

II. Christian Stewardship in Biblical Perspective

Lifestyle Stewardship

“Stewardship in Real Time, Part 1”

Genesis 39

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January 26, 2020 • Morning Sermon

Genesis 50:15–26 says [15] *When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, “It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him.” [16] So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, “Your father gave this command before he died: [17] ‘Say to Joseph, “Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.”’ And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.” Joseph wept when they spoke to him. [18] His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, “Behold, we are your servants.” [19] But Joseph said to them, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? [20] As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. [21] So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.” Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.*

[22] So Joseph remained in Egypt, he and his father's house. Joseph lived 110 years. [23] And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation. The children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were counted as Joseph's own. [24] And Joseph said to his brothers, “I am about to die, but God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.” [25] Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.” [26] So Joseph died, being 110 years old. They embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

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

The reason we chose the theme of a lifestyle of Christian stewardship is we ended last year with five foundations that need to be delivered into your life through small group discipleship. Those five foundations were Christianity 101 which is the basics of Christianity, spiritual growth which are the disciplines of grace, lifestyle stewardship, training in personal evangelism and the last was worship which includes gathered worship and lifestyle worship. Lifestyle stewardship is comprehensive and most of think money when we hear this yet it’s much more than that so we decided to take the whole year to teach this. I loved this idea and we started it in the last study.

In the last study a point was made that stewardship is a very common factor throughout the Bible is written. The five things brought out about stewardship is that a steward owns nothing, the master owns everything, the master allocates and directs to the steward, there is accountability to the master and the overseer is faithful and productive with what has been allocated to him and to administer it as it was directed. Immediately we transfer this matter into Christian stewardship and we begin to see things about stewardship.

First, is the Christian owns nothing and yes I understand in our society there are papers that say you own things but as a Christian with a Christian world and life view, while things in human terms have been entrusted to my ownership, in reality I’m not a true owner. I’m like those in Acts 2 who even though they controlled their property they saw themselves as owning nothing. The Lord owns it. In Christian stewardship, I not only own nothing but I am owned. I

Corinthians 6:19–20 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.***

Secondly, my master is Jesus Christ. He owns everything. I Corinthians 15:10 says [10] *But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.* What I have has been entrusted to me by the sovereignty of God no matter what and I how much and therefore my Master allocates and directs me on how to use it. What do I do with my time, treasures and talents? Think of everything He has allocated to you in three categories – relationships, resources and responsibilities.

Think about the relationships you are in. I'm a pastor, husband, father, grandfather, and a citizen in a country where God has entrusted me to vote and participate in the public politic. I have finances and responsibilities entrusted to me. I have experiences God has entrusted me to learn from. I have mental and emotional abilities. I have spiritual and physical gifts/talents. The same thing that is true of me is true of you. God tells us in His Word what to do with all this and how to handle it for Him.

We are accountable to Him and that accountability will be on a particular day for there is a day that is coming where it is appointed unto man once to die, and then the judgment (Hebrews 9:27). I will not stand at that judgment in terms of where the unbelievers stands with my name in those books because my name is in the Book of Life and Jesus has already taken my judgment. I will appear for the judgment of stewardship. What did I do with what He allocated to me to be a minister according to His Word? So I want to know now from His Word how to do it. As a pastor that is burden on my heart because I know you will stand there to give an account for what God has given to you. To be a faithful and productive steward is to do what His Word says to do with those resources.

One of the primary ways you discover that is through the preaching and teaching of the Word and being disciplined in the Word which is why we have to stay on our mission as a church, so that you can be a comprehensive steward in all of life. This is what brings me to Genesis and from Genesis 36 to the end of the book we mainly here about this man Joseph with the exceptions of a few side stories. As we study stewardship I want you to see stewardship in real time in the life of a believer who lived as a steward in multiple settings. Joseph was a steward for his father in the family as he was sent out to check on the brothers. He was a steward for Potiphar, for the jail/prison warden and then for Pharaoh. Here is a man we typically most admire, are drawn to, and astonished by in the Bible and this also goes for Genesis 39.

Before we get to Genesis 39, I have a confession, an admission and request I want to give. This chapter like every other part of the Bible has multiple contours of what God is communicating. In this chapter I see three contours that are relatively evident and one of those is the anticipation of Christ where you begin to see Jesus through Joseph. Joseph is to some degree a type of Christ. Christ was rejected by His own and so was Joseph. Christ was abandoned by the 12. Joseph is abandoned by his brothers. Christ was betrayed with 30 pieces of silver, Joseph with 20 shekels. Christ was disrobed and so was Joseph – at the pit and at Potiphar's house. Christ was falsely accused, tried, convicted and sentenced and so was Joseph. Joseph was humiliated and then exalted so Christ was humiliated and then exalted with the name above every name that at the name of Jesus we could be saved. In Joseph's position of exaltation he would secure the well-being of God's covenant people in the land of Egypt.

Time and time again we see ways that Joseph anticipates Christ and Genesis 39 gives us great insight into it. I hope this wets your appetite for doing personal study on Joseph. I commend to you Kent Hughes' book on Genesis for further study that has greatly helped me. Another book is Richard Philip's commentary on Genesis and Jim Boyce's commentary on Genesis as well.

A second contour from Genesis 39 is an examination of a prevalent issue in the Christian life. I have been studying this text for weeks and in this text is embedded, I believe, perhaps, the most insightful text in the life of someone. There are other texts that give us principles but in this text it gives us how we deal with temptation, with sexual temptation in particular and what men should do in relationship to sexual temptation. This is one of the most powerful texts on this and so I will go into more detail on this in the next study especially in what we deal with in our sexualized culture due to Satan's snares and schemes. This chapter is God's grace based approach to dealing with it in the life of Joseph so be sure to read on to the next study.

The third contour in Genesis 39 is a presentation of a profile of the Christian life. Remember, you're a sinner saved by grace, a saint secured by grace, a soldier in the army of God's grace, a servant by grace where you love and obey your Master and you're a steward. In this chapter is a real life example of stewardship in the life of Joseph that I want you to see that can give us insights into our lives. Remember the five things we said earlier about stewardship and let's see if this is true in Joseph's life. And what is Satan's response when you attempt to be faithful as a steward?

Genesis 39 is a historical narrative in real time and we know this because of the word 'now.' Genesis 39:1 says *[1] Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there.* So after Joseph had been thrown in the pit by his brothers, the Ishmaelites who were slave traders bought him for 20 shekels and now they are headed to Egypt which was a great market for slave. Potiphar is likely a captain in an imperial army of Pharaoh and buys Joseph from the Ishmaelites.

Genesis 39:2–3 says *[2] **The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. [3] His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.***

Lest you be trapped into today's current heresy of the prosperity gospel, you need to realize here that Joseph is a slave. So what does it mean when the Bible says that a believer is successful? Joseph is enslaved where he is so it can't mean status or money because Joseph doesn't have any. A Biblical meaning of successful is that you are faithful to God's calling with what God has given to you and you are content in the Lord. Here is a man who is faithful and productive in whatever is assigned to him. Joseph is a slave and he doesn't call a pity party. He takes his current status and he is the best slave Potiphar could possibly have. Every time he does something a slave would do he succeeds in his assignment for he has accepted his position from a sovereign God and he is content, industrious, engaged and gives attention to his master. He did not attempt to rebel or undermine his master but embraced his position.

Genesis 39:4–6a says *[4] **So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. [5] From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had, in house and field.*** (This is enough for me to go hire Christians who are faithful to the Lord and give attention to what has been assigned for the Lord blesses those who bless His people and its happening here.)

[6a] So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge, and because of him he had no concern about anything but the food he ate.

Potiphar sees how the Lord blesses Joseph and all that he does so he puts him in charge of everything and all Potiphar needs to concern himself with is when to show up to eat. Everything else is being taken care of by this faithful, productive, industrious overseer. We see here that a Christian is a steward and that God is your master. Can God say to you that He doesn't have to worry about anything He has entrusted to you? Are you faithful in all your relationships, resources and responsibilities? Our heart's desire is that we want to attend to the Lord in everything. Lord, if You get it to me I'll get it back to you, should be our prayer to Him because of His grace, by His Spirit and for His glory.

As far as we know Potiphar wasn't a believer, but in the text it says that Potiphar saw that the Lord was with Joseph and saw everything he did. How would Potiphar know the Lord was with Joseph? How would Potiphar know that Joseph was successful because the Lord was with him? There is only one place he would get that and that would be from Joseph. In other words, Joseph as the Lord blessed didn't take any credit but gave all the glory to God and let Potiphar know that it wasn't him but that it was because the Lord was with him. Joseph bore witness of the glory and presence of God and that's who Potiphar knew the Lord was with Joseph. Another way to look at this is that Joseph was an evangelist – I am what I am by the grace of God. This narrative is about to take a turn so let's continue.

Genesis 39:6b–10 says *[6b] Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. [7] And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me." [8] But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge. [9] He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" [10] And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her.*

Joseph is a good steward of his relationship with Potiphar's wife for he knew she belonged to Potiphar and not him and he was going to keep that pure. Joseph says five things here. She wants him to lie with her and she is trying to draw him in. He says 'no' and then he verbally says out loud that one it is a sin against God, two it would be a sin against his master, three it would be a sin against his vocation as a steward, four it would be a sin against her, and five it would be great wickedness – not just a little sexual problem of unsafe sex. He says it out loud not only for her but anyone else who is listening and he is telling himself. He is raising the flag, going public to show why his stewardship would not allow this before the Lord. Now we find out what she does.

Genesis 39:11–23 says *[11] But one day, when he went into the house to do his work and none of the men of the house was there in the house, [12] she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." But he left his garment in her hand and fled and got out of the house. [13] And as soon as she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled out of the house, [14] she called to the men of her household and said to them, "See, he has brought among us a Hebrew to laugh at us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. [15] And as soon as he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried out, he left his garment beside me and fled and got out of the house." [16] Then she laid up his garment by her until his master came home, [17] and she told him the same story, saying, "The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to laugh at me. [18] But as soon as I lifted up my voice and cried, he left his garment beside me and fled out of the house."*

[19] As soon as his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, “This is the way your servant treated me,” his anger was kindled. [20] And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison. [21] But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. [22] And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. [23] The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the LORD was with him. And whatever he did, the LORD made it succeed.

So what happened? There is a false charge against Joseph, his master is angry with him but I think the master knows something is not quite right. The reason I say that is because the penalty for having sex with another man's wife back then was death so the penalty he received was a mild one. Maybe this wasn't the first time she had done something like this and maybe Potiphar could actually see what was going on but I don't know. It is still a penalty and Joseph loses his position but as he goes to prison, he doesn't feel sorry for himself for he starts ministering to two prisoners and he obeys the warden. The next thing we know Joseph is the steward of the prison. Just like Potiphar had no concerns about anything Joseph was in charge of neither did the prison warden have any concerns about anything Joseph was in charge of. If Joseph was in charge of it, it was going to be done faithfully and productively.

My prayer as I read this is God, whatever you give to me help me be faithful to You and productive in what You have given to me so that You have no concerns and I know I can't do that without Your Spirit, Your Word, Your grace and Your mercy. I believe that is the heart of a steward where the master doesn't have to take a second thought, once He has given it us and given us His Spirit, His Word and His grace to do it.

Joseph's promotions won't stop here for later on he will get promoted to Pharaoh. He will become the vice president and prince of Egypt. He will be put in charge of everything and Pharaoh won't have to worry about a single thing. So what are some things we can learn about stewardship in real time from this text? I want to give you three takeaways from this.

The first takeaway is Joseph is a steward as a believer. Here is what I am saying from this. Joseph is a steward from his father. Joseph becomes a steward for Potiphar. Joseph becomes a steward for the prison warden and he will become a steward for Pharaoh in the palace. My point is that Joseph keeps being put into positions of stewardship because Joseph is a lifestyle steward for the Lord. It doesn't matter where he is – favored son, the pit, Potiphar's house, prison or a palace. They make him a steward because he practices stewardship as a lifestyle.

God has assignments for all of us and those assignments are directly related to our desire to take all that we are and have to use for Him. That's why in the parable of the talents He takes the one talent from the one who buried it to give it to the others who used it. I'm not talking about financial success. I'm talking about stewardship opportunities before God. He loves to entrust to His people those things that He knows they will embrace because they live a life of stewardship, not a life of self-pity. Joseph had many opportunities to descend into self-pity but he never does. Whatever his next assignment is, he is a good steward of it by giving attention to those over him, handling what has been given to him and then he is given positions of a steward.

Positions of stewardship are given to those who have lifestyle stewardship for they embrace responsibility, relationships and resources faithfully and with integrity. So they know there are things that are not lawful for them to have as did Joseph with Potiphar's wife. Moses, who wrote Genesis, doesn't even dignify Potiphar's wife with a name. Did you notice how

quick thinking Satan and his servants are? She sees Joseph's garment and thinks what can I do with this garment and quickly concocts this story about Joseph that isn't true. Yet Joseph is a good steward. This is guy who loved his robe as he wore it at home but now he is willing to part with garments to flee temptation. His Master owns everything. He owns nothing.

The second takeaway is as a believer and a steward your circumstances will constantly change. What will you do when they change in your life? Joseph was the same no matter where he was – pit, Potiphar's house, prison or a palace – slave, prisoner or prince. Joseph never changed with his circumstances. Joseph was faithful and productive in every circumstance. I think the key is found when he responded to his brothers by saying 'don't worry, I'm not going to seek revenge. God was working.' Yahweh is the word Joseph used when responding to his brothers and that means covenant keeping God. God has been working all things together for what they meant for evil God meant for good so that all of his brothers could be cared for. They might have been ready to sacrifice Joseph but God was just getting him the place so Joseph could take care of all of them. Am I God? In every circumstance Joseph is answering 'no, it's not about me for it's my God faithfully at work in me, through me and for me.'

Periodically we are going to find ourselves in places we don't want to be and we're convinced – God, why have you put me in this dead end? A pit looks like a dead end, doesn't it? Potiphar's house looks like a dead end, doesn't it? A prison looks like a dead end, doesn't it? There aren't dead ends. God's putting you where you need to be to get you ready for where you're going to be. Here is an example.

A couple of weeks ago I went home to take some pictures to my sister and I couldn't help but stop by the place we all went to church growing up. I wanted to see a particular road in the back for there was a small road that ended with a dead end and a turn around. It is the same now as it was 50 plus years ago. That is where my daddy would take me after prayer meeting to teach me how to drive. I wanted to get on Independence Blvd. but my daddy knew I wasn't ready for that road. That road was similar to an interstate and my daddy knew Independence Blvd. wasn't ready for me.

So God has this plan for His people in Egypt multiplied matured to go back to the Promised Land. God's other plan was to get a faithful steward there, by the name of Joseph whom God is going to use for all of this and Joseph knows it. Joseph says 'just embalm me and when God visits you He is going to take you up there.' Why does Joseph know that? It is because God had visited Joseph.

I want you to leave remember these four verses in Genesis 39:2, 3, 21 and 23 which says [2] **The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master.** [3] **His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.**

[21] **But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.** [23] **The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the LORD was with him. And whatever he did, the LORD made it succeed.**

The Lord was with Joseph – Immanuel. The reason we can be stewards is that God has not only allocated to us but He is with us and if He is with us, who can be against us (Romans 8:31)? Potiphar's wife? Satan? No, for He wins the victory. That is why He says to go and make disciples and I'll be with you until the end (Matthew 28:19–20). I'll never leave you nor forsake you (Deuteronomy 31:6). God with us, let's pray.

Prayer:

God, thank You so much for this steward in real time to look at, learn from, be amazed by, astonished by, challenged by and encouraged by but thank You it's not Joseph for it's You for You were with him and You are with us. So today if you know you're not with God and He is not with you because you haven't yet surrendered to Him but you are now ready, then know that this Jesus went to the cross to die for you. He is the steward of your soul. Just as Joseph was humiliated and exalted so was Jesus to save you having won the victory at the cross. If you would like to pray with someone about this please call us at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200. We also have Bible studies to help you get started. Father, I ask that everyone reading this will embrace stewardship as a lifestyle. Give us the freedom of owning nothing, the joy of faithfulness in everything, the anticipation of productivity, all because you are with us for I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

Stewardship in Real Time

- I. Owns nothing
- II. Master owns everything
- III. Master allocates and directs
- IV. Accountability to the Master
- V. Overseer—faithful and productive

Stewardship in Real Time

- I. A prevalent issue in the Christian life
- II. An anticipation of Christ
- III. A profile of the Christian life

Life Takeaways

- 1. Joseph the Steward as a believer*
- 2. Circumstances changing, Joseph does not*
- 3. Dead Ends?*

Immanuel