

I. Christian Stewardship in Biblical Perspective
Lifestyle Stewardship
“Christian Stewardship: An Identity and a Vocation”
I Corinthians 4:1–5
Dr. Harry L. Reeder III
January 12, 2020 • Morning Sermon

This is God’s Word and it’s eternal, infallible and inerrant. I Corinthians 4:1–5 says [1] *This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. [2] Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. [3] But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. [4] For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. [5] Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

This past year I knew where my vacation time was going to be spent and that was with my sister who was battling cancer and close to going home to be with the Lord. On the way there I stopped by my hometown and while I was there I took a picture of the house where my sister was born so I could show her as she was approaching to be with the Lord which she was fully ready to do so. Then I took a picture of a house we bought just a little while afterward when my parents had two more children which was the house we all grew up in together.

I also rode by one of the elementary schools I went to when I was in the fifth and sixth grade and went in to visit my sixth grade classroom. As I stood in the doorway I remembered a time when the teacher’s pet, Libby, came to that doorway to tell my teacher ‘The principal wants Ike Reeder to come to her office.’ Unfortunately that message had been delivered at other times as well and of course I was wondering what I was in trouble for which could have been a number of possibilities. As I got to the office I saw my dad and I thought for sure I was in trouble but the principal said ‘Ike you’re not in trouble. We are going to release you with your dad and here are your homework assignments for the next ten days.’ My dad was in the Southern baseball league at that time and had a couple of stands in Asheville and Chattanooga. My dad said ‘Son, I’m going to take you on a road trip.’ I have never forgotten that trip. I got to meet and talk with Pete Rose, Tommy Helm, Johnny Bench and all these guys in baseball at the time. It was a great road trip.

Our ministry theme of lifestyle stewardship this year is a journey and so I’m going to take you on a road trip. It will be an upward journey. I believe it will be an exciting and enjoyable journey so don’t let stewardship scare you. I can’t tell you the joy I have in this congregation of God’s people being faithful in where He has put them and what He has done here. People in moments of challenge don’t become something they’re not. That moment is merely the next step of a lifestyle of stewardship and it’s much more than finances. I understand why Jesus kept bringing us back to money because you can’t love Him and money and money is what Satan loves to use.

I have been studying this subject of lifestyle stewardship for six months and I’ve been convicted, excited and I’m on this journey/road trip with you. I want you to enjoy it and grow in your understanding of what it means to be a steward. In our text for this study Paul identifies

that he is a servant and a steward. Then he tells us when all is said and done, as a steward he wants to be 'found faithful' so what does he mean by that? It means God finds him faithful even at the Judgment Seat and there will come our commendation. Paul is not looking for commendation here. Here is an insight for you, for God's people will appear before the Judgment Seat but not for the issue of salvation, because we're in the Book of Life. We will be there for the issue of stewardship for we are accountable for our stewardship. So let's understand it.

What is meant by this word stewardship? It is on the one hand an identity in our life and on the other hand it is a vocation of our life. The Greek word for steward/stewardship is *oikonomos* which are two Greek words that are put together. Oiko is the Greek word for house and nomos is the Greek word for rules or law. So *oikonomos* is house rules.

Growing up my mother had a whole list of house rules like when you could take your shoes off and when you could where them in the house. We had to mop three times in the kitchen and have our beds made by a certain time, etc. This was how we were to live in this house.

God lives in His church and here are the rules of the house. This is the culture that God wants developed where He dwells and if you're a Christian then God dwells in you. You are His house personally so what are the rules of the house? These rules are not for salvation for He has already done that as your Lord and Savior. This is the life you live, not to be saved, but to live out of that adoration, allegiance and growing affections for your Savior.

The other word associated with *oikonomos* is *oikonomia* and we get another word from that which is the word economy and that is a life system – the economy of a nation, the economy of your home. So we are not just looking at one area of what we do with our money but what it means to live your life as a steward – what is the economy of a Christian, the lifestyle of a Christian? We will typically expound on particular texts that have to do with this ministry theme of Christian stewardship.

The first text we're looking at is this one in I Corinthians 4. According to this text the Lord will be the One who will give the verdict of whether you will be found faithful as a steward and that verdict will be given at the Judgment Seat. This has to do with your stewardship in your sanctification as a believer and not your salvation.

If you are a Christian your identity is Christ. Philippians 1:21 says [21] *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.* Christ is your life but when Christ is your identity Christ gives you other identities for Him. Here are five of them that He gives you that identifies you as a Christian. The first one is that you're a sinner saved by the grace of God. Praise God you're not under the dominion of sin anymore and you're eradicating the practice of sin in your life, but you're still a sinner.

A second identity mark is you're a saint secured by the grace of God. You are both a sinner and saint. As a sinner you are saved by grace and God's grace is bigger than all your sin and you're a saint secured by His grace. Blessed assurance Jesus is mine, O what a foretaste of glory divine as the great hymn says. You are set apart sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, filled with the Spirit of God, wrapped in the righteousness of Christ, forgiven and pardoned. Christ is yours and you are His. You are a saint that belongs to Him.

Thirdly, you are a soldier for Christ on a mission, on message and in ministry. You have been enlisted into His army. He has equipped you with the armor of Christ (Ephesians 6:13–17). He has given you the divinely fashioned weapons to take down the strongholds of sin and idolatry so that you take every thought captive unto the obedience of Christ. You are in a

spiritual warfare as a soldier for Christ. Praise God the war has already been won but we have a lot of battles to fight for Jesus for the souls and hearts of men and women, boys and girls and our nations.

A fourth identity is that you're a servant of Christ in unrivaled devotion to the Master. Most of the time in the Bible it says you are a servant bound by love (*doulos* – Greek word) to your Lord, Master (*kurios* – Greek word) but there is one word for master used at special times and only six times in the Bible. It is the Greek word *despótēs* which means master and you're a servant to your master. We get the word despot from this word yet for us that's a very negative word but in the first century despot was an unrivaled master – master who had no rivals, no competition. When Jesus saves us He becomes our unrivaled Master and out of love we serve Him for the glory of His grace.

The fifth identity is that we're a steward. In the first century a steward (*oikonomia*) was an individual who had been appointed by someone to oversee, supervise, or use (manage) the resources and responsibilities that has been allocated to them. The master on his own decides what they decree to their steward and what they want the steward to do with it. So the master allocates the resources and directs the right use of them and therefore directs the steward to supervise it. The steward owns nothing. The steward manages and supervises. Paul says 'I'm a steward' and the steward wants to be found faithful at the Day of Judgment.

In God's sovereignty I'm an American, a pastor, Cindy's husband, a father, and a grandfather so I have all of these sub identities, but I never think of any of them without first thinking of my encompassing identity. I am a Christian husband, a Christian father, a Christian grandfather for I am Christ's and Christ is mine. Do I do this perfectly? No, but that is where God has called me to think and how God has called you to think. As Christians we never modify Christian by one of those identities, for we modify those by being a Christian. Now I am a steward for Christ. What does it mean to do Christian stewardship?

I want you to take you on this Christian stewardship journey with me for it is an exciting, encompassing journey to find out the breadth, the height, the depth and the length of this. So what does it mean to have this vocation, this calling? We have multiple callings as a Christian where we're called to be an evangelist, to worship God, to be an ambassador for Christ, a discipler and be disciplined but a key calling is that of a steward of everything God has allocated to me and to use, manage and supervise those things for Him.

All the callings we have as Christians are all challenges in a fallen world but I believe the two biggest challenges of our calling in Christ is worship and stewardship. The challenge is that we keep trying to make worship about us instead of about Him – what do I think about the songs, what do I think about the worship, what do I think about this or that instead of, was God pleased, was He honored, was He lifted up? The reason Jesus saved you was to worship Him. It's no accident that the woman at the well gets saved and gets the answer to the question about worship. Our purpose in missions is that the praise of God will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. God-centered worship is why I was made, saved and sustained in His providence, but the tendency is to make it about me.

In stewardship we tend to look at it as a duty we have to accomplish instead of a life that I need to embrace. We constantly think 'what am I going to give to God from what I own?' That is not Christian stewardship for Christian stewardship is that I don't own anything, absolutely nothing. I want to give you a couple of principles in this matter of Christian stewardship.

The first principle in Christian stewardship is that we own nothing. I understand we're in a society where we have property titles and all of that but as a Christian in our mind whatever it is in this world system they say we own, we actually know we don't own anything. God owns my house, my job, my bank account, my calendar and every moment of every day of my life. God owns it all.

The second principle is that as Christians we are owned by Christ. We belong to Him. This is the key to lifestyle stewardship. If you get this wrong or reject it or set it aside then forget Christian stewardship for you will never embrace it. You may give a little something from time to time for this or that but you will never know the joy of being a steward for Christ and what it means to hear the words 'well done good and faithful servant.' These two principles are crucial. So are these two Biblical or not? I want to show you two passages of Scripture to set the nail on these two principles of – I own nothing and Christ owns me.

The first text is I Corinthians 6:19–20 which says *[19] Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, [20] for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.* God lives in you. This is why I'm here – to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. I glorify the One who bought me with His blood, who purchased me from the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of light, the One who gave me forgiveness and eternal life in Christ.

Do you know Christ? Are you bought with the blood, the soul cleansing blood of the Lamb? Do you know what it means to be forgiven, to be made acceptable with the righteousness of Christ? If you do know Him then you know you are not your own for you belong to Him. Now let's look at Romans.

Romans 14:7–9 says *[7] For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. [8] For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. [9] For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.* I am not my own. I am the Lord's and therefore all that I have belongs to Him because I belong to Him. We own nothing. I'm a steward and not an owner.

The third principle of Christian stewardship is all that we have has been allocated to us by God. He gave it all to us. He gave you your marriage, your children, your job, He blessed the work of your hands and all that you have has been given you by Him.

The fourth principle is that we are now accountable and called to be faithful with all that God has given us. What is done in the darkness will come to the light according to Luke 8 and Ephesians 5. What you think is simply in the light will get more light for He is going to expose that which we are and what we have done. Is our salvation on the line? No, because as I said earlier Jesus has secured our salvation but our sanctification and our stewardship will be made evident on the Day of Judgment.

II Corinthians 5:10 says *[10] For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.* Those who don't know Christ will be judged in terms of sin and condemnation but those who do know Christ, whose names are written in the Book of Life, will be judged on our stewardship and sanctification. We will be accountable. It is just like the parable of the talents where what I was given and allocated I will be accountable for how I used it.

So here is the takeaway. This is the foundational definition of Christian lifestyle stewardship. It is the economy of a Gospel-shaped life that faithfully and productively invests all that God has allocated to us for His glory as directed by the Word of God and enabled by the

Spirit of God. Christian stewardship is shaped by the Gospel and it is not an effort to create the Gospel. The Gospel is the foundation, the formation and the motivation of every aspect of the Christian life. The Gospel shapes my worship, my stewardship and all the contours of my life. I am working out what God by His grace is working into my life.

A man who used to disciple me said it this way – know, be, do. **Know** who you are in Christ. **Be** what you are for Christ. **Do** what you do unto Christ. Don't do to be. Know who you are by the grace of God in Christ. Be who you are – an evangelist, an ambassador, a steward, etc. I am assured I am saved by God's grace. My stewardship like everything else will be uneven and imperfect but I want to get on the journey of growing stewardship and it's the Gospel that motivates me, shapes me, leads me and fills me. I am what I am by the grace of God. I am called to what I am doing to the glory of God by the grace of God. This is a Gospel shaped life.

I am to be faithful. Some may be thinking 'Harry, are you a capitalist?' Yes I am for whatever He gave me I want to invest it, use it and multiply it. We will learn more about this as we go through this study on Christian lifestyle stewardship. The way to multiply is that little is much when God is in it. It is amazing what God will multiply with a couple of loaves and fishes. So will I productively use all that God has given me as directed by the Word of God? What does the Bible tell me to do with my responsibilities, my relationships and my resources? The Bible directs me in all of the arenas of my Christian stewardship but I can only do by being enabled by the Spirit of God.

We have some great motivators. The Gospel motivates us. The preeminence of Christ motivates us. Colossians 1:18 says [18] *And He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent.* That is stewardship. When I go to work, parent, preach, do a hobby or whatever it is I want Christ to be preeminent. Another motivator is that He is worth it. All that I have He is worthy of it. He not only gave it to me but He is worthy of me bringing it back to Him.

Another motivator is that I will be accountable for all He has given to me. I remember growing up and getting home from school when I was tired from practice and there would be a list waiting for me with bullet points. All of my sisters and I would have lists to do when we got home from school, like mop the floor, clean off the table, go check your bed it wasn't done right and some of them would be underlined. I know those would be the ones that would get inspected with the 'white glove.' Accountable. Remember this has nothing to do with your salvation but my stewardship will be tested.

Another motivator is that this will be fun. This is a great road trip. You will get to talk with fathers and mothers in the faith who will help you with this. This is a great adventure. It's a test that brings a testimony. Another motivator is that this will fulfill your deepest desire. I'm reminded of Psalm 115:1 which says [1] *Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!* When all is said and done we're not profitable but our deepest desire is that when we get to that Judgment Seat could we hear from Jesus, 'Well done good and faithful servants.'

We have some obstacles though. One is that every morning I wake up I have to kill the old man that is still living within me, because every morning I keep wanting to take my life back for me. I keep wanting to be master/owner and it's not about me being a steward for Christ. I'm the obstacle. Another obstacle is that it's hard to be faithful as a steward with your job, your money, your marriage and your children if your identity is in your job, your money, your

marriage and your children. As long as your identity is not Christ then you can't be a steward for Christ or bring the preeminence for Christ to everything.

Another obstacle is jealousy and envy. "I only received two talents. I should have received five." I love what Robertson McQuilkin said to my dear friend Mike Ross when he talked to him about this incipient jealousy that pastors can have. Dr. McQuilkin said "if God gives this guy five drums to beat go praise the Lord. If He gives you two drums to beat you praise the Lord. You pray for him as he beats his five drums and then you just go be the best two drum beater that has ever been living." Don't envy the guy with five just go be a two drum beater and thank God for what He gave you, but don't get caught up in jealousy and envy.

Here is one more obstacle and that is the training tools God has given you for stewardship. The training wheels of stewardship is the tithe. The training wheels for the hours and minutes of every day is the Sabbath, the Lord's Day. When you learn to set aside one day that is foundational to setting aside all of life. When you learn to set aside the tithe and the first fruits then that's training wheels for everything, but if you don't see that as training wheels for everything and only as the minimum to get by then the training wheels become an obstacle. In other words it's what another preacher calls the ten ninety – where you bring God the tithe but the other ninety percent is yours. Or God I am bringing you the Lord's Day but the other six are mine. You just misused the training wheels. The tithe is there to acknowledge and affirm for its all from Him and to Him. The Lord's Day, the first day, the resurrection day is there to affirm and the other six I'm working for Him for they're His. Don't let the instruments that God has given become the objective. As my friend Randy Alcorn says 'They are the training wheels to help you in discipleship of being a good steward.'

When I went to be with my sister before she died and then after she died, I was watching this independent Presbyterian Church she was a member of outpour love to our family and I was so grateful. It was just amazing. Here is what I shared with them at the funeral. "Our family is deeply grateful for all that you have done. The reason you are able to do what you have done and what allows a church in a moment of crisis to go to the next level is because they have already been doing it every day." You people here at Briarwood have even done this for us from a distance.

The thing that allows us at a moment of opportunity in stewardship of our resources, responsibilities and relationships, is that we have already built it as a way of life. We are stewards. I own nothing. It belongs to Him. He is worthy. I am His and He is mine. God by Your grace may I be found faithful. Let's pray.

Prayer:

As we started this journey today however the Lord spoke to your heart from His Word, take a few moments to the praise of God's glorious grace allow Him to be at work in your heart. We are stewards for Christ – found faithful – managing, using, overseeing our relationships to the preeminence of Christ, our responsibilities in life for the preeminence of Christ, our resources for all of these things He has allocated to us sovereignly using them because we own none of it. We are owned by Him. Perhaps you haven't taken that first step of being owned by Christ and you know you're a sinner and you want to turn from your sins and put your trust in Him. Then today is a glorious day that your life is stewarded by Christ and kept by Christ for all eternity. If you want to pray with someone please contact us here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 for we would love to pray with you and if you have been awakened by stewardship and want to pray with someone then call us as well. Jesus we come. Nothing in our hands we bring but to the cross we

cling. Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to Thee for the praise of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

STEWARDSHIP—AN IDENTITY

Oikonomia – Oikonomos

Our Identity in Christ is Christ

Sinners – saved by the Grace of God

Saints – secured by the Grace of God

Soldiers – On Mission–On Message–In Ministry

Servants – Unrivaled devotion to the Master

Stewards – Gospel assured, Biblically directed and Spirit-empowered faithfulness in all things

STEWARDSHIP—A VOCATION/CALLING

We have multiple Vocations/Callings in the Lord

Two Most challenging Vocations/Callings

Christian Lifestyle Stewardship Principles

- We own nothing
- We are owned by Christ
- All we have has been allocated to us by God
- We are accountable and called to be faithful

LIFE TAKEAWAY

Christian Lifestyle Stewardship

The economy of a Gospel-shaped life that faithfully and productively invests all that God has allocated to us for His glory as directed by the Word of God and enabled by the Spirit of God.

Relationships–Responsibilities–Resources