

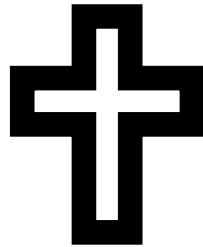
**Twelve Lessons**

*on*

***Biblical Stewardship***

*by*

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**\$6.00**

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## **STEWARDSHIP DEFINED -- LESSON 1**

**Text: Romans 12:6-16**

**Introduction:** A steward is a person entrusted with the management of the possessions of another. The manager of a business who reports to the owner or the directors is a steward of the business.

Spiritually, a steward is one who has been entrusted by the Lord with resources which can be used to promote human welfare and the kingdom of God on earth. Life itself, plus all that we have or all we can do, is included in the stewardship principles set forth in the Word of God. This series of lessons are designed to help you be a good “house manager” for God. Stewardship involves using all that God has entrusted to us in a way that will please Him. I Corinthians 4:2 – “*Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.*” A steward is a servant who manages everything for his master, but who himself owns nothing. Joseph was a chief steward in Potiphar’s household (Genesis 3:9).

### **I. THE ESSENCE OF STEWARDSHIP**

**A. Stewardship is the practice of partnership with God.** We may speak of “my house, my farm, my business, my money” and even “my life”. But the truth is, none of it belongs to us. It belongs to God and we are privileged to enjoy it for awhile.

1. When David and his peers gave their offerings to provide funds to build the temple in Jerusalem, they accompanied it with the prayer.
2. I Chronicles 29:14 – “*But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.*”

**B. God makes us stewards of His resources as a way of grooming us toward maturity.**

1. By the practice of true stewardship we learn humility (because what we have does not belong to us).
2. Discipline: (keeping a portion of our income to return to God – tithes and offerings)
3. Sharing: Not spending all on ourselves, but investing also in the lives of others
4. Values: the temporal is not as important as the eternal. (By observing these principles of good stewardship, the faithful steward will experience the joy of spiritual growth.)

**C. Stewardship includes all of life, both secular and religious.** (That is the theme which runs through Romans 12:1-21.) God does not say, for instance, “Give me the first 10 percent, and then you can do as you wish with the remaining 90 percent.” **Never!** We are responsible to Him for the full 100 percent of our resources.

**II. THE PRINCIPLES OF STEWARDSHIP--**There are three principles which underlie all Bible teaching on stewardship. These principles apply to all people in all areas of stewardship obligation.

**A. All persons and things belong to God.**

1. The prior ownership of God is based on creation. Psalms 24:1-2 – “*The earth is the LORD’s, and the fulness thereof ... he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.*” That includes the wild animals, the domesticated animals, the fowl of the air.
2. It includes all the mineral deposits of the earth, including the gold and silver (Haggai 2:8). There is nothing which was mine before it was His. Everything belongs to God.

**B. God entrusts portions of His goods to our supervision.**

1. Do not say, “*My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth.*” Instead, “*...remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth* (Deuteronomy 8:17-18).”
2. Ecclesiastes 5:18-19 teaches that it is right for a person to enjoy the pleasures which his wealth can bring him. “*This is the gift of God* (verse 19).”
  - a. Call nothing your own.
  - b. Look on everything from the viewpoint of God’s ownership and your stewardship.

**C. We must account to God for what we did with what He gave each of us.**

1. There is no exception, for “*every one of us shall give account of himself to God* (Romans 14:12).”
2. Jesus illustrated that truth in telling of a man who entrusted his goods (five talents, two talents, one talent) to his servants while he made a long journey. Upon returning, he called each servant to give a personal report on what he did with what he had during his master’s absence (Matthew 25:14-30).
3. Jesus said that “the kingdom of heaven” is like that. He is the master; we are the servants. He has made a journey and left resources entrusted to our care. **He will return and we will account** (II Corinthians 5:10-11).

### **III. THE GUIDELINES FOR STEWARDSHIP**

**A. Romans 12:6-16 gives twelve practical suggestions which mark good stewardship.**

**B. We need review them periodically and relate them to our personal lives.**

- 1. Be involved** (Romans 12:6-8). The Holy Spirit has entrusted a spiritual gift to each Christian. That spiritual gift must be discerned, developed, and deployed in the service of people for Jesus' sake. **Be involved.** II Timothy 1:6 – *“Stir up the gift of God, which is in thee.”* I Timothy 4:14 – *“Neglect not the gift that is in thee.”* I Peter 4:10 – *“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”*
- 2. Be loving** (Romans 12:9,19). *“Let love be without dissimulation,”* that is, love sincerely, without hypocrisy; make your love genuine.
  - a. Jesus commands us to love one another as He has love us (John 15:12).
  - b. That means we will *“love one another with a pure heart fervently* (I Peter 1:22).”
  - c. Remember that divine love is more than emotion. It is the will in action moving in mercy to help one in need.
  - d. You are a good steward of your life when you are related in that way to your peers.
- 3. Be discerning** (Romans 12:9). To be loving does not mean to be permissive with evil. A good steward of life will abhor evil and cleave to the good.
- 4. Be zealous** (Romans 12:11) May God deliver us from the sin of slackness. There is no place for laziness in the service of our Saviour.
  - a. Ecclesiastes 9:10 – *“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.”*
  - b. Every one of Jesus' disciples was busy before they were called to follow Jesus.
- 5. Be joyful** (Romans 12:12). *“Rejoicing in hope,”* means being full of joy because of your hope in God.
  - a. Psalms 126:2 – *“Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: ...”* (A Christian who looks like he just had a transfusion of grapefruit juice is a poor testimony of what the grace of God can do in the life of a believer.)
  - b. Paul was in prison when he wrote Philippians 4:4 – *“Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, rejoice.”*
- 6. Be patient** (Romans 12:12).
  - a. “Patient in tribulation” is to be steadfast in suffering, enduring affliction, bearing up under all hardship.
  - b. A person once asked Bud Robinson to pray for them to have patience. He prayed, “Lord, let trials and troubles and all kinds of problems come into the life this thy child.” The person said, “Don’t pray like that. I want you to pray that I will have patience.” Bud quoted Romans 5:3, *“...we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience.”*
- 7. Be prayerful** (Romans 12:12). “Continuing instant in prayer” means persisting in prayer, maintaining the habit of prayer. I Thessalonians 5:17 – *“Pray without ceasing.”* Lit. never quit praying.
- 8. Be liberal** (Romans 12:13) *“Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.”* God gives us stewardship opportunities as we relieve the needs of His children, providing for the needs of those who are less fortunate than we.
  - a. That principle applies to friend and enemy alike. Proverbs 25:21 – *“If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink.”*
  - b. Such an investment is not wasted. God promises in Proverbs 11:25 – *“The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.”*
- 9. Be forgiving** (Romans 12:14). *“Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. (Romans 12:20) “Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.”*
  - a. Never return evil for evil. That makes you worse than your enemy. I Thessalonians 5:15 – *“See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.”*
  - b. Forgiveness is a grace and unforgiveness is a sin. You are never more like Jesus, than when you are forgiving your enemies.
- 10. Be sympathetic** (Romans 12:15). *“Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.”*
  - a. It is the Christian’s privilege to share the happiness of those who are joyful and to share the sorrow of those who mourn.
  - b. We should share their sufferings with an empathy which makes us feel as if we were experiencing what they experience. Hebrews 13:3 – *“Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and*

*them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.”*

**11. Be unified** (Romans 12:16). *“Be of the same mind one toward another.”*

- a. Harmony should mark all Christian relations. We share a *“unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (Ephesians 4:3).
- b. God **commands** us in I Peter 3:8-9 – *“Finally be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous ... knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.”* See also Philippians 1:27; II Corinthians 13:11).

**12. Be humble** (Romans 12:16). *“Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate.”*

- a. The admonition “mind not high things” forbids all haughtiness, vain ambitions, aspirations to eminence, and snobbish attitudes.
- b. “Condescend to men of low estate” means to associate and accept in fellowship those who have no claims to wealth, fame, or power.
- c. Do not act “high minded”, feel “too good” to associate with and help any person. I Peter 5:5 – *“All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.”*
- d. Micah 6:8 – *“He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”*

**Conclusion:** These principles are very demanding. It is not an easy thing to be a good steward of the multi-faceted grace of God. It is not easy, but it is rewarding.

**A. Christian stewardship covers the whole of life.** No one can be a good person without being a good steward.

1. No one can be a good citizen without practicing those principles of stewardship.
2. No one can be a good Christian without the practice of biblical stewardship.

**B. Let every Christian live with the spirit that is expressed in I Corinthians 4:1-2** – *“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”*