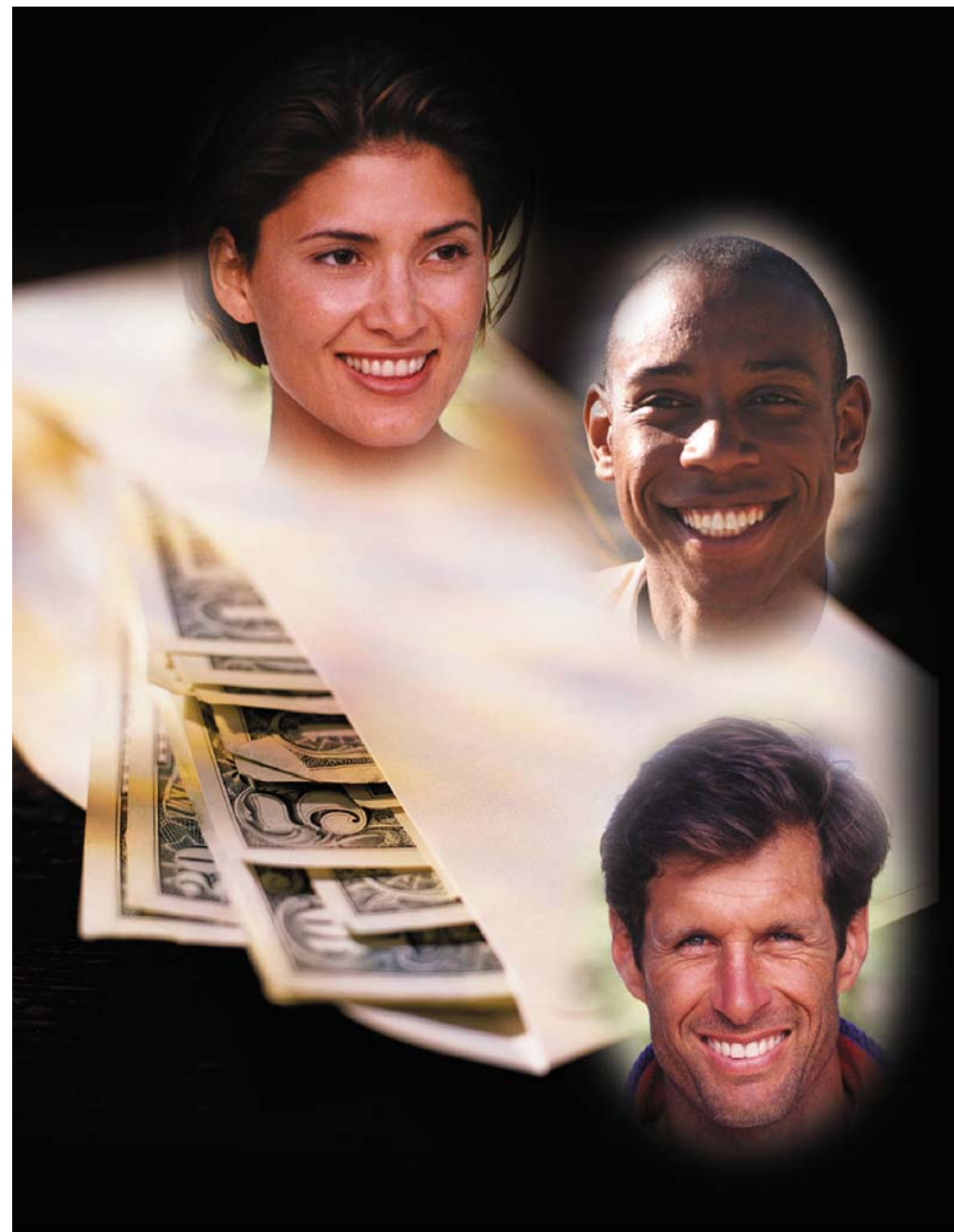


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Stewardship... God's Way

Adult Edition

Stewardship is More than Money

Group Study—Part 1

Lesson Goal: The goal of these four special stewardship studies is to teach group members the biblical principles of managing what God has put in their trust.

Teaching Aim: To bring group members/attendees to a personal realization of their stewardship of life and possessions, and to encourage them to make commitments to surrender their lives in their entirety to God's purposes.

Preparation:

- Review the member material and be prepared to review study content with them.
- Construct any visuals or handouts.
- Bring or prepare for use a dry-erase board or chalk board for notes.

Introduction

We're studying these special stewardship studies with this goal: to learn the biblical principles of managing what God has put in our trust.

That goal tells us some things from the very beginning:

- Stewardship is biblical — not an idea made up by churches or preachers
- Stewardship means management
- We are stewards because God has entrusted something to us

Even before we study what the Bible has to say about all this, we should set a group goal. We can do this because we can begin by agreeing on whatever the Bible says to us is what we ought to believe and do. Let's review our goal and agree to it:



Now move to the third point of the study: "Sanctifying Our Things." Review the material in this section.

Tell the group that as well as the principles of stewardship in the Bible, there are certain *disciplines of stewardship*, ways in which the principles are to be lived out in our lives. In each of these studies we will study principles, and then look at disciplines which express our commitment to these principles.

- The discipline of "Sanctifying Our Things" is this: The Christian must acknowledge Christ's Lordship of everything, and constantly seek ways to use possessions to serve Christ's purposes.
- The group just demonstrated the beginning of this discipline in its exercise of visualizing things in their homes.

Use the board and have the group name some things which need to be considered or reconsidered in our daily lives as to how they are or are not used for the glory and purposes of God. Some items you might supply if not mentioned: Extra income, a car, washing machine, tools, clothes, food, spare room, books, garden, real estate. These are random ideas. What could they be used for that would be for more than selfish use?

Ask if the group remembers the story of Elisha and the Shunamite woman in the Bible. How did she exhibit the discipline of sanctifying her things? Can members think of some ministry they can perform with something in their lives right now?

Lead the group in a closing prayer:

*F*ather, we have seen that it all belongs to You, but You generously share it with us. And You have challenged us to manage it for Your glory. Help us to see our lives with different eyes today and in the future, and to see new opportunities to manage what is "ours" for its real owner. In Jesus' name. Amen.

My goal is to learn God's principles of stewardship, obey them, and apply them to my life.

Let's pray about that goal before we start looking at what the Bible has to say about stewardship:

(Suggested Prayer)

Father, we're about to open Your Word to see what it says about us as stewards. Help us as we read and study to see Your truth. Open our eyes to our responsibilities. Break us of any prejudices that are against Your ways, melt any resistance in our hearts, show us Your love and generosity toward us, and convince us of our role in Your world in godly management of everything You've given us. Most of all, let us come to a fuller surrender to Jesus Christ, in response to everything He's done for us. Amen

Review the material in the member's material beginning with "He Shares It With Us" and continuing to "Applying the Realization." Emphasize the following:

- The second principle of stewardship is **God is the ultimate source for all our needs, including the energy and ability by which we appear to be sustained.** This means we cannot assume human efforts or ingenuity are ever to be credited with our success or enrichment. Translation: we only think we are self-made men! The real reason we have enough or make enough or succeed in life, is **God blesses us!**
- Ask members to think of the city of Providence, RI. How did it get its name? It was named for God. Our forefathers frequently referred to God as "Providence." The city was named as a testimony to the conviction of settlers that God was to be credited with their arriving here and finding a new home.



Suggest the group do an exercise. Have them close their eyes, and mentally tour their own homes, beginning with a drive up to the house in their car. Have them identify everything they see, and to say to themselves, "This is God's ____." Beginning with their car—Have them ask themselves about everything they picture in their minds, "How does God want me to use this for Him?" After a few minutes, end the exercise and ask, do we all get the point?

Write on the board "The Principle of Divine Source" and the scripture reference James 1:17. Read the verse which tells us every good gift comes from God. Make the point there isn't anything God created which is not good, "Bad" is what we make things because of sin. We pervert good things, misuse good things, invent bad things. God gave us everything, and everything God gave us was good.

Have someone read Genesis 1:1, and another read I Corinthians 6:20. Comment that both these passages make the same point. What is it? Everything belongs to God. The first principle of stewardship is **God owns everything, including all we are and have, both by creation and by redemption.**

Ask the group the two reasons God owns everything, and write the two words “creation” and “redemption” on the board as they respond.

Review the material under this first section of the member’s study. Pay special attention to the following:

- God created everything, and therefore it is His. The evolutionary model and understanding of the universe has no place for God. The Bible shows, however, God originated everything, is in charge of it all, and is the owner of it all.
- The work of redemption in Jesus Christ was not simply about saving a few people, but about buying back all creation. The cross redeemed a people for God, but also brought the promise that eventually everything will return to the complete Lordship of God in Jesus Christ.
- While we rarely see evidence of God’s interfering with our use or misuse of our lives or things in this world, this does not mean He has given it up and doesn’t have a claim on it. We need to come to the profound realization, the life changing realization, nothing we lay our hands on is really “ours.” It all belongs to God!

Point out to the class God’s ownership does not mean He is selfish. Move to the next point, God shares everything with us.



Review

Review the material in the members’ study beginning with the background passage, and continuing through the introduction, and the “Point of our study today.”

If your class uses primarily the King James Version instead of the NIV (which these lessons use) point out that the translation of monetary units in the Bible was intended by King James’ scholars to give an equivalent in value, so that readers would realize what the worth of these investments might be in their own day. This requires frequent re-translation if these values are to be meaningful. A value given in dollars thirty years ago would be entirely inaccurate today.



The most important point about the introduction is to establish the fact this parable of Jesus — and many biblical stories about money — are not about money alone, but about life. In fact, this story is principally about life and all its opportunities, not just money.

Learn the Definition of Biblical Stewardship

Take a few minutes to teach the group this definition of biblical stewardship:

Stewardship is the obedient management of life and all its resources under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to the glory of God and the advancement of His kingdom.

Work through the definition phrase by phrase, and attempt to have the group repeat it with you twice. Use the board to write the definition of stewardship, asking the group to tell you what to write.