



Faith Aflame: 360 Degrees

Fundamental #3

Stewards Live in Obedience to God's Word

Opening Prayer

Introduction

In *Much More Than Giving*, Roy Bleich writes, "Most citizens seem to expect little good to happen from their local or national government agencies. To get by with as little as possible is the attitude of many in school and at work. It seems hardly anyone wants to be held accountable, whether it be the vilest criminal or the respectable housewife, the banker or the production-line worker.

Such an attitude even seems to have permeated the church. Not only are members often upset with a congregation that expects something of them, but some pastors also have sought to deny responsibility for results. I fear the average church member and even some pastors don't believe God is really serious about the stewardship of the mission that He has given His followers. The low priority so many give to worship and church work and to living the kind of life God wants leads me to that conclusion. That the church is satisfied with such a low level of response is perhaps the greatest tragedy. God cannot tolerate lukewarmness!" (Pages 48-49)

Tell why you agree or disagree with Bleich's assessment.

How is accountability a blessing or a challenge at your church?

A bulletin in a church stated, "We want members to be the church not to just attend church." What do you suppose they mean?

Stewardship Fundamental Number Three:
Stewards Live in Obedience to God's Word

Read John 15:1-5

- What does Jesus mean when He calls Himself "the true vine"?
- What does Jesus mean when He says, "Remain in me, and I will remain in you"?
- What does Jesus mean when He says, "Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me"?



A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER

Lord God, You alone are the source of every gift, of the vast array of our universe, and of the mystery of each human life. We praise You and we thank You for Your great power and Your tender, faithful Love.

Everything we are and everything we have is Your gift, and we thank You for the Greatest Gift of all, Your Son, Jesus Christ and the salvation He gives.

Fill our hearts with Christ's truth and with His love, that we may glorify Your Holy Name and serve one another.

In the Name of Jesus, we commit ourselves to be good stewards of the gifts entrusted to us, to share our time, our talent and our material gifts as an outward sign of the treasure we hold in Jesus.
Amen.

In John 15 Jesus stresses His desire for fruitfulness. Bleich lists the following points as he reflects on fruitfulness: (Page 47)

1. In Scripture “bearing fruit” is a familiar image for living the life of discipleship. Read and discuss each passage.

- Romans 7:4-6
- 2 Corinthians 9:8
- Philippians 1:11
- Colossians 1:10

2. The purpose of Christ’s coming was to give “Himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for Himself a people of His own who are zealous for good deeds.” Read and discuss each passage.

- Titus 2:14
- Ephesians 2:10

3. The blood of Jesus Christ not only cleanses us from sin but also purifies our consciences “from dead works to serve the living God.” Read and discuss the passage.

- Hebrews 9:14

Bleich continues, “The essence of stewardship is to make the business that has been entrusted to the steward profitable for the owner. The steward is expected to produce. If he can’t manage the resources so that the business prospers, or if through the lack of faithfulness (trustworthiness) he neglects the business so that no profit is produced, the steward will lose his position. Each of the stewardship parables that Jesus told has this emphasis.” (Page 47)

- What is the Christian steward “expected to produce”?

Karl Kretschmar, in *The Stewardship Life*, says “There are many among us who, like the rich young ruler in the gospel, are ready enough to boast of their faithfulness to the commandments of the Lord. But if that Lord should suddenly request that we sell all we have and turn the proceeds over to the poor, how many of us would respond with cheerful and whole-hearted compliance?” (Page 54)

Action Item: What does living in obedience to God’s Word mean to you? How will you grow in this area?

Closing Prayer Provide time at the end of each session for questions, comments and group prayer. The prayer can take one of the following forms or be done in a way the group decides.

Adoration...
Confession...
Thanksgiving...
Supplication....

Praise...
Remember...
Ask...
Yield...

