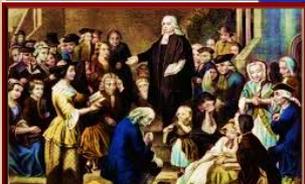


The question is whether we’ve deliberately transferred the ownership of ourselves and all our assets to Him. Have we invited Him to be what Scripture says He is—the Creator, Owner, and Controller of us, our family, our possessions, and “our” money? Have we extended the invitation again after we’ve forgotten and taken things back into our hands? This self-surrender to God is the beginning of true stewardship.

“CAN WE AFFORD TO BE ERRANT KNAVE?”



John Wesley asked, “Can any steward afford to be an errant knave? To waste His Lord’s goods? Can any servant afford to lay out His Master’s money any otherwise than His Master appoints him?” A test of our stewardship is whether we ask God to

show us what to do with His money. If we don’t consult Him, we act as if we were owners, not stewards. When we grasp that we are a steward, not an owner, it totally changes our perspective. Suddenly we are not asking, “How much of my money shall I, out of the goodness of my heart, give to God?” Rather, we are asking, “Since all of ‘my’ money is really Yours, Lord, how would You like me to invest Your money today?” Not only does God own everything, God controls everything. Again, the implications are enormous. I don’t have to own everything. I don’t have to control everything. It’s in better hands than mine.

“ONE DAY WE WILL GIVE AN ACCOUNT”

The Scriptures are filled with references to the ultimate judgment of our works, yet somehow many Christians have either failed to understand—or have chosen to ignore—what the Bible says. Nevertheless, we will be judged. Paul makes this clear in his letter to the Corinthians: “For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body” (2 Corinthians 5:10). Jesus confirms Paul’s assertion, revealing that each of us will be held accountable for every idle word we speak! “And I tell you this, you must give an account on judgment day for every idle word you speak”(Matthew 12:36). Jesus, knowing the nature of Heaven and the rewards that await us, discouraged us from becoming captives of this world and its fleeting pleasures. Instead, He encouraged us to focus on the accumulation of heavenly treasures: “Don’t store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be”(Matthew 6:19-21). Our treasures in Heaven are eternal.

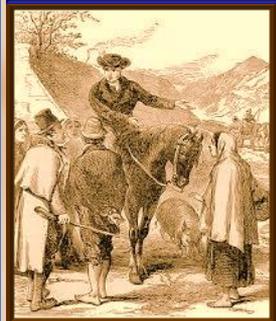


“HE HAS ENTRUSTED US”

Stewardship isn’t a subcategory of the Christian life. Stewardship is the Christian life. For what is stewardship but that God has entrusted to us life, time, talents, money, possessions, family, and His grace? In each case He evaluates how we regard and what we do with what He’s entrusted to us.



JOHN WESLEY UNDERSTOOD: “OWNERSHIP BELONGS TO THE LORD”



A distraught man furiously rode his horse up to John Wesley, shouting, “Mr. Wesley, Mr. Wesley, something terrible has happened. Your house has burned to the ground!” Weighing the news for the moment, Wesley replied, “No. The Lord’s house burned to the ground. That means one less responsibility for me.” This wasn’t the sanctimonious reply of someone who thought I’d be quoting his words hundreds of years later. We might say, “Get

real,” but his reaction didn’t stem from a denial of reality. Rather, it sprung from life’s most basic reality—that God is the owner of all things, and we are simply his stewards. John Wesley have something in common that all of us need to cultivate—a life-changing understanding of God’s ownership and our stewardship.

“THE FULL IMPLICATIONS OF GOD’S OWNERSHIP”

From beginning to end, Scripture repeatedly emphasizes God’s ownership of everything:

- “To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it” (Deuteronomy 10:14).
- “The land is Mine and you are but aliens and My tenants” (Leviticus 25:23).
- “Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things.” (1 Chronicles 29:11-12).

“THE FULL IMPLICATIONS OF GOD’S OWNERSHIP”



- “Who has a claim against me that I must pay? Everything under heaven belongs to me” (Job 41:11).
- The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters” (Psalm 24:1-2).

- “For every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are mine. If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it” (Psalm 50:10-12).
- “The silver is mine and the gold is mine,’ declares the Lord Almighty” (Haggai 2:8).

Search and you won’t find a single verse of scripture that suggests God surrendered His ownership to us. God didn’t die and leave the earth—or anything in it—to me or you or anyone else. In case I think “well, at least I own myself,” God says, “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).” They too were not to do with their lives as they pleased. That’s Paul’s point in 1 Corinthians 6. The believers in Corinth were doing what they pleased. And why not? “It’s my life.” Paul said, “No, it’s not your life. You own nothing, not even yourself. When you came to Christ you surrendered the title to your life. You belong to God, not yourself. He is the only One who has the right to do what He wants with your life—your body, money, possessions, everything.” God doesn’t just own the universe. He owns me. I Am Twice His—first By Creation, Second By Redemption.

“WHO IS THE TRUE OWNER?”



John Wesley

Stewardship is living in the light of these truths. It’s living with the awareness that we are managers, not owners, that we are caretakers of God’s assets, which He has entrusted to us for this brief season here on earth. How we handle money and possessions demonstrates who we really believe is their true owner—God or us. John Wesley offered four questions to help decide how to spend money. Notice how the last three flow directly out of the first one: **In spending this money, am I acting as if I owned it, or am I acting as the Lord’s trustee?**

“WHO IS THE TRUE OWNER?”

- What Scripture requires me to spend this money in this way?
- Can I offer up this purchase as a sacrifice to the Lord?
- Will God reward me for this expenditure at the resurrection of the just?

If we really believe he is the owner of all entrusted to us, shouldn’t we regularly be asking Him, “what do you want me to do with your money, and your possessions?” And shouldn’t we be open to the possibility that He may want us to share large portions of His assets with those whose needs are greater than ours?

“STEWARDSHIP TO MANY IS AN OLD WORD”

The word “**Stewardship**” has fallen on hard times. To many it’s an old word, dusty and crusty, no longer cutting edge, no longer relevant to the day in which we live. To some it’s a religious cliché used to make fund-raising sound spiritual. It conjures up images of large red thermometers on church platforms, measuring how far we are from paying off the mortgage. But in reality “**Stewardship**” is such a good word, both biblically and historically, that it deserves resuscitation rather than burial.

“A steward is someone entrusted with another’s wealth or property and charged with the responsibility of managing it in the owner’s best interest.”

“A STEWARD IS TO BE FOUND TRUSTWORTHY”



The steward is entrusted by the owner with sufficient resources and the authority to carry out his designated responsibilities. Scripture tells us that God delegated to us authority over all His creation. “God blessed them, and God said to them, “**Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion**

**over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”** (Genesis 1:28). God expects us to use all the resources He gives us to best carry out our responsibilities. A steward’s primary goal is to be found faithful by God as he uses those resources to accomplish the tasks delegated to him. “**Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.**” (1 Corinthians 4:2).

“Transferring the Title Deed to God”

God owns all things, whether we recognize it or not. But life becomes much clearer—and in some respects much easier—when we consciously recognize it. The question isn’t whether we theoretically affirm God’s ownership.