

Man in the Mirror Bible Study
Spiritual Disciplines- A Man and Stewardship
Patrick Morley 9/13/2002

We are doing a series on spiritual disciplines. Spiritual disciplines are habits you develop to grow spiritually.

This morning we are going to talk about the spiritual discipline of stewardship. What does it mean to be a faithful steward? Some of you are thinking that this is just going to be another lecture on tithing. You might also be sitting there feeling very guilty because you are not tithing. We will be talking about stewardship and not tithing. The reason for this is that there are preachers bleating for men to tithe all over America. Often we talk about tithing in such a way that when you finally do tithe you think that you become a God. You think that you are some sort of spiritual giant. If you already tithe, big deal. You think that God wants ten percent of your money? Forget it, he doesn't want ten percent of your money. He wants it all. It's not just your money he wants. He wants all of your treasure, all of your time and all of your talent. God wants it all. You need to give money a lot more than he needs to get it. Do you tithe? That is so lukewarm. Big deal, every Pharisee can tithe. You want to brag about it, you can brag right along with the Pharisees. Ten percent is no big deal. There seems to be this huge gap between where we are, and tithing. Tithing is nothing. When you get to tithing you are only to the starting point of what God wants you to do with your life. God has a purpose for you. He wants to use you to make a difference in the world. Let me tell you, ten percent isn't going to help. He wants it all.

The big idea for this morning is: **A faithful steward devotes 100% of his time, talent, and treasure to the glory of God.**

I don't know if this was my imagination or if this was the voice of God, but as I was on my way over here this morning a thought crossed my mind, "If I can't have it all, I don't want any." That might be a better big idea.

Look at 1 Chronicles 29. Let's look at whether or not God wants 100%. Then let's look at what it means to be faithful, and the applications of how we can actually bring glory to God in our stewardship.

In 1 Chronicles 29:10 David is at the end of his life. He has assembled resources to build the temple that his son Solomon will build. People have really stepped up to this task, maybe they are even going a bit further than tithing. This is one of the last things that we hear from King David. "Praise be to you, oh Lord, God of our Father Israel, from forever to forever. Yours, oh Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor for everything in heaven is yours and everything on earth is ours."
Everything in heaven and on earth is yours. Y- O- U- R- S. Before you remove the Y from yours to make it ours, you better be very careful to ask why you think you can do

that. If the Bible is God's truth then it is His and not ours. "... Yours, oh Lord is the kingdom. You are exalted as head over all." First of all, the earth is his and now, wealth and honor come from you, "...you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now our God, we give you thanks and praise your glorious name. But who am I and who are my people that we should be able to give as generously as this. Everything comes from you and we have given you only what comes from your hand. This is the perspective of the whole counsel of God- the whole of the scriptures.

This is one of the key texts that Crown Ministries is based on. It all belongs to God and it all comes from God, and the scriptures tell us that you are not your own. You have been bought with a price. Even you do not belong to yourself. If you are a Christian then you have been purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ, through his death. The scriptures also tell us that now it is required that whoever has been given a trust must prove faithful. It is the essence of Christian life that you don't own anything and that you are owned. You are a servant, a slave of Christ, by the purchase of your life through Christ's death and resurrection. Everything you have has been given is a trust with which you must prove faithful. 100% of your time, talent, and treasure. We are not owners. We don't own anything. For the purposes of government and order, we may have deeds or titles. However, as believers, we don't actually own anything. When you live in a house and you have a deed; one- hundred years from now, you don't own that house any more. Someone else is living in that house.

We just put my father's house on the market for sale. He didn't really own that house. He was just a manager of the house that God had given him. Your car, that little hot BMW that you have- you don't own that car. God owns that car, and you are a steward, a manager of it. Your wife and children belong to God who has given to you as a trust.

A faithful steward devotes 100% of his time, talent, and treasure to the glory of God. If I can't have it all, I don't want any.

What does it mean to be faithful?... calendar, checkbook, time, money.... I am holding my father's checkbook. I am the personal representative for his estate. Just out of curiosity and responsibility I have gone through his checkbook. You will find nothing that would ever embarrass Jesus Christ in my father's checkbook. That's what it means to be faithful. It is to use your money in such a way that you would never be embarrassed for someone to take a look in your checkbook. Or, if you write a check for a thousand dollars in cash, someone could follow the trail of that money and you would not be embarrassed.

To be a faithful steward means that I could ask you for your calendar right now, without you having to make any adjustments (assuming that your calendar tracks 100% of your time) that I could look in your calendar right now and you would not be embarrassed. That's what it means to be a faithful steward. It means to use our time, treasure, and talents for the glory of God.

As you know, my father passed away. When my father was two years old his father abandoned the family. My father is one of four children. He was the baby. His mother Ida May, one of seven sisters, had a stroke not long after this abandonment. For the rest of her life she had slurred speech that only a few people could understand her. When she walked, she dragged the whole right side of her body. There was a great deal of stress in the family. Soon they lost the farm that they had in Hayward, Minnesota, and Ida May and her four children moved in with two of her sisters that lived in town.

The three women raised these four children. My dad's older brother, my uncle Harry, had to go to work to help support the family. He worked on the bread truck before school, in the butcher shop after school, and on the weekends he worked at the local filling station. He was ten years old. When my father turned six he had to go to work. My father began his work life at the age of six years old. He would get up with his brother at three and they would work the bread truck and then deliver newspapers. They had a permanent tardy slip for school.

My dad and his legacy will never be measured by money or achievements. That was never the kind of legacy that he set out to leave. My father's mission in life was to break the cycle. His father, the one that abandoned the family ended up as a criminal. He ended up in prison. My grandfather was a criminal, and so my father's mission in life was to break that cycle. By will and determination that is what he did. He set our whole family lineage on a whole new course for many generations to come. That was the purpose of his life. He could have cared less about money and achievements. Today, the success and legacy of my father is different than we would normally measure legacies. The success and legacy for most men is measured by how far they go. However, the success and legacy of my dad, is best thought of by how far he came. Was he perfect? No. Was he a faithful steward? Yes. My father was a faithful steward who used 100% of his time, talent, and treasure for God's glory. I can't remember my father ever doing anything dishonest. I can't remember ever hearing my father speak ill of another person or doing anything that neglected or dishonored my mother in any way. I can never remember a single lazy act on the part of my father. That's quite a legacy. That's what it means to be a faithful steward. It's not how far you go in life. It's not your money or achievements. It's looking at where you came from and then taking your lot in life and using it for the glory of God.

Any Pharisee can tithe, but a faithful steward devotes all of his time, talent, and treasures to the glory of God. How do we apply this? How do we bring glory to God? Basically, you obey scripture. The word obey, in our culture, years ago, had a positive connotation. In other cultures, conforming to group norms is highly valued. In our culture today, my generation screwed this whole thing up by saying, "down with the establishment." People talk about the Gen-Xers, the under 35 and 30 crowd, and how they started the post modern movement. My generation invented that. Most people think that generation X is the wild generation. We were the wild ones. The idea of obedience, and submitting to authority, was the antithesis of the baby boomer generation. The message about that this morning is, get over it. God is saying, "If I can't have it all, I don't want any of it." He wants it all.

The way that we apply this in our lives is by obeying the scriptures. This obedience is not some oppressive thing. It is something we do that comes from our freedom in Jesus. We have been set free to obey the scriptures instead of being a prisoner to obey our own free will. What will obeying your own free will get you? Some of the scriptures that we obey are: "the diligent man prizes his possessions" Get out there and wash your car. Don't be a slob. "Give careful attention to your herds". Be sure to know the condition of your flocks, for riches do not endure forever. Manage the money that God has given you, your investments. "In the house of the wise are stores of choice food and oil." Plan for the future. One error is to embrace the culture and get caught up in worldly affairs, which has its own set of problems. Another problem is withdrawing from the world and just assuming that God will take care of me, which is the sin of inattention. You can be very proud of being inattentive to your own personal worldly affairs, but I don't think that is the record of the scriptures. I think the record of the scripture is that we are charged to pursue a discipline of stewardship.

Now we will talk about some applications. Some may hear this message and run scared. You have always been running scared. You may be a believer in Christ, you might not be, but it's just kind of your nature that you're always running scared - you're afraid. You know what? I'm going to help God? How are you going to do that? Well, I'm going to worry because that will help.

I had an insight yesterday morning that I think might be helpful. It sure has helped me at least because, let's be honest, we all worry to some degree, but for some of us it's just the way we're wired. I'm not wired that way, but I know some men are, and you're always running scared. You never take a vacation.