

A BRIEF BIBLICAL STUDY OF STEWARDSHIP*

THE REAL OWNER! The Bible teaches us that God is the owner of everything & we are just the caretakers:

- Psalm 24:1 - "The earth is the LORD's, and all it contains, The world and those who dwell in it."
- Psalm 50:10-12 "For every beast of the forest is Mine, The cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird of the mountains, And everything that moves in the field is Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you; For the world is Mine, and all it contains."
- I Cor. 10:26 "For the earth is the Lord's, and all it contains."

"ECONOMICS IS IN THE BIBLE?" YES, BUT TRANSLATED BY A DIFFERENT ENGLISH WORD! "Oikonomia is the Greek word from which the English word *economy* or *economics* is derived. In the New Testament the word *oikonomia* appears frequently, but it is not translated as 'economy' or 'economics.' It is translated '**stewardship**.' Christians may not be deeply concerned about economics, but the New Testament certainly is concerned about stewardship. We see the concept on page after page. Stewardship comes from a combination of two words: *oika* which comes from the Greek word for 'house,' and *nomos* which comes from the Greek word for 'law.' *Oikonomia* has to do with '**house law**' or '**house rule**.' The biblical idea is that the steward is the one who is placed in a position of authority over the house. The steward does not own the house, but he works for the owner and is given authority to manage the house... **Ultimately, the global house, biblically speaking, is the world, which is our home.** God is the one who ultimately owns the world and man is placed in this world as a steward of God's house. Economics, therefore, has to do with managing the resources that ultimately belong to God. God holds us accountable for what we do in that management process as we take care of the world that He has given us" (R.C. Sproul, "*Lifeviews-Understanding the Ideas That Shape Society Today*." Fleming H. Revell Co.: Old Tappan, NJ, c. 1986, pp. 144-145). In the KJV there are 20 verses that are translated Steward (13), Stewards (4) or Stewardship (3 -all in Luke 16, the parable of the unjust steward), twelve of the NT occurrences being various forms of the Greek word *oikonomia*.

DEFINITION OF A STEWARD: Caretaker, Overseer, Foreman, House Ruler, Manager, etc. "A person who manages another's property or financial affairs, or who administers anything as the agent of another or others... A person who has charge of the household affairs of another... An employee on a ship, train, or airplane who waits on and is responsible for the comfort of passengers."(Random House College Dictionary, 1973, p. 1288) cf. the now politically incorrect word Stewardess: "A woman who works as a steward, especially on a airplane, ship or train."(ibid) So a steward is one put in charge of property, possessions, a business, etc., by an owner. **The key character quality of a good steward:** Faithfulness (i.e. Reliability, Dependability, Consistency, Integrity, etc.)

SOME EXAMPLES OF, OR LESSONS FROM, STEWARDS IN THE BIBLE:

- Gen. 39:4 Joseph served in that position under Potiphar.
- Gen. 43:19 Joseph had a steward later in life (thus he had one, and had been one!).
- I Kings 16:9 Here is an example of a steward who was a poor influence on his master, as he helped him get drunk!
- I Chron. 28:1 Here a steward oversaw all the property and livestock.
- Mt. 20:8 A "foreman" of workers.
- Luke 8:3 Herod's steward is mentioned.
- Luke 12:42 Here is a steward who took care of the feeding and pay of servants.
- Luke 16:1-13 A parable told by Jesus of a poor, lazy, unfaithful steward who lost his position due to such personal deficiencies. Such negative qualities disqualify a person from the roll of a steward.
- I Cor. 4:1-2 Faithfulness is the one key prerequisite to qualifying as a steward.
- Titus 1:7 - A pastor (overseer) is God's steward (overseer) of the flock.
- I Pet. 4:10 - Everyone should faithfully use his/her spiritual gift, because we are to be good stewards of what God has given us.

AS BELIEVERS, WE SHOULD CHECK OURSELVES, TO SEE IF WE ARE GOOD STEWARDS.

- **INDIVIDUALLY** - Are we taking good care of ourselves physically & spiritually. Are we using our mental abilities to the maximum?
- **FAMILYWISE** - If we are married, are we leading our family well?
- **SCHOOL/EMPLOYMENT** - Are we good, faithful workers &/or students?
- **SERVICE TO GOD** - Are we faithful in Church attendance & involvement; witnessing; Bible reading & memorization; prayer; discipling of others; etc.?
- **THE ENVIRONMENT** - Do we take care of God's creation & utilize it and make it productive?

ANOTHER WAY OF EXAMINING OURSELVES is to ask yourself: "HOW DO I USE..."

- **MY TIME?** We all get the same 24 hours per day!
- **MY TALENTS?** The abilities, gifts, etc, that God has given us.
- **MY TREASURE?** Our money & possessions.

QUESTIONS TO ASK OURSELVES TO DETERMINE WHAT KIND OF STEWARD WE ARE:

- What do you **THINK** about?
- What do you spend your **TIME** on?
- What do you spend your **MONEY** on?
- Who do you **ASSOCIATE** with?
- What are your **GOALS** in life?

"AM I A FAITHFUL STEWARD, OR AN UNFAITHFUL ONE?"

*Compiled by Mike Edwards while serving as Baptist Chaplain at the University of Papua New Guinea, c.1988. (revised, Jan 1998 & reformatted Nov, 2008)