malachi 2-3 / Luke 21:1-4

God (the church) doesn't need your money

Why support organizations that don't support you

- This is another lie trying to reason away the responsibility of gratitude towards God. It ignores a key element of gratitude: **tithing is not about God but about us.** God can, has and will continue to propel His kingdom without our money and yet He has given us the chance to express our appreciation by participating in His kingdom with the resources He has blessed us with.
- The whole thought behind this lie is that we need the money more than the church and as such we are entitled. God is aware we have financial hardships, but because we forget He is our Provider and continually struggle with selfishness He gave us an avenue to solve both of these issues (much like Sabbath)
- Answer: 1 Cron 29:14 / Joshua 7

Will you believe, teach and live
the truth of stewardship.