



7. My life as I manage God's gifts to me

*Christians administer all to
the glory of God*

Introduction

Borrowing

"If you borrow something, you put it back where you got it and in better shape than when you received it."

What are the common presuppositions behind such everyday wisdom?

Consideration for others.

It isn't yours to begin with.

Treat someone else's property with respect.

The Scriptures Say

1. "I believe that God created me and all that exists, and that he gave me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my mind and all my abilities" (from the explanation of the First Article of the Apostles' Creed). How does belief in a six-day creation by the power of God's Word affect our view of the world, ourselves, and all of our material possessions?

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

Deuteronomy 10:14 To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it.

Psalms 89:11 The heavens are yours, and yours also the earth; you founded the world and all that is in it.

Everything, including my own body, belongs to God.

Without a Biblical perspective of creation, it's only natural to think that I own/earned what I have (cf. survival of the fittest)



2. “I believe that God **still preserves** me by richly and daily providing clothing and shoes, food and drink, property and home, spouse and children, land, cattle, and all I own, and all I need to keep my body and life.” What does this statement from the First Article’s explanation teach us about our position in God’s creation?

Psalm 145:15,16 The eyes of all **look to you**, and you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.

1 Peter 5:7 **Cast all your anxiety on him** because he cares for you.

2 Corinthians 9:10-12 Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way **so that you can be generous on every occasion**, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.

God is the source of all we need, so we don’t have to be anxious about anything. We are managers of all God has entrusted to us, not just for our benefit but also for the benefit of others.

If we care for someone else’s child, we are careful to follow that person’s specific directions. Because we are managing God’s possessions, we follow his guidance.

3. Read Matthew 25:14-30. Under Jesus, we are equal in status. That doesn’t mean he will give us the same abilities or material possessions. Why can Christians be free from envy of another’s gifts or material possessions? **God decides who gets what.**

Matthew 25:14-30 parable of the talents (**1 talent = 20 years of a day laborer’s wages**)

1 John 3:17 If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?

Hebrews 13:5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “**Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.**”

1 Timothy 6:6-10 Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. **For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.** Some people, eager for money, have **wandered from the faith** and pierced themselves with many griefs.

God is the one who gives us all things. He has promised not to leave or forsake us. We will have what he knows we need. Rather than focusing on what we don’t have, we are able to focus on how we can use God’s gifts to benefit others.

4. But if we are honest, sometimes we give in to envy. When we do, what sins are involved? **Envy is the result of a lack of trust in God’s promises or of making gods of ourselves and our possessions. Greed. Ingratitude.**

5. After reading Mark 12:41-44, compare the attitude of the widow with the attitude of two imaginary men. (The men might be the sinful nature that lives within each of us.) One man boasts about his good stewardship as he gives a large offering. Another man excuses his poor offering and promises he will give a gift when he is able to afford it.

Mark 12:41-44 Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.” **What’s the lesson?** 1. Jesus cares about offerings. 2. %, not totals. 3. Trust, not leftovers. **What’s wrong with the 2 men?**

The first man’s gift was motivated by the desire for self-glory rather than thanks to God. The second man didn’t seem to believe he was blessed or didn’t recognize that all he had belonged to God and that it was a privilege to be able to worship God by returning a portion of what God had given him.

God’s desire for us is that we are motivated by the gospel to be faithful with our gifts.

6. What encouragement does God give us in the following passages as we seek to express our gratitude to God through our gifts for his ministry? **Principles?**

1 Corinthians 16:2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. **Regular, percentage, free-will (What about only giving an annual gift? Can be an expression of weekly savings)**

2 Corinthians 8:2 In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. **Poverty does not preclude generosity. Where there is a will, there is a way. Greed, not a lack of money, hinders giving.**

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. **And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. Giving is a matter of the heart (faith), not mind (logic). Don’t have the wrong motives (guilt, fear, pride: LAW). We are motivated by grace. God can bless our giving, materially. God will give us what we need. Trust him.**

1 Corinthians 4:2 Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. **God is trusting us with his gifts. He expects us to manage them faithfully.**

God gives us what we have and expects us to use these gifts faithfully. He directs us to think about what he has given us and then plan what we will return to him, giving to him regularly and in proportion to what he has given us, trusting that he will provide for us in abundance.

The Principles

Because the Bible clearly teaches the following truths . . .

1. I believe everything, including my own body, belongs to God.
2. I believe I am a manager of all God has entrusted to me.
3. I believe that God will entrust different gifts to each of us according to his wisdom.
4. I believe God's will is that, motivated by the gospel, we are faithful with his gifts.

Focus

Stewardship

An annual stewardship program can be a blessing for all of us. It encourages us to take stock of all the blessings God has poured into our lives. It reminds us that God has given us the opportunity to use our time, talents, and abilities in a way that can have an eternal impact. **Agree/disagree: A pastor shouldn't have to preach about money.** (Assumes that God's Word re. money is a bad thing. It's not. My New Man loves it. My Old Man hates it. Who am I listening to?)

What Does This Mean?

1. Evaluate this statement: The attitude of my heart is reflected by my stewardship of all the blessings God has given me.
Yes, Christian stewardship is a fruit of faith. Generosity says something about my gratitude and trust in God. However, outsiders may misread outward actions. They can't read the heart or know all the circumstances of a person's situation.
2. Agree or disagree: What I eat and drink is an expression of stewardship. Explain.
Agree. As a steward of the body God has given me, I will want to eat and drink those things that will benefit my body.
3. List seven things you are a steward of that have nothing to do with money.
Answers will vary but could include: my confession of faith, God's Word, God's house, my job, my family, my time, my talent, God's creation, freedom, etc.
4. Discuss the importance the blood and righteousness of Jesus have to your life as you contemplate your personal generosity.
It is our motivation. Because it is our highest treasure, it is the power behind our desire to be good stewards. It is also our comfort as we turn to the cross in repentance when we fail.
 - Take a few moments to write a short statement expressing the way these truths shape what you believe and how you live.