



“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof,” Romans 6:12.

The Stewardship of Personality

Central Truth: Stewardship involves committing oneself totally to God.

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Topic: Stewardship

It is not enough to give God the best you are; you must give Him the best you can become.

That is stewardship of personality. Personality is the totality of the qualities which distinguish a person as unique. It includes all a person is. The “stewardship of personality” means a stewardship of one's whole self.

We are persons; so, we have personality. Our personality is designed after God's personality (for He is a person also). It can be conformed to His design and be an influence for holiness in the world. Or it can be corrupted by sin and be an influence for wickedness.

The Bible gives several practical guidelines for us to follow in being good stewards of ourselves. Philippians 4:5-9 lists five principles: exercise self-control, practice praying, live in serenity, control your thoughts, and be an example. Even a casual listing shows how important those qualities are in a mature character. Let us examine them one by one, remembering that stewardship involves committing oneself totally to God.

I. EXERCISE SELF-CONTROL (Philippians 4:5)

“*Let your moderation be known unto all men*” is wise counsel. But what is “*moderation*”? It means “forbearance, considerateness, reasonableness, courtesy,” which are expressed in self-control. The moderate

person controls his life and refrains from extremes. He might be described as having a reputation for gentleness.

God commands all Christians to exercise self-control, “*with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love*” (Ephesians 4:2). Believers are to have hearts of compassion, “*forbearing one another, and forgiving one another*” (Colossians 3:13). His will in the matter is quite clear. Control yourself!

Self-control is a sign of the love of God in one, for such love “*beareth all things, . . . endureth all things*” (I Corinthians 13:7). Since love works no ill to its neighbor, it walks hand in hand with self-control.

It is not easy to control oneself. It is like putting a bit in the horse's mouth (James 3:3). But it is the finest exercise one will ever perform.

Self-control manifests true heroism. “*He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city*” (Proverbs 16:32).

Here is the highest motive one could have for exercising self-control: “*The Lord is at hand.*” His present nearness and soon return challenge us to keep the lines of discipline tight under all conditions. That is stewardship of our persons.

II. PRACTICE PRAYING (Philippians 4:6) Philippians 4:6 is one of the finest passages giving practical direction in prayer. It suggests three things — two negative and one positive — which guide to effective prayer.

A. Pray without fretting. “*Be careful for nothing*” means do not be troubled with anxiety over anything. Jesus showed us that anxious care is thoughtless, useless, heathenish (Matthew 6:24-34). It is like the thorns which spring up and choke the plant so no fruit is produced (Matthew 13:7, 22). Prayer is “*casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you*” (I Peter 5:7). Why worry when you can pray?

B. Pray without ceasing. If we pray “*in every thing,*” we will be praying under all circumstances and so following the admonition to “*pray without ceasing*” (I Thessalonians 5:17). “*Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face continually,*” and your prayer life will be a blessing (I Chronicles 16:11). What a privilege it is to be “*praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit*” (Ephesians 6:18).

C. Pray with thanksgiving. “*By prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God*” (Philippians 4:6). Here is how to worship in private and in public: “*Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name*” (Psalm 100:4). When entreaty is joined with thanksgiving;

prayer reaches all the way to the throne of God.

III. LIVE IN SERENITY (Philippians 4:7)

So live that *“the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”* That is good stewardship of one's spirit. Notice the three elements of serenity set forth in this verse.

A. Serenity is from God. It is *“the peace of God,”* a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22). *“The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost”* (Romans 14:17). Jesus is the source of our peace. He promised, *“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid”* (John 14:27).

B. Serenity is beyond human comprehension. It *“passeth all understanding.”* As we could not attain it without Christ, so we cannot understand it when He confers it. It is deeper than all knowledge and surpasses all our dreams. It is the peace of God, not of man. *“He is our peace”* (Ephesians 2:14).

C. Serenity will guard you constantly. God promises to keep in *“perfect peace”* the one whose mind is stayed on Him (Isaiah 26:3). That means He will keep our minds from the frustration of helpless worry. *“Let the peace of God rule in your hearts”* if you would reign in life over the enemy of anxiety and worry (Colossians 3:15). Worry distresses the mind, disturbs the emotions, upsets the physical body, and challenges faith in God. A good mark of true stewardship of personality is to live in peace.

IV. CONTROL YOUR THOUGHTS (Philippians 4:8; Isaiah 55:8, 9)

A. Think the thoughts of God. They are superhuman (Isaiah 55:8, 9), peaceful (Jeremiah 29:11), personal (Jeremiah 29:11), many (Psalm 40:5), gracious (Psalm 40:17), and precious (Psalm 139:17). What consolation it is to read, *“I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me”* (Psalm 40:17). What a reason to rejoice!

B. Consider the thoughts of man. They may be corrupt and depraved (Genesis 6:5; Matthew 15:19). They set the direction of one's life (Proverbs 23:7). But they can be disciplined and brought under subjection to Christ (II Corinthians 10:5) and in that way become a blessing (Romans 8:6).

Stewardship involves making one's thoughts submit to the government of the thoughts of God. The Word of God is *“a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”* (Hebrews 4:12).

V. BE AN EXAMPLE (Philippians 4:9)

Paul was an example to his converts; we must be examples to others. That is where stewardship of personality is most obvious. The Christian steward follows this principle: *“Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity”* (I Timothy 4:12). That is inclusive of all of one's life. Speech, conduct, selfless love, confident trust in God, and clean thoughts and conduct are dynamic witnesses to the reality of knowing God in Jesus Christ. If you would be a good steward, be a good example.

Remember that personality is the totality of the qualities which distinguish one person as unique. This study has challenged you to be unique in the reflection of the life of God in you through Jesus Christ. It is a call to *“let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”* (Matthew 5:16).

Questions

1. What is personality?
2. What is stewardship of personality?
3. How is self-control a part of good stewardship?
4. How can you be a good steward of prayer?
5. How can you live in peace in a troubled world?
6. How can you be a good steward of your thoughts?
7. How can you be the example of I Timothy 4:12?
8. In which area of life do you feel the greatest need to be a good steward of personality?
9. How does Matthew 5:16 apply to you personally?
10. What do you plan to do this week to put this lesson into operation in your life?