



“If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me”
(Matthew 19:21).

The Surrender to Stewardship

Lesson Truth: Stewardship requires you to place spiritual matters above material possessions.

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A steward is a person who acts as the supervisor or administrator of the finances or property which belongs to another. He might be called a business manager.

There are three elements in stewardship. (1) What I have is not mine; it belongs to another. (2) I am responsible for its use while it is in my possession or under my supervision. (3) I must return it to its rightful owner and account for what I did with it while I had it. That makes stewardship very serious.

Stewardship is a Christian responsibility. It covers all areas of life, private and public, material and spiritual. A Christian steward must recognize Jesus as Lord in all things. A summary statement of stewardship is, “Jesus is Lord of all.” A saint of God from a previous generation has reminded us, “Jesus is Lord of all or He is not Lord at all.” Stewardship requires the surrender of all personal preferences. It is not a question of what I prefer, but rather, ““What does the owner require of me?”

Surrender and the Duties of Life

A rich young man, a leader among the Jews, came running to Jesus to inquire what He must do to inherit eternal life. The answer of Jesus, and the young man's response, teach great principles on the surrender that

stewardship requires.

You must surrender your pride of position and possessions. This man did when he ran and knelt before Jesus (Mark 10:17). Being a ruler, he was not accustomed to kneeling before anyone. But the matter of eternal life was so serious that he surrendered his pride in seeking it. Humility is essential to Christian stewardship.

You must surrender your desires. The young man thought he was willing to do whatever was necessary to inherit eternal life. However, he had not come to desire God's best rather than the world's best. He found the price too demanding when Jesus told him the cost of stewardship. As long as self is on the throne, you can never be a faithful steward of God.

You must surrender your relationships. When Jesus mentioned God's laws dealing with human relationships, the young ruler declared that he had kept them without blemish. But what about the principles of divine relationships? Relationships with people depend on what you do; relationship with God depends on what you are. You must never depend on what you do to make you right with God.

You must surrender your possessions. Here is where the rich young ruler was faced with the real demands of living for God. The idea of giving up his wealth in ministry to others was beyond his willingness to obey. He went away from Jesus with great sorrow. Jesus required no more of him than He had required of others who followed Him. Simon Peter said, *"Lo, we have left all and followed thee"* (Luke 18:28). But God will be no man's debtor. Jesus promised a hundredfold return for what one has left in this world and everlasting life in the world to come. Think about that!

Stewardship will demand your surrender of many things. But you will lose nothing which you give up for the work of God. He takes it, blesses it, multiplies it, and gives it back to you to use. He invites you to put Him to the test and see whether or not He is faithful (Malachi 3:10).

Surrender and Personal Possessions

Is it better to give yourself or to give your possessions? The key to everything is the surrender of self. Jesus said, *"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me"* (Luke 9:23). When self-surrender is settled, the surrender of possessions naturally follows.

Doing right is never enough. The rich young ruler had kept all the laws requiring right relationships with his fellowman. He could honestly say, *"All these have I kept from my youth."* But he had to ask, *"What lack I*

yet?” (Matthew 19:20). More is involved than human relationships. No one is made right with God by good deeds (Romans 3:20). Faith, not works, is the way to peace with God (Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8, 9). There must be a relationship with God which changes your heart and gives you the Spirit of God. Only then can you be a real steward of Jesus Christ.

Giving is essential. Jesus said if you wish to go all the way in stewardship, you must release all you claim as your own and make it available for God's disposal (Matthew 19:21). That does not mean you must take a vow of poverty and live in a destitute condition. It rather means all you have and all you receive must be kept available for God's use when He calls for it. That is the way the early church operated, and no one suffered because of it (Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-37). It is a mark of the children of God that they do not trust in riches for their security (Mark 10:24). They trust in their heavenly Father. Jesus promises all who live such a life that their “*reward shall be great*” (Luke 6:35).

Surrender is demanding. It will cost you dearly to be a faithful steward of Jesus Christ. He told the rich young ruler to “*sell, . . . give, . . . follow*” (Matthew 19:21). Nothing less than that is enough. Jesus demands a total, unconditional surrender. That will not be easy, but it will be rewarding. If you try to save your life for yourself, you will lose it; but if you lose it for Jesus, you will save it (Matthew 16:25). Christian stewardship demands more than what you have. It demands you.

Jesus said that if you would follow Him you must deny yourself. That raises the question, “Deny myself of what?” The answer is “Deny yourself of self.” Think about that! Every issue of life must pass the approval and follow the direction of your Lord rather than your personal preference if you would be a faithful steward.

Stewardship is no small issue in the Christian life. It requires all that you are and have, plus all you can become or will receive. It is total surrender.

Are you a faithful steward? The Bible says, “*It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful*” (I Corinthians 4:2). That is why it will be such an honor to hear the Lord say, “*Well done, thou good and faithful servant: . . . enter thou into the joy of thy lord*” (Matthew 25:21). I want to hear Him say that to me. You want to hear it of yourself, don't you? Then fulfill faithfully the duties of your stewardship.

Surrender and the Kingdom of God

Failure to surrender excludes one from the kingdom of God (Matthew

19:22, 23). The rich young ruler found the demands too great for him to pay. He went away from Jesus. He did it with great sorrow, it is true, but he went away nonetheless; for he placed a greater value on his possessions and position than he placed on pleasing God.

Jesus said to His disciples, “*A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 19:23). They were amazed. They thought riches was an indication that a person was under the special blessings of God. They thought a rich man was the person nearest the kingdom of heaven. They were amazed to realize that riches may sometimes (but not always) keep a person from the kingdom. Jesus explained further that it is trust in riches which excludes one from the kingdom.

Today there are people who depend on the security of their wealth or the extent of their gifts of benevolence to make them acceptable to God. In that case, their wealth is standing between them and God, keeping them from Him. You are not withholding yourself and your possessions from Him, are you? You will be a faithful steward when you lay all on the altar for Him.

Surrender is the only way to enter the kingdom (Matthew 19:24, 25). Interpreters have worried over Jesus' statement that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. There are two common interpretations of that statement. (1) Jesus is exaggerating the figure of speech to show how impossible it is for one who trusts in riches to enter the kingdom of God. It is as impossible as it would be for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.

(2) Jesus is using a very common expression of that day. It is said that the great gates which gave access to the city had a smaller gate which would permit pedestrians to pass through without opening the large gates. The smaller gate was called the “eye of the needle,” or the “needle's eye gate.” It would be possible for a camel to pass through that smaller gate, but only after its load was removed and if it crawled through on its knees.

By either interpretation, it is evident that the Lord is saying no one can come to God if he carries the load of his earthly accomplishments. He must lay everything aside and come to God as a poor, needy supplicant to be accepted. That principle still applies to one who comes to God today.

Surrender must be to God himself (Matthew 19:26). Jesus said that what is impossible to man is possible to God. Therefore, one must come to God and depend on His grace alone if he would enter the kingdom of God. He can put the “camel” through the “needle's eye.” The person who comes in humble dependence will discover to his delight that “*God is able to make all grace abound to you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things,*

may abound to every good work” (II Corinthians 9:8). Is that what you have found as you came for salvation and surrendered for service?

The kingdom is the kingdom of God. He alone has the keys to the kingdom. He requires renunciation of self and availability to himself. You can be neither saved nor sanctified without coming humbly to Him.

Stewardship is lordship. To be a steward means you submit to Jesus as your Lord. Submission takes the “stew” out of stewardship. Your difficulties do not arise over the surrendered areas of your lives, but over the areas not surrendered to Him. There is no question about who controls what is surrendered. Those areas of disputed ownership cause the problems.

Stewardship involves giving your time, effort, money, abilities, or whatever the Master has entrusted to you. What you give to God is never lost; what you keep for yourself is lost. The natural decay of earth plus the intrusion of your peers (which Jesus calls “moth,” “rust,” and “thieves” in Matthew 6:19, 10) take away what you hold too dear.

What you give to Jesus is a treasure laid up in heaven. There it reaps far greater dividends than treasures on earth could ever reap. Resolve to be a surrendered steward all of your life.

Questions for discussion

1. What is stewardship?
2. What identifies one as a faithful steward?
3. What are the three elements of stewardship?
4. How does stewardship require surrender of pride and possessions?
5. Why is doing right by your fellowman not enough in Christian stewardship?
6. Why does Jesus demand surrender when it is so hard for us?