

# **Biblical Stewardship Principles--Middle Elementary Version**

**Christian Stewardship is the free and joyous activity of the child of God and God's family, the church, in managing (taking care of and using) all of life and life's resources for God's purposes.**

## **I. God's Stewards Are God's Stewards**

**What does this mean:**

**We are God's stewards (managers) first because God created us; He formed our bodies before we were born. We are God's stewards second because God redeemed us and made us His own through Holy Baptism. Therefore we belong to Him and everything we have belongs to Him.**

**What does God's Word say about this?**

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Genesis 1:27 So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Isaiah 43:1 But now, this is what the LORD says--He who created you, O Jacob, He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are Mine."

2 Corinthians 5:16-17 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! (God made us new creatures when we were baptized in His name; the old, sinful nature is gone; the new Christ nature has come.)

Ephesians 2:8-10 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (It is totally God's gift to us that we are saved. We do not have to and we cannot do anything to earn salvation for ourselves. We can't even believe on our own. In fact, all the good things we do are things God planned for us to do before we were born.)

**How is this done?**

**As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, we will:**

- \* Recognize that it is through God's actions that we are made stewards;
- \* Respect all Christian stewards because they belong to God;
- \* Remind ourselves and each other that we are God's new creation each day;
- \* Always name the name of the Lord who has given us all gifts of time, talent, and treasure, to use for Him; and
- \* Always talk about stewardship to include all areas of life, in money, in time, and in talents to use for the Lord, and never limit it to just money or any other single area of life (talents or time).

**As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, we will not:**

- \* Tell God's people that when they give of their time, talent, and treasures they are merely donors, clients, or customers or that giving is a way to get something from God.

## II. God's Stewards Are Managers, Not Owners

### What does this mean?

**God has given to His people (His stewards) life and everything we need to live (all life's resources) as a trust; that is, we use and take care of everything, including life itself, for God. We do this with joy and with responsibility.**

### What does God's Word say about this?

Genesis 2:15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

Psalms 24:1 The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.

1 Chronicles 29:14 "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given You only what comes from Your hand. (David was praising God for his and his people's joy of being able to give of their treasure for the temple which his son, Solomon, would build.)

2 Corinthians 8:5 And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. (Paul was talking about people who had little to give, but who asked for the privilege of giving to God's work, first giving themselves, then giving out of their poverty what they could.)

Luke 12:48b From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

### How is this done?

**As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, we will:**

- \* Encourage God's kind of management of all life and life's resources for God's purposes;
- \* Use materials and plans for stewards that have as their foundation the understanding that God is the Owner and we are the managers in the area of stewardship;
- \* Encourage cheerful living and giving in all areas of life by Christian stewards, giving the firstfruits (giving from all we have, not just from a portion of it), proportionate (giving the best and first), including but not limited to tithing (giving of 10 percent);
- \* Always remind ourselves that God is the Owner and we are the managers; and
- \* Receive and use God's gifts with thanksgiving.

**As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, we will not:**

- \* Approach the steward as if he or she is the Owner;
- \* Forget God, the Owner, because we begin to believe that the work or the people or the company is the most important thing; or
- \* Fail to remind each other that if God has given us greater blessings, then we have greater responsibility to manage them according to God's purposes.

### III. God's Stewards Are Saints and Sinners

What does this mean?

**God's stewards rejoice in the fact that they are saints (holy people) made so by Jesus' death and resurrection. God's stewards live as saints as the Holy Spirit works God's good will in them. At the same time, God's stewards recognize they are sinners who fight sin and the evil sin brings each day.**

What does God's Word say about this?

Ephesians 4:22-24 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. (cf. Colossians 3:5-17) (God helps us put away the way we were before we knew Jesus; in that life, we believed the lies about the good life; God has created a new self for us through Jesus' death and resurrection.)

Romans 7:21-25 So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin. (There is always a struggle between good and evil. God has made us perfect through Jesus' death and resurrection, but while we live on earth, we still fight against sin in ourselves. The saint in me is a slave to God's law and so I delight in it; the sinner in me is a slave to the law of sin and so makes me wretched.)

1 John 3:1-2 How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as he is.

1 Peter 2:9-10 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you

had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

### **How is this done?**

#### **As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, we will:**

- \* Recognize that it is possible for either great good or great evil to happen because of how we manage what God has given us;
- \* Evaluate carefully everything we do or say when we talk about stewardship; (We want God's Law to be just God's Law; we want the Good News of Jesus to be just that: the Good News of Jesus. God's Law tells us how to live in accordance with God's will; God's Law can only show us our sin; God's Law can keep us from sinning more than we do; the Law can never save us from our sin because we cannot keep every point of the Law perfectly;

The Gospel tells us the Good News of Jesus Christ, that He paid the price for all our sin by His death and resurrection; the Law tells us we are unable get to heaven because we cannot keep the Law perfectly; the Gospel tells us we don't have to keep the Law perfectly because Jesus did it for us; now, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we can live lives pleasing to God not to earn heaven, but out of gratitude and thanksgiving to the God who sets us free).

- \* Know this biblical truth: that each child of God at the same time is saint and sinner;
- \* Know that, even with other Christians, we must present the Law only as Law and the Gospel only as Gospel; and,
- \* Look for ways to grow in our faith: read the Bible, attend church and Sunday school, pray, talk about God with and to others; in these ways, God helps us grow in our understanding of Him and in our relationship to Him.

#### **As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, we will not:**

- \* Say anything that will get people mixed up or confused about how much God loves us and how He wants us to use and take care of what He has given us;
- \* Think all Christians know God and know about Him as much as everyone else does; so we will need to watch what we say and watch what we ask others to do; or
- \* Talk in any way to God's people that makes them do or say something God doesn't want them to do or say; but help them know they can always act in love

for God and for others.

#### **IV. We Each Live as An Only Child But Always Together in the Middle of God's Big Family**

**God's stewards recognize that their lives are not something they do on their own by themselves. All things we do are personal responses to God. We live all our lives with other Christians so people in the world may know there is a God in heaven and He loves them and so come to faith.**

#### **What does God's Word say about this?**

Romans 12:4-5      Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. (God wants each of us to have a special place in His family and do which He plans for each of us; what each of us does affects everyone else in God's family.)

1 Corinthians 12:12-13      The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. (We all have been given gifts to help each other and God's church. Each gift is different from another because there are many things to do in God's kingdom and different tasks require different gifts. Yet God makes us One in Jesus.)

1 Peter 4:10      Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. (God wants us to use the gifts we have been given to help and serve others. God's great love shows itself in many ways.)

2 Corinthians 8:13-14      Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality. (Paul was telling the Christians in Corinth that God wants us to help each other so that those who have much might help those who have too little. That way, no one has too much or too little.)

Galatians 6:10      Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

## **How is this done?**

**As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, we will:**

- \* Emphasize that God has made each of us unique and given each one specific gifts. He gives us the privilege of using those gifts to honor Him and bless others. He will ask us how we have used our gifts;
- \* Recognize that each person will use the gifts God gives in the way that only he or she can use them; how you use God's gifts will be different from the way someone else would use similar gifts; and yet
- \* Know that we are all members of the Body of Christ and that we are to use our gifts and work together with other believers for God's kingdom;
- \* Encourage each other to recognize, care for, and use the gifts God has given to us;
- \* Rejoice in the gifts God has given to others for the good of the Kingdom; and
- \* Remind each other that God showers blessings upon those who manage them wisely and well for the common good.

**As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, we will not:**

- \* Say or think or act as if one person's gift (for example, our own) is more important than another person's gift; we cannot ignore or put down the gifts God has given to others; or
- \* Lead others to think that we do not need each other and each other's gifts as we work together in God's Kingdom.

## **V. God's Stewards Are *in* the World, But Not *of* the World**

**What does this mean?**

**God's stewards recognize that the Lord sets them apart from the world. The Holy Spirit transforms (changes) them by the power of the Gospel and sends them into the world to live out the Gospel. God's stewards live in the world, but they do not live like people of the world live.**

**What does God's Word say about this?**

Romans 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed [changed] by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--His good, pleasing and perfect will. (Do not live in the same way people who do not know Jesus live; the Holy Spirit has changed us to live as Jesus lived. When we do so, we are pleasing God [though not for our salvation] and showing that He lives in us and we have given ourselves to Him.)

John 17:15-18 "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world." (Jesus was praying for His disciples and for us. He asked God the Father to protect us from Satan and to make us holy by the truth of His Word.)

Genesis 12:1-3 The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (God was telling Abram that Jesus, the Savior, would come from his family and through Jesus' death on the cross, all people on earth will be blessed.)

John 16:33 "I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (Jesus was talking to His disciples, assuring them that by His death and resurrection, He defeated death, the devil, and the world.)

### **How is this done?**

**As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, we will:**

- \* Learn how the Gospel (the Good News of Jesus) transforms our attitude in, about and toward the world (we live in the world, but do not live as people in the world--those who don't know or believe Jesus; we want the world to know the saving love of God through Jesus; we ask God to protect us from the temptations of the world);
- \* Know that *whenever* and *wherever* we make decisions, we are giving witness as God's people to others;
- \* Encourage each other to remain faithful to God in all that we say and do,

knowing that when we fail, God, in Jesus, forgives us and strengthens us for another time; and

\* Lift each other up in prayer to be faithful witnesses for Jesus.

**As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, we will not:**

\* Limit Christian stewardship only to "church-related" projects and activities;

\* Fail to ask God to give us opportunities to witness for Him in our stewardship practices; or

\* Forget the daily temptations and struggles of being God's stewards *in* but not *of* the world.

## **VI. God's Stewards Are Loved and Loving**

### **What does this mean?**

**God's stewards recognize that their stewardship flows out of God's act of love for them in Christ, which empowers them, in turn, to love others in acts of Christ-like love.**

### **What does God's Word say about this?**

1 John 4:19 We love because He first loved us.

1 John 3: 16-18 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

John 13:34-35 [Jesus said,] "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this [everyone] will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another."

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again. (Christ loved us so much that we don't have a choice about how we are to love each other. When Jesus died on the cross, our sinful nature died with Him. Now Christ lives, and He has given us new life to live in Him.)

Galatians 5:6b The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

### **How is this done?**

**As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, we will:**

\* Know that whatever we do, when it is done in faith, is always Christian stewardship, for we are managing (taking care of and using) the gifts God has given us;

\* Honor each other as members of God's family as we make choices to show

Christ-like love in many ways; and

\* Look for ways to show God's love in us; to reveal the Gospel to others; to live a life of faith and love.

**As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, we will not:**

\* Live for ourselves, but out of love for God, live for Him and for each other;

\* Ignore or put down anyone's gift of love in word or deed, knowing that person is showing God's love in the way he or she best knows how;

\* Forget to pray for one another and to love each other as Christ loves us.

## VII. God's Stewards Are Served and Serving

### What does this mean?

**God's stewards recognize that taking care of and using God's gifts to them (stewardship) involves a Gospel-powered style of life; this is demonstrated as we serve others no matter where we are or whom we are with.**

### What does God's Word say about this?

Philippians 2:5-8 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! (We want to be more Christ-like every day. Jesus did not think it too lowly to become like us. He became our servant even to dying on the cross. We can, through the power of the Holy Spirit, serve one another.)

Matthew 20:26b-28 [Jesus said,] "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave, just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."

John 13:3-5; 14-17 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under His power, and that He had come from God and was returning to God; so He got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around His waist. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around Him... [Jesus said,] "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."

Galatians 5:13 Serve one another in love.

### How is this done?

**As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, we will:**

\* Know that when we serve each other, or serve people in the community and in the world, we are being Christian stewards;

\* Recognize that just as Jesus came to serve, we, as Christian stewards, are privileged to serve others through the abilities and resources God has given us; and

\* Adopt the attitude of a servant in all our relationships with others.

**As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, we will not:**

\* Set aside servanthood so that we might accomplish our own goals;

\* Fail to encourage each other to be God's servants in any decision or action; or,

\* Fail to challenge each other to do acts of kindness and mercy, using the abilities, gifts, treasures, and time God has given us.

## VIII. God's Stewards Live with an Awareness of the Present and Future, of Time and Eternity

What does this mean?

**God's stewards live purposely knowing that God is planning a place in heaven for us. At the same time, we live in time, in the present, and are firmly committed to God's rule here on earth.**

What does God's Word say about this?

Matthew 6:19-21 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

1 Timothy 6:17-19 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Philippians 3:12-14; 20 [Paul writes: "I have not received all that God is going to give me, knowing Jesus totally, being made perfect, knowing God as He is, being raised from the dead.] Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,

2 Peter 3:11-12a Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.

Revelation 14:13 Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the

Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow (with) them."

### **How is this done?**

**As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, we will:**

- \* Recognize that everything we decide to do or not do can have importance for eternity;
- \* Make plans with God's purpose for us in mind, both as we live now and as we look forward to living in heaven someday; and
- \* Rejoice in knowing that what we do now as God's stewards can have eternal benefits.

**As children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit's help, we will not:**

- \* Be so intent on the here and now that we forget the possibilities for extending the kingdom of heaven for eternity; or
- \* Be so intent on plans for the future that we forget the possibilities for extending the kingdom here on earth.