

## Called to Stewardship 1 Corinthians 4

We own nothing. All that we have, indeed all that we are, is a gift from God to be invested wisely during our few short years on this earth.

Growing up, dad would loan his tools, mower, vehicle, etc. to someone in need. Frequently, the item loaned came back in worse condition. Why? It didn't belong to the person, so they did not treat it as their own. A guy borrowed a yard tool from my dad even though he had one of his own. "Don't you have one of your own?" "Yes, but I don't want to mess mine up." Life lesson moment: return any borrowed item in better condition. Break it/replace it; upgrade it if necessary because it is not your own. That person trusts you, and they should continue to trust you after you borrow something.

Principle of stewardship. We are not owners; using resources owned by someone else; responsible; accountable. Honor the owner and honor the trust he has given to you.

READ 1 Cor 4:1-2

### I. Faithful stewards anticipate/ expect/ foresee accountability

- Accountability is inherent in stewardship. Faithful stewards prepare for it.
- 4:6. Interpretive key
  - Paul – greatest theologian; church planter
  - Apollos – greatest preacher
  - Prominent leaders of 1<sup>st</sup> century church
  - This is how you should think of your leaders; this is how you should think of yourselves
- Stewards are not superstars – 1 Cor 4:1; 4 descriptive terms
  1. Helper (ὕπηρέτης). assistant, helper, attendant in the court; under-rower
  2. Manager of a household. Chief servant – money, food, fields, slaves
    - Great responsibility and authority, but not final authority
    - 1 Cor 6:19
  3. Deacon (Diakonos). 1 Cor 3:5. Servants – intermediary, assistant, aide, waiter; under authority
  4. Laborers; 1 Cor 3:9. fellow workers; field hands
  5. Slave. Paul's favorite term to apply to himself
  - Summary: We are not in charge; we are under authority
  - Mt 20:25-28
  - 1 Cor 4:9-13
  - *Good to Great*, Jim Collins, 13-14. "We were surprised, shocked really, to discover the type of leadership required for turning a good company into a great one. Compared to high-profile leaders with big personalities who make headlines and become celebrities, the good-to-great leaders seem to have come from Mars. Self-effacing, quiet, reserved... these leaders are a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will."
  - Surprised. Shocked. Leaders are bold, brash, arrogant
    - 4:6. If this applies to us as leaders, how much more to you?!

- John Lennon 1966 interview with *Evening Standard*. “Christianity will go. It will vanish and shrink. We're more popular than Jesus now.”
- Muhammed Ali (1964). “I want everyone to bear witness, I am the greatest! I'm the greatest thing that ever lived.”
- Courtney Love. “I'm not a woman. I'm a force of nature.”
- Brian Wilson (pitcher for the Dodgers). “My I.Q. is 188. End of discussion, it's been proven. Certified genius.”
- Kanye West. “My greatest pain in life is that I will never be able to see myself perform live.”
  
- It doesn't shock us that people think this way; just that they say it out loud.
- Sports, entertainment, politics – pride is valued.
- Paul – In God's family, we are just stewards; stewards are accountable.
  
- Stewards are accountable for their stewardship
  - “It is required” – 4:2a
    - Luke 16:1-2. “Give an account of your stewardship”
  - Reward – 1 Cor 3:11-14
    - Praise
    - People
    - Authority
    - Isn't it inappropriate to be motivated by reward? Mercenary?
    - C.S. Lewis. *The Weight of Glory*. There are different kinds of reward. There is the reward which has no *natural connexion* with the things you do to earn it, and is quite foreign to the desires that ought to accompany those things. Money is not the natural reward of love; that is why we call a man mercenary if he marries a woman for the sake of her money. But marriage is the proper reward for a real lover, and he is not mercenary for desiring it. A general who fights well in order to get a peerage [status or wealth] is mercenary; a general who fights for victory [in a just cause, for his country's honor and safety] is not, victory being the proper reward of battle as marriage is the proper reward of love. The proper rewards are not simply tacked on to the activity for which they are given, but are the activity itself in consummation.
    - Reward is a legitimate motivation. So is fear.
  - Loss – 1 Cor 3:15
    - Not loss of salvation
    - Loss of praise; lost opportunity
    - 1 Cor 9:24-27
    - Different motivations work at different stages of life
      - Ex – raising kids. Carrot – money, toy, trip to park
      - Hope for reward; Fear of discipline fear of lost opportunity
      - What's important to remember is that it matters how I live
  
- Stewards are evaluated based on faithfulness – 4:2b
  - 4:3-5
  - No human is qualified to announce a verdict on our stewardship
    - We judge based on the wrong values; we don't know ourselves
    - Ex – Widow's two small coins
  - Not outcomes; not how much you produce
    - How many attend on Sunday? How big is your budget?
    - “God caused the growth”
    - Abide in the vine; not, strive to bear fruit

- Not ability – Things I’m good at and not. God made me. Knows capacities
  - Mt 25:14-15
- Not time served
  - Laborers in the field
  - Differing amount of time; differing part of field; differing strength
- God is always just, and He loves to be generous

## II. Faithful stewards invest wisely

- Mt 25:14-15. Parable of “talents”
  - Talent = unit of measurement for weight.
  - OT: Approximately 75 lbs. NT: a unit of money
  - something weighty, valuable. Silver or gold
  - Set of parables within Olivet Discourse; all have same point
  - Return of God’s Son; end times; certain; soon; be prepared
- What do you invest? Everything you are and everything you possess – 4:7
  - Psalm 24:1
  - You are rich; great resources; don’t boast
    - Don’t boast. INVEST your stewardship
- 1) Invest God’s gift of relationships – 4:14-16
  - a. Unique position (Apostle) – 1 Cor 1:1
  - b. Parent, coach, teacher, Bible study leader, youth leader
  - c. Your family; your friends; your roommates
- 2) Invest God’s gift of opportunities – 3:5
  - a. “As God gave to each...”
  - b. “Door”
  - c. Your life experiences open up opportunities
    - i. Speak out of your success/trials
    - ii. Ex – moving often; physical pain
- 3) Invest God’s gift of talents
  - a. What are you good at? What do you love to do?
  - b. Woodworking; baking; cars (free oil change for single moms); motorcycle club; no one asks me to help with landscaping
  - c. Exodus 31:2-4. Bezalel first man “filled with Spirit”
  - d. 1 Peter 4:10. Spiritual gifts. More later.
- 4) Invest God’s gift of treasure
  - a. Mt 6:19-20. Do not lay up treasures in earth...
  - b. Can’t take it with you, but you can send it ahead
  - c. David Livingstone. “I place no value on anything I have or may possess, except in relation to the kingdom of God. If anything will advance the interests of the kingdom, it shall be given away or kept, only as by giving or keeping it I shall most promote the glory of Him to whom I owe all my hopes in time or eternity.”
  - d. Money AND possessions; house, car
  - e. Great servant but a terrible master; like fire
    - i. Can’t bring contentment or happiness
    - ii. But it can be invested
    - iii. **Philippians 4:17**. Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit [interest; lit. “fruit”] which increases to your account.
    - iv. Luke 16:8-9. Welcome you into their eternal dwellings

- 5) Invest God's gift of time
  - a. Resource you never get more of
  - b. Seneca (Roman statesman/philosopher). "We are always complaining that our days are few, and acting as though there would be no end."
  - c. Benjamin Franklin. "Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for it is the stuff life is made of."
  - d. Henry David Thoreau. "As if you could kill time without injuring eternity."
  - e. Well pleased to impart not only the gospel, but our very lives
- 6) Invest God's gift of truth – 4:1
  - a. "mystery" = gospel
  - b. "entrustment" – 1 Thess 2:4; 1 Tim 1:11; 6:20
  - c. Most valuable treasure you possess. Pearl of great price.
  - d. Patrick Henry. "I have now disposed of all my property to my family. There is one thing more I wish I could give them and that is faith in Jesus Christ. If they had [faith in Jesus] and I had not given them a single shilling, they would have been rich; and if they had not [faith in Jesus], and I had given them all the world, they would be poor indeed."

### **Application**

#### Reflect

- What stewardships has God entrusted to you?