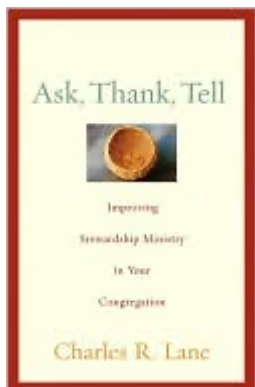


Faith Aflame: 360 Degrees

Stewardship—A Spiritual Issue



Session One – Part One



Introduction: Christian stewardship is the free and joyous activity of the child of God and God’s family, the Church, in managing all of life and life’s resources for God’s purposes.

The above definition of Christian stewardship emphasizes the broad scope of what Biblical stewardship is all about. Unfortunately, as Charles Lane says in his book *Ask, Thank, Tell*, “Stewardship has been kidnapped and is being held hostage by a sinister villain named ‘Paying the Bills.’” (page 7)

The purpose of session one is to enlarge and elevate stewardship. To enlarge means to see stewardship, as the above definition states, as all of life and not just “paying the bills.” To elevate means to encourage the making of stewardship a priority in the believer’s life and in the life of the Christian congregation.

There are, as a starting place, three things that can be said about Christian stewardship:

- God is the owner. (Psalm 24)
- We are stewards by God’s grace. (Titus 2:11-14)
- We are accountable to God for the stewardship task He gives. (Hebrews 4:13)

Bible Study: Luke 15: 11-31 “The Parable of the Prodigal Father”

Stewardship Questions:

1. Who am I? (The identity question)
2. What belongs to me? (The ownership question)

Stewardship: A Spiritual Issue

Stewardship is a spiritual issue. It has to do with God’s relationship to us in Christ and how we live out that relationship. It involves passive righteousness and active righteousness.

Stewardship is a spiritual issue. Stewardship is about the hearts of God’s people. Jesus’ desire is that our hearts be turned to Him.

Stewardship is a spiritual issue. As a spiritual issue the steward asks: “What does the Bible say to me and to my church about Biblical stewardship?”

God's Steward

As you think about stewardship as a spiritual issue, consider the following passages:

- Ephesians 2:12-22
- Galatians 5:16-26
- 1 Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19

Why is it important to elevate and enlarge stewardship both in the individual believer's life and the life of the congregation? There is a one word answer to that question and that one word is **SIN**. Because of sin people are prone to mismanage their lives; even Christian people are susceptible to mismanagement.

As one author noted, "If we are not willing to teach ourselves and our fellow believers how to manage our lives for the Savior, the sinful world is more than willing to teach its brand of self-centered living."

The Cornerstone of Christian Stewardship:

Charles R. Lane, in *Ask, Thank, Tell: Improving Stewardship Ministry in Your Congregation*, writes: "The biblical truth—that it all belongs to God—is the cornerstone of everything we have to say about stewardship." (page 22)

He suggests two cautions that need to be kept in mind:

The first caution has to do with a false sense of ownership. "Getting this one wrong," he says, "can make a true sense of stewardship impossible, because the steward falsely imagines that the owner's property belongs not to the owner but the steward." (page 29)

The second caution has to do with our believing that we deserve what we have because of superior intellect, hard work or some other inwardly focused assumption. Lane writes, "We tend to take a very individualistic view of 'success,' ignoring the multitude of complicated factors that have caused one person to achieve wealth and power, while others have not...Remember the words from Deuteronomy 8, "But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth.'" (page 29)

What do the following passages have to say about God's ownership?

- Genesis 1:27-28
- Psalm 24:1-3
- Deuteronomy 8:11-18

God not only owns everything, but also everyone. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)
Why is this such a vital concept for the Christian steward to understand?

