

GROWTHguide

Starting August 10, 2014

"Being a Good Steward"



Day 1: Read Matthew 6:21-24, 13:22-23

What are we really devoted to? That is the question. Are our hearts set on earthly goods? Do we try to combine devotion to them with loyalty to Christ? Or are we devoted exclusively to him?...the heart is dark when it clings to earthly goods, for then, however urgently Jesus may call us, his call fails to find access to our hearts.

--Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*

- Jesus condemns greed and the hoarding of money, but does not condemn riches. Jesus advises us to invest in our eternal future instead of storing up material things for our present and temporary enjoyment. Is God your priority or is money?
- We have the choice between two masters, God or the world's treasures. It is important to consider that everything done in this life has eternal value. Ponder the scripture and the quote; do you have your heart set on earthly goods? Pray and ask God to help you be devoted to Him and not to money.

Day 2: Read Luke 12:16-21

We are encouraged throughout scripture to spend our money wisely, to save, and to plan for the future--especially for our families. How we handle our money says a lot about what kind of steward we are and giving back to God is an integral part. All our possessions are a gift from God, and we know that when we are faithful in giving, we reap many more blessings—one being joy!

- Ponder the scripture and be in prayer about your finances. Are there ways you could improve in the stewardship of the blessings God has given you?

Day 3: Read Malachi 3:7-15

The world is generally unimpressed by the church's witness today. The average person considers it irrelevant, the businessman regards it as pathetically inefficient, while the journalist maintains that religious news is little or no news. But what would happen if the floodgates of heaven were opened and revival blessings were poured out on local congregations and the church at large? Multitudes would throng our buildings, the businessman would take notice. And the reporter would write headlines in the press. The nations would call us blessed.

--Stephen F. Olford, *The Grace of Giving: A Biblical Study of Christian Stewardship*

- Last week at St Paul we experienced a loss of resources at the Open Arms Resource Center, however the outpouring of giving in the wake of the loss has been amazing! Individuals, organizations and companies have given to Open Arms and have come alongside to help those in need—many feeling prompted by the Holy Spirit. News reporters are excited to share the story of the wonderful gifts that have been given! Blessings have been "poured out" on the Open Arms ministry and it is an amazing testament to the work of our Lord.
- Ponder the scripture. Pray about being faithful in tithing to the "storehouse." which helps lead to fruitfulness in the ministry of this congregation and ultimately the "church at large."

Day 4: Read Deuteronomy 8:10-18 and Matthew 19:16-30

How can the disciple have dealings with earthly goods and yet preserve this singleness of heart? Jesus does not forbid the possession of property in itself. He was man, he ate and drank like his disciples, and thereby sanctified the good things of life. These necessities, which are consumed in use and which meet the legitimate requirements of the body, are to be used by the disciple with thankfulness.

--Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*

- Being a good steward of the blessings God has given you also includes being thankful! It can become easy if we experience rich earthly blessings to think that it was because of our "power and the strength" of our hands. "But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth..."
- Ponder the scripture and think about the rich young man who asked Jesus about what he must do to get eternal life. Did you notice what Jesus said about how difficult it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven? Why is that? It isn't because of wealth; it is because of the love of wealth. When we worship our money, we forget about God and that He gives us the ability to produce it!
- If Jesus asked you to "sell your possessions and give to the poor," could you do it? Why or why not? Pray and thank God for his many blessings and ask Him to help you have a giving spirit.

Day 5: Read 1 Timothy 6:9-10 and 6:17-19

What Jesus was against was anything that separates us from the love of God. Money often does just that. If money becomes the all-consuming goal for anyone, then that person has been separated from God...The relationship we have with God is the most important factor in all of our Christian life. Jesus Christ, as Lord and life and all we possess, came to show us life, that we might have it in its freedom and its abundance. When we see money as a tool to accomplish God's will and purpose in life, as revealed in Jesus Christ, money becomes a blessing rather than a curse in our lives.

--Donald W. Joiner, *Christians and Money: A Guide to Personal Finance*

- Where does your hope lie? Do you feel separated from God because of a love for your possessions?
- Ponder the scripture. Pray and ask God to help you to put your hope in Him, and not in the "uncertainty of riches."

Day 6: Read Hebrews 13:5 and 13:15-16

Christian financial planning is less interested in how much we have, or even what we do with what we have. It is first a spiritual issue: How much of us does God have? Christian financial planning begins with and focuses on God. The Christian affirms that all we have comes from God. God invites us into a partnership in the ongoingness of creation. It is an invitation, exemplified in Jesus Christ, to claim that intimate relationship with God we call stewardship.

--Donald W. Joiner, *Christians and Money: A Guide to Personal Finance*

- At various times in our lives we can lose focus and become concerned only with obtaining and storing money. Have you ever struggled with loving money or possessions?
- How much of you does God have?
- How would your life change for the better if you began living a life free from the love of money?
- Pray and ask God to help you to focus on Him, to do good and to share the blessings that He has given you.

Day 7

Today is your "Sabbath" and a time for reflection. How has God been speaking to you over the week? Use what the Lord has said to you to remold and reshape your life. If you are having trouble hearing God's voice, slow down or even stop what you are doing so that the busyness of life's demands do not squelch the whispers of God's language of love upon your heart.