



Faith Aflame: 360 Degrees

Fundamental #1

God Owns All

Opening Prayer

Introduction

In *Much More Than Giving*, Roy Bleich tells the story of Franz Joseph Haydn, the composer, who was present in 1808 for the performance of *The Creation*. At that time he was so old and feeble that he had to be wheeled into the theatre in a chair. It was the last time Haydn appeared in public. The crowd was excited at his presence and burst into applause for him as the chorus and the orchestra went into the superb passage, "And there was light." The applause grew louder and louder, and as it did the composer was seen trying to raise himself from his chair. As he got to his feet, he mustered up all of his strength and in reply to the applause of the audience he cried out as loud as he was able, "No, no! Not from me but," pointing to heaven, "from there—from heaven above—comes all!" Then he fell back into his chair and had to be carried out of the room.

Bleich goes on, "The very essence of stewardship is to realize that everything comes from God and that we only get to manage what He places in our hands. Though we may often act as if the things we possess belong to us, in reality God has never relinquished His ownership of anything. Good stewards acknowledge this."

- What was Haydn trying to tell the audience at the 1808 performance? (After all, he was the composer wasn't he?)
- Someone has said, "Since we have been bought with the blood of Jesus we belong to God. And since we belong to God everything which is His now is ours also." How would you evaluate that statement?
- "Possession is nine points of the law." How does the steward understand this saying?

In *Ask, Thank, Tell* author Charles Lane tells about a sermon he preached at a retreat. In that sermon he repeatedly referred to the countless gifts we have received from our loving God. Pastor Harry Wendt was at that conference and in a later conversation with Lane suggested that he be careful about using the word *gift*. He said that God doesn't give gifts, at least not in the way we use the word gift. Lane wrote, "He went on to point out that when we use the word gift we imply that one person has given something to someone else, who



A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER

Almighty God,
we belong to You.

All that we have
comes from You;
our family and friends,
our health,
our possessions and energy,
our leisure and abilities.

Help us to share
in the blessings of giving
as well as the happiness
of receiving.

We ask this in the name of
Jesus, Your Son, our Lord,
who lives and reigns
with You and the Holy Spirit,
One God, forever and ever.

Amen.

then owns that item and is free to do with it as they please. He concluded his observation by saying that this is not the way it is with God and us. God continues to own everything.” (page 21)

- How do you react to Wendt’s statement?

Christian stewardship consists of four fundamentals according to Karl Kretschmar in *The Stewardship Life*.

Stewardship Fundamental Number One:
God owns all, we own nothing.

The *Congregational Stewardship Manual* (2000) makes the following statement in answering the question, “Where does Christian stewardship start?”

It starts with an understanding of God’s glorious creative activity, sprayed across the prairie skies or etched in the earth as the Sand Hills of Nebraska, the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, the serene Mojave of California or explosive Mount St. Helens in Washington. Stewarding and stewardship doesn’t start with me and what’s mine. It starts with Him and what’s His.

- What are the consequences of getting this starting place wrong?

And again, 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 when it comes to the above biblical truth:

- 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)

Read and discuss: Job 1:21 Psalm 49:17 1 Timothy 6:7 Ephesians 2:8-10

Action Item: What are some specific things that you can do to be reminded that it all belongs to God?

Closing Prayer

Adoration...

Confession...

Thanksgiving...

Supplication....

Praise...

Remember...

Ask...

Yield...

