

pleasure in, prizes above other things, and is unwilling to abandon or to do without) a cheerful (joyous) giver [whose heart is in his giving].

2 Corinthians 9:7 (AMP)

Introduction



Albert Einstein once said: “During the last century, and part of the one before, it was widely held that there was an [irreconcilable] conflict between knowledge and belief. The opinion prevailed among advanced minds that it was time that belief should be replaced increasingly by knowledge; belief that did not itself rest on knowledge was superstition, and as such had to be opposed.”¹

There are so many people in the world today who believe in principles of which they have no knowledge of their origin or accuracy. These beliefs are passed on from person to person and from generation to generation. These beliefs become transformed into actions that have no real meaning or substance; these actions constitute mere rituals.

Unfortunately, stewardship happens to be one of those things that many people believe in and practice, but very few of them have a clear knowledge or understanding of what it really means or its significance in God’s plan for mankind. They practice stewardship as a mere ritual.

Hundreds of books and articles have been written on this subject but they all assume that the audience has a fundamental knowledge of stewardship.

Numerous seminars and workshops have been conducted on this subject, yet all of the material presented starts with the premise that everyone knows the fundamental reason why God implemented

the system of stewardship. Most of the focus seems to be on the promised benefits obtained from adherence to the principles of stewardship and on the development of sophisticated techniques to develop a lifestyle that conforms to that of a faithful steward.

For a while I, too, read the books and attended the workshops and began to practice the principles that would make me a faithful steward — a manager of God’s property. But I yearned for a deeper understanding of the true meaning of stewardship. I got tired of hearing the same rhetoric from the pulpit or seeing ten (10) minute skits performed to act out how a faithful steward should respond to appeals for church projects.

I did not want to adopt the incorrect paradigm of stewardship as a tool for Christians to manage their money and material possessions; nor did I want to think like a financial investor, that if I give to God then He will open the windows of heaven and give me more than I invested.

God never implements a system or a process without taking the time to explain His reason(s) for doing so. In 1 Corinthians 2:12-15, the Bible states that the Holy Spirit teaches us the meaning of God’s word and He helps us to accept its wisdom. Under the direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit, we begin to comprehend God’s principles of true stewardship and to enact them in our lives.

When we desire to understand God’s principles, we must search the entire Bible for His truth. We can’t search the Old Testament in isolation or work from the New Testament alone. We must go back to Genesis where it all began and prayerfully work our way to Revelation. Every principle of God began in the Garden of Eden, points to the Cross of Calvary and ends in Revelation with the second coming of Christ. The Holy Spirit inspired men to write the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16) and it is He alone who will inspire men to interpret it; Holy Spirit in equals Holy Spirit out.

It would be unwise to consider only the Scripture verse(s) in the book of Malachi and attempt to fully understand or teach God’s principles of stewardship. It is a good thing to read books that help you study the Bible, but ultimately the Bible interprets itself. The Bible is a living book; it doesn’t have a shelf life. The original Greek word used in 2 Timothy 3:16 is *theopneustos*² which means

“God breathed into”. The first time we read “God breathed into” something (Genesis 2:7) that thing became alive and was known as man. Because God breathed into the Scripture, it became the living word of God capable of interpreting itself and changing the lives of its readers. Since God’s word is a living word, then God’s principles written in His word are everlasting. An analysis of the Levitical system of offerings, given to the Israelites around 1440 BC, will reveal His principles of stewardship for us today.

It is my prayer that the Holy Spirit will reveal to you from this book and the Bible, God’s principles concerning the spirituality of true stewardship. He created us in His image and likeness and He knows that we are intelligent beings, so He placed in the Bible all His reasons for His actions.

Jesus said, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you” (Matthew 7:7). So together let us seek the answers from the Bible to the following questions:

- Why did God implement the system of stewardship?
- What is the true spiritual significance of stewardship?
- When and how did stewardship all begin?
- What is the meaning of all the symbolisms used in the Bible to represent offerings and sacrifices that were offered to God?
- 1 Corinthians 10: 26 reads: “*for the earth is the Lord’s, and all its fullness.* Then why would God want anything from me?”
- If everything I had comes from God, then why would He want some of it back? What does He plan to do with it? Is He going to give it to somebody else?
- Are the principles of stewardship upheld in the New Testament?
- In this modern day and age, should we really be practicing stewardship?
- Was tithing abolished in the New Testament?

The word steward is used fifteen (15) times in the Bible. It comes from the Greek word *oikonomos*³, which means “the manager of a household” or “the manager of a specific area within the household”. The work of the steward was called management or stewardship. Since the household and its goods did not belong to him but to the owner, the steward was responsible to the owner for the way he carried out his stewardship responsibilities. For example, in the parable of the unjust steward, the steward is asked to give an account of his stewardship (Luke 16:2).

God is the Owner and He has entrusted various gifts to us. We are His stewards, and we are also required to give an account to Him concerning the way we conduct our stewardship responsibilities. Everything that we own belongs to Him. *The earth is the Lord’s, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein* (Psalm 24:1). He requires us to exercise careful and faithful management of the things that He has entrusted to us.

A mark of a careful and faithful manager is that he uses what has been entrusted to him in a way that is consistent with the wishes of the owner. Christian stewardship can thus be defined as the Christian’s careful and faithful management of everything that God has entrusted to him. Another way of putting it: Stewardship is managing God’s resources to carry out God’s mission.⁴

Understanding the spirituality of stewardship establishes in our minds God’s sovereignty, His ownership, and His love for us and requires us to respond appropriately in love.

The more I searched the Bible the more I discovered God’s reasons for implementing stewardship. True stewardship is not a man-made concept to raise money. Stewardship was designed and implemented by God for man. When we follow God’s principles of stewardship, we obtain a glimpse into the mind of God concerning His plan of salvation. Once an individual becomes convinced of God’s principles and convicted by the Holy Spirit that individual would follow the ways of God.

The Bible says in John 12:32, “*And I, if I am lifted up from the*

earth, will draw all peoples to Myself“. When God places in your mind His principles of true stewardship, the Holy Spirit transcends you from the mundane things of the world to the important and meaningful things in life. This allows you to realize fulfillment in your Christian experience.

This book does not focus on the mechanics of practicing stewardship, but on the spiritual significance of its principles. Therefore, this book contains no gimmicks, no clever plans for budgeting to accommodate giving; it contains no testimonials from individuals who have received bigger homes and boats because they have given huge sums of money to their favorite charity, church or non-profit organization.

As you read the pages of this book, it is my hope and prayer that what the Holy Spirit has revealed to me, He will reveal to you.

I invite you to read this book, so that your belief in the spirituality of true stewardship will rest on knowledge — knowledge gleaned from the word of God.

References:

1. Albert Einstein on Knowledge- http://nico.rave.org/quo_2_ein_knowledge.htm
2. Greek #2315 - *Strong’s Dictionary of Hebrew and Greek Words*
3. Greek #3623 - *Strong’s Dictionary of Hebrew and Greek Words*
4. *Christian Stewardship of Possessions – Compelled by the Love of Christ* by David J. Valleskey (August 1989)