

# The Discipline of Stewardship

By Matt Harrison

## Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

### Assignment One

Read the comments related to **What Is Stewardship?** in the section **It's in the Book**; then read 2 Corinthians 9:1–15. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: What attitudes should characterize our giving of money?

### Assignment Two

Read the comments related to **What Is Stewardship?** in the section **It's in the Book**; then read Ephesians 5:15–17. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: In this passage, what does Paul tell us to do with our time? How does this relate to stewardship?

### Assignment Three

Read the comments related to **Stewardship: God's Call for Every Disciple** in the section **It's in the Book**; then read Matthew 25:14–30. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: What stewardship principles can be drawn from Jesus' teaching in verse 29?

### Scripture to Memorize

*His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master." Matthew 25:21*

### Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand what stewardship is and why it is essential for a follower of Christ.

**Matt Harrison** is instructor of Foundations of Education at Southwestern Seminary. He is married to Ruth, and they have three children: Tyler, Megan, and Noah.

## It's in the Book

30 minutes

### Real-Life Scenario

John was able to get his job done at work without putting forth much time or effort. He was content with this because it gave him more free time to do the things he wanted to do, and he only needed do what the boss asked. What do you think about John's approach to work?

### What Is Stewardship?

To answer the question above, disciples need a definition of *steward*. Biblically speaking, a steward is a guardian or manager of someone else's resources (see Luke 16:2–3). Thus, stewards are accountable to the owner of those resources for how they manage what is entrusted to them.

Through Scripture, stewardship comes into focus. The call to stewardship began in Genesis 1:26–30 when God told His image bearers that He had given them every plant, tree, bird, and everything that moves on the earth. God called His image bearers to rule over all He had given.

A crucial principle of stewardship is found in Psalm 24:1. This verse teaches that the Lord owns the earth and all it contains. As a foundation for stewardship, we affirm that God owns it all! We must see that *everything* in our lives is subject to His lordship and thus is a matter of stewardship.

### Stewardship: God's Call for Every Disciple

Every disciple needs to know what it means to be a steward because each disciple has this role. We are all called to stewardship—faithfully managing all He has given.

Money is one resource where God calls us to be stewards. In 2 Corinthians 8–9, Paul encouraged the Corinthians to complete their commitment of giving money to the needy church of Jerusalem. Paul provided crucial teaching for us about the stewardship of money.

### Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week may now share a report.

Time is another resource where God calls us to be stewards. Unfortunately, time is easily taken for granted and overlooked as an aspect of stewardship.

### Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week may now share a report.

**Read** Matthew 25:14–30 out loud.

### Studying the Passage

This passage is known as the parable of the talents and is part of the Olivet Discourse that spans Matthew 24–25. In this discourse, Jesus addressed Jerusalem's destruction and the end of the age.

**Verse 14.** **man . . . on a journey.** This man in the story symbolizes Jesus. He handed over his

possessions to his slaves.

**Verse 15. talents.** A talent was a measure of money of high value. The man gave his slaves money according to their ability. They received different amounts of money because they had different capabilities.

### Discussion Questions

Similarly, Jesus has entrusted His followers with many resources. What sorts of things has He entrusted to you? What is your attitude toward what He has entrusted to you?

### On Your Own

Read Matthew 25:16–18. In the space below, write how many talents each slave was given and what each slave did with his talents.

Slave 1

Slave 2

Slave 3

### Discussion Question

What did you notice about what each slave did with his talents? Compare the responses of the slaves with how people respond to stewardship opportunities today.

### Studying the Passage

**Verse 19. after a long time.** Finally, the man came back to settle accounts with the slaves. The day of reckoning had arrived.

### Discussion Questions

In verses 20–23, the master called the first two slaves to give an account of their stewardship. How does the master respond to their stewardship? What qualities of the slaves does the master commend?

### Studying the Passage

A transition occurs in verse 24. The third slave gave an account of his stewardship.

**Verse 24. hard man.** The slave misunderstood his master's character. He thought the master was a severe taskmaster.

**Verse 25. afraid.** Unfortunately, instead of responding with faith and initiative, the third slave responded with crippling fear. Unhealthy fear caused him to play it safe with his talent.

**Verse 26. wicked and slothful servant.** The master responded with piercing words. He said the slave was wicked. The way he handled the talent revealed the miserable condition of his heart. The master also called him lazy. The Greek word here suggests that he shrunk or hesitated from being faithful with what the master entrusted. The words "wicked" and "slothful" stand in glaring contrast with the first two slaves who were pronounced "good" and "faithful."

**Verse 27. interest.** The master expected at least some return on the money he gave the servant.

**Verse 28. take the talent.** The talent was taken from the servant and given to the one who had ten talents.

**Verse 29. given . . . taken away.** Jesus offered important comments regarding *faithful* and *unfaithful* stewardship.

### **Assignment Three Feedback**

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week may now share a report.

**Verse 30. outer darkness . . . weeping and gnashing of teeth.** These words describe hell and eternal damnation. The third slave faced eternal judgment.

The parable anticipates the day when Jesus will return and we will give an account of our stewardship of all He has entrusted to us. Jesus taught that we must be faithful while He is away. We are responsible to be good and faithful stewards, taking the initiative to manage His resources well. We must live prepared for His coming, as ones who will give an account. Jesus will bless the faithful steward with abundance, but the unfaithful steward will suffer loss.

### **On Your Own**

In the space below, write your thoughts: Would God pronounce you “good and faithful” with what He has entrusted to you? What can you do to be more faithful in your stewardship?

## **Heart and Hands**

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

**Since Last Week**

5 minutes

**Grace-Filled Accountability**

5 minutes

**Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service**

5 minutes

**Prayer**

7 minutes

## **At Home: Nail It Down**

Biblically speaking, a steward is a guardian or manager of someone else's resources (Luke 16:2–3). In Scripture, stewards are accountable to the owner of those resources for how well they manage what is entrusted to them. The discipline of stewardship began in Genesis 1:26–30 when God called His image bearers to rule over the things He had given. The call to stewardship is still upon us today.

A crucial principle of stewardship is found in Psalm 24:1. This verse tells us that the Lord owns the earth and all it contains. Thus, when it comes to stewardship, we affirm that God owns everything! Keep this simple principle before you. See everything in your life as a matter of His lordship and thus your stewardship.

As a disciple of Jesus, you are called to manage faithfully *all* He has given you. This includes areas of your life such as the giving of your offerings (2 Corinthians 9:1–15), the use of your time (Ephesians 5:15–17) and the gifts and abilities He has given to you (1 Corinthians 12–14).

As a disciple of Jesus, you serve Him who lived, died, was resurrected and ascended to the Father. One day He will return. Be faithful while He is away! Take initiative and manage to the fullest the resources He has given you for the sake of His kingdom. One day you will give an account of your stewardship.

Jesus will bless faithful stewardship with abundance, but unfaithful stewardship will result in loss (Matthew 25:29). In stark contrast to the wicked and lazy slave of Matthew 25:26, through the strength the Spirit provides, seek to be a good and faithful steward of your King (Matthew 25:21, 23).

### **Follow up Question**

*What is stewardship, and why is it essential for a follower of Christ?*

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.