

Faith Aflame: 360 Degrees



Stewardship Conversations

Session Three – Number One

Biblical Stewardship
Principle Number Four:
God's Stewards are Uniquely
Singular, Yet Profoundly Plural

Talking about God's stewards who are profoundly plural.

This means: God's stewards recognize that their lives of stewardship are not solo performances but are personal responses to God, lived out within the community of faith to benefit the whole world.

"According to the New Testament," writes Richard B. Cunningham in *Creative Stewardship*, "every Christian shares in the stewardship of the household of God. The New Testament uses the term steward for every member of the church, from the apostles throughout the ranks of believers (see 1 Corinthians 4:1; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 4:10)...The resources for which the church is collectively responsible include the gospel itself, leadership, human beings, material wealth, and anything else that enables the church to be church and do its work in the world." (Page 113)

Cunningham notes that St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians eloquently describes the crucial role of the church's stewardship within the divine purposes. Discuss the following references as they relate to the church's stewardship.

- Ephesians 1:22-23
- Ephesians 3:10
- Ephesians 2:19-22

"Within the congregation the family relationship is most intimately experienced, spiritual edification occurs, and ministry is extended," notes Cunningham. "The New Testament specifically calls for the stewardship of certain important resources within the church." (Page 115)

The first resource which the church stewards is the gospel. How does the church do that according to Colossians 1:25-27?

Cunningham writes, "The church is a missionary people commissioned by Christ and empowered by the Spirit for that task. There should be no confusion about the gospels being at the heart of that mission." (Page 114)

- What are some ways the church preserves the gospel's integrity? (1 Timothy 6:20, 2 Timothy 2:15, and Titus 1:9) While these passages are focused primarily on the leaders of the church, they have application for all members.

Another resource which the church stewards is its leaders. There are both professional church workers and lay members who lead in the church. Cunningham writes, “...the New Testament also applies the term steward to leaders of individual congregations. Paul says, for example, that ‘a bishop, as God’s steward, must be blameless’ (Titus 1:7). He then catalogs the bishop’s special stewardship requirements. The requirements touch upon his personhood, self-control, character and behavior, social relationships, values, commitment to the integrity of the gospel, and skills in interpreting it.” (Page 116)

In addition, every professional church worker must be a good steward of the special and specific gifts he/she has for ministry.

- What are some ways members of the church can help and encourage professional church workers in their stewardship?

Lay leaders also serve in the church and are vital to ministry. They are to be prepared for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up. (Ephesians 4:12) A leader is to inspire, challenge, correct, encourage, and comfort (the list goes on) fellow members. Which means that serving as a leader in the church is often a challenging task that takes a lot of time and energy.

- What are some ways members of the church can help and encourage lay leaders in their stewardship?

The church stewards its members. Human beings are the most valuable resource within the church. In stewarding members of the congregation leaders will help people grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). They will help people discover and develop their particular gifts for ministry (Romans 12:1-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:1-11). They will help people grow in the grace of giving (2 Corinthians 8:7).

- What are some ways our congregation is helping stewards grow in each of the above areas?
- What more could be done?

The church stewards its financial resources. Cunningham writes, “The church has an interpreting and facilitating role for its members that goes beyond its concerns with giving to the church. It should inspire and assist its members in the total stewardship of their material resources. That would include sensitizing them (1) to Christian values about material things and attitude toward the world; (2) to the stewardship of all one’s material wealth, not just giving; (3) to the practice of individual or family budgeting and financial planning; and (4) to a caring, sharing, sacrificial life-style.” (Page 118)

- How is our congregation doing in each of the areas mentioned?

