



Idea: Christ-followers give because God has first given to them.

Intro: Human life is sacred. We were reminded of this last Sunday as we looked at the creation of humanity and the charge given to Adam. He bore the image and likeness of God. He was commanded to multiply and to fill, subdue, and have dominion over the earth (Gen 1:28). Adam was to reflect God in his work. He was created to have dominion over all the earth...to be the steward and caretaker of God's creation. As the image-bearer in creation, this is a fitting role. Humans alone possess the creativity, energy, and authority to do such a thing.

The command given to humanity in Genesis 1 is that they fill the earth and steward its resources. In this, God expects humans to develop a God-centered culture that reflects Him and steward the environment to honor Him. This concept of stewardship is all-encompassing. It applies to government, the environment, the workplace, the home, and the church.

Why is it, then, that some “Christians” do not want to hear a sermon or teaching on biblical stewardship? Why do they “amen” the sermon on the sanctity of life but dismiss the sermon on stewardship, calling it “meddling”? It is clear from the first chapter of the Bible that there is a connection between the two.

A steward in the ancient world was a person who was given the responsibility and authority to rule over the affairs of the household. For example, the patriarch Joseph became a steward over Potiphar's household: he managed everything in the household and was given the authority to rule over the house (Gen. 39:1–6a). In that role, he was responsible to manage the household well; he was not to waste the resources of the family but to make wise decisions.

The New Testament further expresses this management. The term often used and translated as stewardship is οἰκονομία (*oikonomia*). The English words *economics* and *economy* are transliterated from this Greek term. Οἰκονομία is a compound word made from οἶκος (*oikos*), the word for “house” or “household,” and νόμος (*nomos*), the word for “law.” Together, οἶκος and νόμος literally mean “house law.” Our English word “stewardship” translates this Greek term. It is the idea of governing household affairs. What we see, then, is that stewardship and economics are closely related concepts in the New Testament.

Yet, the role of the steward was not something that just happened to emerge in the Greek system of management, nor was it something invented by the Egyptians in the time of Joseph. The steward's role derives from the principle of stewardship, which is rooted in the creation of mankind found in Genesis 1. Fundamentally, stewardship is about exercising our God-given dominion over His creation, reflecting the image

of our creator God in the care, responsibility, maintenance, protection, and beautification of His creation. It is about managing and leveraging God's resources for His glory and the blessing of others as God has commanded.

What we see in Scripture is that stewardship is an incredible privilege entrusted to us by the Lord. He has gifted us with the responsibility of managing and tending to His creation. Therefore, stewardship is something we dare not neglect or ignore. Instead, we should joyfully lean into the blessing of stewarding God's resources. King David understand this high calling.

Inquiry: In 1 Chronicles 28 and 29, David shares the plan God had given him to construct a permanent temple for worship. He charges his son Solomon with the responsibility of the temple's construction. He also shares how he and the leaders of Israel had sacrificially given of their treasure to this great work.

Back in October of 2018, I preached through 1 Chronicles 29:1-17 in a message entitled "Freely Giving." It was part of our newDay sermon series, laying out a biblical perspective for our capital campaign. In that message I detailed how much David, the leaders, and the kingdom contributed to the needs of the project. I would encourage you to listen to or read that sermon. You can find it on our messages page under the series, "newDay."

Collectively, David, the leaders, and the kingdom gave, just in gold and silver, much to the campaign to build the Temple. The figures below represent the market value in October of 2018. Gold prices today are over \$400 more per ounce.

Gold		
<u>Kingdom</u>	<u>David</u>	<u>Leaders</u>
100,000 talents	3,000 talents	5,000 talents
7.5 million lbs	225,000 lbs	375,000 lbs
\$144,108,000,000	\$4,323,240,000	\$7,205,400,000

Total: \$155,636,640,000

Silver		
<u>Kingdom</u>	<u>David</u>	<u>Leaders</u>
1 million talents	7,000 talents	10,000 talents
75 million lbs	525,000 lbs	750,000 lbs
\$17,484,000,000	\$122,338,000	\$174,840,000

Total: \$17,781,178,000

Gold/Silver Total: \$173,417,818,000

Not everyone gave the same amount. It was not equal giving; it was equal sacrifice. And the Bible tells us that they gave willingly, sacrificially, and out of a great sense of excitement and expectation.

Going back to the question of why some Christians do not want to hear a sermon or teaching on biblical stewardship, could it be that they fail to understand a great truth that David and Israel understood? David expresses a clear theology of stewardship in this chapter. Believers use the resources given them to bless and benefit others not because some man or woman instructs them to do so, but because God is worthy and instructs them too.

Read 1 Chronicles 29:10-17.

This passage provides a beautifully clear theology of stewardship. It shares the “why” of giving. It is the reason behind our service and the desire to bless others. There are two major points in this theology of stewardship.

1. Divine Possession

The Bible’s approach to gold, silver, money, mutual funds, land, bank accounts, talent, strength, and all the rest is this: God is the giver and owner of it all. It is as the psalmist declares, “*The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof*” (Ps 24:1). This truth is expressed four times in this passage (vs. 11, 12, 14, 16).

God divinely possesses all things, and He entrusts His things to people. He gives you your daily bread. He gives you the ability to produce wealth. He gives you talents and skills. All that you have comes from His hand. This brings us to the second point in the theology of stewardship that David lays out.

2. Human Administration

Again, stewardship is the exercising of our God-given dominion over His creation, reflecting the image of our creator God in the care, responsibility, maintenance, protection, and beautification of His creation. It is about managing and leveraging God’s resources for His glory and the blessing of others as God has commanded. One of the greatest joys of the Christian life is the opportunity to give back to God what is already His for the expansion of His kingdom and to the praise of His glory. All that we have is God’s anyway. He entrusts to us wealth, power, and skill.

This is why David and the Israelites rejoiced over the privilege of giving of their resources to the construction of the temple (vs. 16-17).

We steward God’s resources as we give the tithe, free-will offerings, and use our spiritual gifts to serve in the church. Likewise, we steward those resources as we work as unto the Lord, meet needs among our neighbors, serve in the community, and lead out in the culture to make a difference for the glory of God.

God divinely possesses all things, and He entrusts to us the administration of those things. Unfortunately, stewardship and giving especially are often high-jacked, so that it is taught and expressed in ways, which are far from the Bible’s portrayal. There are four specific truths about stewardship that we need to understand.

4 Truths about Stewardship

1) We give as an act of worship.

Worship is best understood as worthship. As David prays with the people, he declares the greatness, power, and glory of God (vs. 11-12). He and the people willingly desired to give to this great work first and foremost because of the greatness of God. He was worthy of their worship. Our worship does not end on Sunday mornings when the music stops.

This leads to a second truth.

2) We give our first and our best.

All throughout the Bible, we discover that God-honoring stewardship is always our first and our best. The Jews, regrettably, failed to give to the Lord their first and best during the days of Malachi. Instead, they offered to the Lord blind, lame, and sick animals. They gave leftover and unusable items as gifts.

How does that kind of giving reflect the worthship of God? It does not! Instead, what it proclaims is that God is not worthy of my best. He is nothing more than an inferior serf that we throw scraps toward.

Church, we must never forget that God is worthy. On the contrary, it is you and I who are not worthy. God graciously entrusts to us His possessions. When we steward and give, we do so by offering our first and our best because He is worthy.

3) We do not give in order to get.

One of the great heresies of our day teaches that if you will give then you will get. “Sow a seed and reap a harvest,” it says. If you will give 10% to the Lord in faith, then He will give back to you 30, 60, or 100-fold. This idea, though built on biblical teaching, perverts God’s Word. It is true that when we do give to the Lord and His work, He often will return and expand our gifts. He is good and benevolent. It is true that you can never out-give God. Getting more, however, should never be the goal of those who follow Christ. No, our goal is to steward what God has entrusted in a way that is obedient to God’s Word, honoring to God’s great name, and a blessing to others. Christians steward selflessly rather than selfishly.

4) We give gratefully and joyfully.

David and those in Israel rejoiced over having the wonderful privilege of giving to the work of God (vs. 13-14). It was a joy for them (vs. 17).

What we discover both in the Bible and throughout history is that the people most joyful and pleasant are those who are grateful and generous. The reverse is also true. Selfish and ungrateful people are mean and repulsive. God’s people ought to be the most grateful and generous in society. Therefore, they also should be full of joy and a delight to others.

How do we develop this theology of stewardship in our lives?

3 Helps of Stewardship

1) Honor God first with the tithe.

Stewardship is fairly simple, and the Word of God is clear. A tithe is 10%, and in the Bible, it is always taken and given before anything else. We should give to God the first, which represents our best. Giving the first means that the tithe needs to be first on our budget sheet. We give to the Lord through the local church first before the mortgage, rent, groceries, electric, gas, or recreation.

Often people will say, “I cannot afford to tithe.” My response is, “How can you afford not to tithe?” You will never go wrong by obeying and honoring God’s Word. Malachi says, “*Put me to the test*” (3:10). This is not a promise of incredible wealth, but it is a promise that the Lord will meet your needs when you honor Him with the tithe.

2) Work to be debt free.

Many people in the American church have believed the lie that debt is acceptable and even beneficial. It is not!

The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender. – Proverbs 22:7

Have you ever considered all you could do if you did not have any debt? Have you thought about how much more you could do to serve the Lord and bless others if you were not enslaved to the lender like you are?

Debt is not forbidden in the Bible, but it is warned against. It should not be our lifestyle. This means that most of us need to be diligently working a plan to be free of all debt. This will require a budget. Every dollar should be on paper on purpose, intentionally working to free you from the creditor. It will require you to say “no” to some things today, so you can say “yes” to some things tomorrow.

3) Develop a discipline of generosity.

Our God is a giver, and as His people, we should reflect His generosity. Like other disciplines, it will not develop on its own. It requires commitment and work. It requires eyes that see the needs of others. Some of you are not able to help others in need because you do not have the financial margin in your budget.

Developing a discipline of generosity involves:

- Prayer.
- A budget.
- Open eyes.
- Compassion.

Conclusion: As Christ-followers, we give because God has first given to us. He owns all things, and we are His stewards. As we lead, serve, and cultivate God's creation, we offer worship to the Lord. We use the things He has entrusted to us to bless and better others all because God is worthy. Therefore, we hold our possessions, talents, and wealth loosely. We live with palms up.

Is this how you live your Christian life? Is this your understanding of stewardship? Do you give the Lord your first and best in the tithe? Do you give above and beyond the tithe gratefully and joyfully as the Lord directs? Do you live within your means so that you can leverage your resources for Kingdom purposes?

As your pastor, I exhort you to honor the Lord with the tithe. It should be given through the local church. I encourage you to prayerfully consider pledging and giving above and beyond the tithe to newDay. This is our capital campaign to renovate and repurpose space in our facilities to better serve our people and community. Many people have started attending and become members since we launched this campaign two years ago. Have you who are new considered joining us by giving to newDay?

I beg all of you to live within your means. Get on a budget, and stop living on credit. We have people in our church who are willing to help you learn and develop new financial disciplines. We offer Financial Peace University once or twice a year. Register and take that class when it is offered.

We want to be givers because our God is a giver. We do not give to get. We give simply because we have been given the greatest gift. His name is Jesus. *"For God so loved the world He gave..."* (John 3:16).

Good news: God gave you life, and He loves you. He created you just as you are, and He desires to know you.

Bad news: You are a sinner in rebellion against your Creator. Your sin separates you from God. It has caused great brokenness in your life.

Best news: God has done everything necessary to justly deal with your sin, bring forgiveness, and restoration to your life.

Have you experienced this best news? If you have, do you steward the gifts and resources God has entrusted to you in a way that honors Him and reflects His great worth?