

Zebedee Commitment: A study for Personal Stewardship Growth

Lesson One: Stewardship defined

The Gospel writer, Matthew tells the story of Jesus who walked along the Sea of Galilee and spotted some fishermen who became the first disciples. Simon and Andrew are the first set of brothers. Simon became Peter who became one of the best known disciples of Jesus and an important leader in the new church. This 5 part series of lessons walks with the other two brothers, though. They are known as the Sons of Zebedee, James and John. They also left everything and followed Jesus. As we begin to consider their lives and to look at stewardship through the lens that they offer, let's refresh our memory about these brothers and their relationship with Jesus

The Sons of Zebedee

James and John are the sons of Zebedee. They are among the most familiar of the disciples, and just like the other ten they left all they had to follow where Jesus would lead. Let's refresh our knowledge of these brothers.

Read the call of the brothers from Matthew 4 and then scan some of the texts below. If time is a factor consider the ones in bold.

Matthew 4: 18-22 -- The call of the fishermen brothers.

Mark 1: 29 -- Present when Peter's mother-in-law is healed.

Mark 3: 17 – Brothers are named the Sons of Thunder (because of their impulsiveness)

Mark 9:38-41 –John proposes to stop one who casts out demons in Jesus' name.

Mark 10:35-40 -- The brothers request places of honor with Jesus in his glory

Mark 13:3-8 – The brothers and Peter ask for more information about future destruction of temple.

Mark 14: 33- 37 – Jesus takes the brothers and Peter to pray with him in the Garden of Gethsemane

Luke 8:49- 55 – The brothers are present with the healing of Jairus daughter

Luke 9:28 – 35 –The brothers witness the transfiguration of Jesus

Luke 9: 52- 55 – The brothers request permission to command fire to strike a Samaritan village that does not receive Jesus..

John 13: 21-28 –The disciple whom Jesus loved reclines with Jesus at the last supper and asks the question on everyone's mind. (tradition holds that this disciple is John, although we cannot know that with any certainty)

John 19: 26 – Jesus passes responsibility for his mother to the disciple whom Jesus loved.

Acts 3 and 4 – John and Peter heal a man at the temple gate and then go to jail for proclaiming Jesus.

Acts 8: 14-17 -- Peter and John lay hands upon believers that they might receive Holy Spirit..

Acts 12: 2 --King Herod has James killed.

Galatians 2:9 – Paul speaks of John as one of the pillars of the early church.

What can we know about John (and presumably James) from these passages?

Can we assume anything about their relationship with Jesus?

What did they give up to follow?

What did they gain in the process?

What's in a Word?

The Old and New Testaments contain about 26 references to “steward” or stewardship.” We use the word today in such terms as “wine steward” or “union shop steward.” These uses convey the sense of responsibility and management inherent in the word. “Steward” is an Old English word made up of *sti* (meaning-- hall) and *weard* (meaning-- one in charge). It describes someone employed in a large household or estate to manage its affairs. In translating the New Testament, “steward” has been the English word of choice to render the Greek word *oikonomos* [oy co NO mos]. Which means “ruler of the house” or “manager of another’s property.” *Oiko* (house) appears in contemporary English in the form of “eco” -- economics, ecology, ecumenical. (1)

Douglas John Hall observes, “Reflecting upon the word picture, we might conclude that stewardship has not only to do with money, budgeting, and finances, but with the whole ordering of our life, our corporate deployment of God’s varied grace in the daily life of the world.” (2)

If we are stewards, what is the estate? Who is the owner? What does it mean to be a caretaker of someone else’s property?

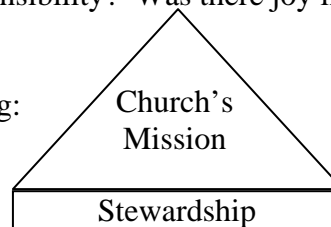
Read Psalm 104: 10 –18 What does this author say about being stewards?

Expanded Vision

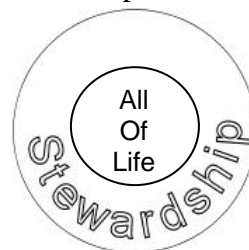
Many Christians are able to articulate God as the one who gives us life. God also gives us the physical world in which we live. Christians are easily able to recognize our responsibility to care for creation. (Genesis 2:15). But to stop here places stewardship in the category of a chore to be fulfilled.

Were James and John stewards? What responsibility was given them? What did they care for? How do you think they might have felt about that responsibility? Was there joy involved? What was the bonus?

Many people think of stewardship as the following:



But the following model is a model of stewardship which encompasses all of life.(3)



What Is Christian Stewardship?

The full picture of stewardship may provide one of the best ways to get a vision of what it means to be a Christian in our daily life. John Westeroff wrote:

“Stewardship is what we do after we say we believe, that is, after we give our love, loyalty, and trust to God, from whom each and every aspect of our lives comes as a gift. As members of God’s household, we are subject to God’s economy or stewardship, that is, God’s plan to reconcile the whole world and bring creation to its proper end.” (4)

Consider stewardship through the following Scriptures.

Psalm 24:1 God is the owner of all we have. Even our very lives are on loan from our Sovereign God.

Genesis 1:26 and 2:15 Humans are made in God’s own image. We are caretakers of Creation, of the world that God has given us.

John 3: 16 God is in the business of giving. Even when sin entered the world, God gave his son to restore the relationship.

Matthew 12: 15-21 Jesus models faithful stewardship. He was not the owner, rather the son, the one who came to do the father’s will.

Matthew 28: 18-20 and 1 Corinthians 4: 1 Jesus gave the disciples (and us) a task—to make disciples. Are we not to use all that the Father has given us to do his will and care for his world?

Matthew 6: 25-33 To be caretakers of God’s world means that we place ourselves into God’s care for us . By trusting in God for our own well-being we learn to look outwardly to help others and find great joy.

How are the concepts presented by these scriptures different from those offered by society?

As you think about living these concepts, what would be the positive results for you? For our world?

What is the scary part of living these concepts in our own lives?

We hear a lot these days about being good stewards of our earth, especially in respect to the issue of Global Warming. Do any of the scriptures above speak to God's call for us to care for our earth?

How can our awakening understanding of our responsibility to care for our earth inform other aspects of our lives?

What is Stewardship

Consider the following. Rate how you feel the following items express your understanding of Stewardship. Rate them from 1 "not very much" to 4 "Very much" (5)

1. Getting involved in local government issues?

No 1 2 3 4 Yes

2. Giving to the church

No 1 2 3 4 Yes

3. Working and praying for world peace.

No 1 2 3 4 Yes

4. Supporting relief for the hungry and refugees.

No 1 2 3 4 Yes

5. Developing a deeper relationship with God.

No 1 2 3 4 Yes

6. Singing in the choir or working on a church project.

No 1 2 3 4 Yes

7. Attending exercise class.
No 1 2 3 4 Yes
8. Advocating to end the genocide in Darfur?
No 1 2 3 4 Yes
9. Recycling newspapers and bottles to preserve the environment.
No 1 2 3 4 Yes
10. Taking a walk with your daughter or son to spend some quality time together.
No 1 2 3 4 Yes
11. Shopping carefully for the best value and price.
No 1 2 3 4 Yes
12. Preparing a will.
No 1 2 3 4 Yes

13. Changing the oil in your car.
No 1 2 3 4 Yes
14. Taking a nap on a Sunday afternoon.
No 1 2 3 4 Yes
15. Seeing a doctor or a dentist to take care of our physical or dental well-being.
No 1 2 3 4 Yes
Discuss with a partner why you selected certain items as stewardship and why other items feel inappropriate.

Report to larger group.

Select one or two of these that you want to work on in the following week.

Pray: Gracious God. Everything we have is a gift from you. Help us to be good caretakers of all these wonderful gifts. In the process allow us to rely more fully on you that we find joy and support in our lives. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

End Notes -- Lesson One: Stewardship defined

1. Stewardship Education: Congregational Ministries Division of the Presbyterian Church USA. "Covenants of Stewardship," Session One. Page 1.
2. Douglas John Hall, The Steward. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990). Page 41.
3. Stewardship Education: Congregational Ministries Division of the Presbyterian Church USA. "Covenants of Stewardship," Session One. Page 2.
4. John H. Westeroff III, Building God's People in a Materialistic Society (New York: Seabury Press, 1983), Page 15.
5. As adapted from Stewardship Education: Congregational Ministries Division of the Presbyterian Church, USA. "Covenants of Stewardship," Session One. Page 5.