

Biblical Stewardship



INTRODUCTION:

This week in the news:

The tree was around 300 years old and stood beside a part of Hadrian's Wall called Sycamore Gap in the North of England. In 2016, it was named Tree of the Year in a competition organised by the Woodland Trust. Officials reported that it had been deliberately felled, which means cut down, overnight on Wednesday

Question: *what was your reaction? Why?*

We understand in life that there are things we use & enjoy.... That don't actually belong to us. AND we expect them to be looked after.

We have a strong sense of what is 'ours' - those things that belong to us. If they are taken, broken or misused we feel aggrieved.

But what does the Bible say about who owns what & how it should be used? - this is the concept of stewardship

The Foundation of stewardship

1. Ownership - who actually does this belong to?

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

This is the fundamental principle of biblical stewardship. God owns everything, we are simply managers or administrators or stewards acting on his behalf.

And this concept permeated their culture and how God's people lived in community:

- **In Giving** (1 Chr 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.'

- **In Sabbaths & Jubilee** (Lev 25:4 & 13, 23)

'When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a sabbath to the Lord..... In this Year of Jubilee everyone is to return to their own property... The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers.'

- **In Gleaning** (Lev 19:9-10)

'When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick

up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the Lord your God.'

But as the Biblical story continues - there is a warning. The blessings of wealth can actually cloud the truth - that everything belongs to God.

'You may say to yourself, 'My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.' But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth,' (Deut 8:17-18)

THE foundation OF STEWARDSHIP IS THAT EVERYTHING BELONGS TO GOD... the next 3 principles are our response to that - expressed in this parable:

Question: *what do think of this CS Lewis quote?*

'Every faculty you have, your power of thinking or of moving your limbs from moment to moment, is given you by God. If you devoted every moment of your whole life exclusively to His service, you could not give Him anything that was not in a sense His own already.'

– C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

Question: *how does this biblical idea that everything belongs to God challenge our western mindset?*

Question: *how might these bible verses above shape our behaviour and our attitude to our possessions?*

NOTE - *if there is time you may like to look at 3 more principles of stewardship, these all flow from the idea that everything belongs to God, and can be seen in Jesus parable*

Read: ***The Parable of the bags of gold*** - Matt 25:14-29

2. The principle of responsibility

'called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them' (Matt 25:14)

This echoes the very beginning of the bible.

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

If everything we have belongs to God, then with that carries the idea that we have responsibility in how we use it. We are called as God's stewards to manage that which belongs to God. While God has graciously entrusted us with the care, development, and enjoyment of everything he owns as his stewards, we are responsible to manage his holdings well and according to his desires and purposes.

Although God gives us "all things richly to enjoy," nothing is ours. Nothing really belongs to us. God owns everything; we're responsible for how we treat it and what we do with it. While we complain about our rights here on earth, the Bible constantly asks, What about your responsibilities? Owners have rights; stewards have responsibilities. - Bill Peel

3. The Principle of Accountability

'After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them' Matt 25:19

In other words - 'how are you using that which has been entrusted to you?'

Like the servants in the Parable of the Talents, we will be called to give an account of how we have administered everything we have been given, including our time, money, abilities, information, wisdom, relationships, and authority.

4. The Principle of Reward

'His master replied, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' Matt 25:21

Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.' Luke 6:38

Its a very simple equation! When we give - we receive a reward!

Question: *which of these principles challenges or encourages you the most?*