



Stewardship: Living as God's People in God's World

Lesson 2: Stewards in God's Kingdom

THE GOSPEL MAKES US OUTWARD FACED

Through the gospel, Jesus makes us a people for others. His gospel gives us deep respect and great hope for every non-Christian, and frees and empowers us not to live for ourselves but for our friends, neighbors and associates who don't believe.

The gospel makes us a people and a place where non-Christians are expected, welcomed and respected. Their questions and objections are invited. Their struggles and doubts are taken seriously. We love them not so we can evangelize them, but we evangelize them because we love them.

Review

The theme of our first lesson was the kingdom of God. We saw how God is to be worshipped as the Lord and King of all creation. We also looked at how God's kingdom is described in the Bible. It's a realm where peace, justice, and righteousness triumph over conflict, oppression and sin. Finally, we noticed how Jesus described his ministry as ushering in this promised kingdom through his life and death.

This week we will spend some time discussing Sunday's sermon, then we'll talk about the implications of God's kingdom for our lives. We are not only citizens of the kingdom; we are also children of the King! And as citizens and children, we are also stewards.

Further Informed & Further Involved (15-20 minutes)

Sermon Topic: The Gospel Makes Us Outward Faced

- Have you been in a relationship where you felt like you were the other person's "project"? How did it make you feel?
- Read or review the text from the sermon. In what way were you most challenged from the sermon?
- What about the gospel compels us to have a genuine concern for others?

Further Invested (45-60 minutes)

The concept of "stewardship" is built upon the reality that God is king and ruler over all the earth. Everything belongs to Him. Whatever we possess is on loan to us from the True Owner. So then a steward is a person who manages the resources, property and affairs of a ruler or an owner. The best example in the Bible is

Psalm 8:4-8

⁴What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? ⁵You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. ⁶You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet; ⁷all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, ⁸the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.

Matthew 24:45-47

⁴⁵Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. ⁴⁷I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

Luke 16:10-13

¹⁰Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. ¹¹So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? ¹²And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? ¹³No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."

1 Corinthians 4:1-2

¹"This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. ²Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy."

"He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep in order to gain what he cannot lose." **Jim Eliot**

Joseph in Genesis 39-41. Over time he essentially became the steward of Pharaoh in Egypt and every decision he made was backed by the authority of Pharaoh.

The Bible is clear that God considers us not only citizens and children in his kingdom, but also as stewards of his creation. Psalm 8 speaks of the significant role we have been given by God.

- David seems humbled in Psalm 8 by the place of man in God's world. Explain in your own words what it means to be a steward.
- Overall, how would you rate our performance as stewards of the creation?

The modern equivalent of a steward might be something like a manager of a trust. A steward is both a manager who is given the latitude to make far-reaching daily decisions and also a servant who seeks to act in the interest of, and within the will of, a much higher authority. Jesus told a parable in Matthew 24 of wise and foolish stewards. He makes the point that we all we be called on to give an account of our stewardship.

- Name some things over which God has made you a steward.
- How would you evaluate the job you're doing? How do you think God would evaluate it?

In Luke 16:1-15, Jesus told a somewhat confusing parable about a shrewd steward. It's confusing because the steward is commended even though he acted dishonestly. Of course, Jesus wasn't encouraging us to be dishonest; rather, he was making the *one* point that in the midst of a crisis, the manager had acted decisively with a view toward his future. He cancelled the debts of those who owed his master so that when he was fired, he would have friends who would care for him. And Jesus says we can learn from him. He says in verse 9, "I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings." It's a unique way for Jesus to challenge us to use our wealth and material possessions with a view toward eternity.

- Read Luke 16:10-13. What are the true riches? What's the problem with trying to serve two masters?
- What are you doing with your wealth and possessions to make eternal friendships?

In 1 Corinthians 4, Paul says a steward is to be trustworthy, but he is talking about something far more significant than money. He is talking about the gospel. God has blessed us with salvation through faith in Christ, but along with that blessing comes the responsibility of a special stewardship. We are to use *all* that God has given us (not just 10%) to serve our King and point others to Christ.

- How does *Advancing the Vision* provide a unique opportunity for us to be stewards of the kingdom?
- Pray for each other, that God would help you live out the responsibility and potential of biblical stewardship.