

Church of God Sunday School

WHOLE-LIFE STEWARDSHIP #1 – WHAT IS STEWARDSHIP?



DAILY READINGS:

- ❑ **Monday:** Read about stewards in the Old Testament (Genesis 15:1-2; Genesis 39:1-5; 1 Kings 16:8-10).
- ❑ **Tuesday:** What are the responsibilities of stewards (Genesis 24:1-4; Genesis 44:1-2; Matthew 20:1-8)?
- ❑ **Wednesday:** God owns everything (Psalm 24:1; Haggai 2:8; Psalm 50:10; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20).
- ❑ **Thursday:** We own nothing (Ecclesiastes 5:13-15; Job 1:21; 1 Timothy 6:7).
- ❑ **Friday:** Stewards are held accountable (Matthew 25:14-19; Luke 19:12-15; Luke 16:1-2).
- ❑ **Saturday:** Requirements of good stewards (Matthew 24:45; Matthew 25:21; 1 Corinthians 4:2; Titus 1:7).

MEMORY VERSE: *"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."* –1 Corinthians 4:2

What Is a Steward?

Have you ever traveled on a plane, ship, or train? The people who are in charge of making sure you are fed and taken care of are called "stewards" or "stewardesses." (Today, they are more commonly called "flight attendants.") A steward is also someone who is employed to manage a large estate. This often includes keeping the accounts, supervising the staff, and collecting the rents. By definition, *stewardship* is "the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care" (*Webster's Dictionary*). The steward does not own these possessions, but he is the manager. In Bible times, a steward was often a trusted slave or servant. The master had great respect for this servant and put him in charge of running his entire household. Many times this included caring for the master's children. In this position, the servant usually lived a comfortable life, and as long as he was a faithful steward, he kept this favored position.

Stewards in the Bible

There are several Bible stories about men who were stewards. Eliezer of Damascus was Abraham's steward. If Abraham died without children, Eliezer was to be his heir (Genesis 15:2-3). Eliezer "ruled over all that [Abraham] had" (Genesis 24:2) and was entrusted with finding a wife for Abraham's son Isaac (Genesis 24:4). Joseph was a steward over Potiphar's household (Genesis 39:4-5). Everything in Potiphar's house was "committed" to Joseph's care (verse 8). Later, when Joseph became governor over Egypt, he had his own steward who managed Joseph's household (Genesis 44:1-4). You can read in 1 Kings 16:8-10 that King Elah was murdered in the house of his steward Arza.

The New Testament also mentions stewards. Chuza was King Herod's steward (Luke 8:3). Several of the parables told by Jesus explain the position and responsibilities of stewards. In the parable *The Workers in the Vineyard*, the steward was the one who paid the workers at the end of the day (Matthew 20:8). In *The Parable of the Talents*, three servants were entrusted with the master's money (Matthew 25:14-30). In *The Parable of the Unjust Steward* (Luke 16:1-8), we read of a wasteful steward who was called to give an account.

There are several verses in the Bible that tell us we are "stewards." Studying Bible examples of stewards and their responsibilities helps us to understand what whole-life stewardship is and how God expects us to apply it to every area of our life (not just money or our talents). First, it is important to understand some basic principles of stewardship.





The earth is the LORD's, & everything in it, the world, & all who live in it.

Psalm 24:1

#1 – God Is the Owner

The most important principle of stewardship is understanding that God owns everything and we own nothing. Psalm 24:1 tells us He owns "the earth" and everything that is in it. Haggai 2:8 says that He owns all the "silver" and "gold." Psalm 50:10 lets us know He owns "every beast of the forest" and "the cattle upon a thousand hills." Not only that, but you do not own your body; it belongs to God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). First Timothy 6:7 says, "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." It has been said, "There are no U-Hauls behind hearses" (John Piper). When we understand that everything belongs to God and we are only called to manage it, it puts a different perspective on what we consider our money, time, possessions, and ourselves.

#2 – We Are the Managers

We are called to take care of God's property. We are managers, or stewards. What does that mean? Let us look at a few definitions of the word *manage*: (1) "bring about or succeed in accomplishing, sometimes despite difficulty or hardship" (it is often difficult to be a successful manager); (2) "to take charge of" (you are being given a serious responsibility); (3) "to influence" (as a manager, you will be able to help or hinder people through your influence); (4) "to handle, direct, govern, or control in action or use" (management requires hands-on participation; you must be involved).

Keep in mind that there are two parties involved in stewardship: the master and the steward. God is the Master (owner), and we are the stewards (managers). We own nothing; He owns everything. We need to make our decisions with this principle in mind. It is God's property. Ask yourself these questions: "Am I using what God has given me in a way that pleases Him? What would Jesus do?"

#3 – We Will Be Held Accountable

Can you imagine being given a million dollars? What would you do with it? Many people have been given a large sum of money and spent it all in a very short period of time. There was little or no thought of making it last the rest of their lives, of providing for their children, of helping others in need, or of giving some of it to God. This seems like such a waste! Perhaps, if there was someone who had held them accountable for every dollar they spent, they might have been more careful in their management.

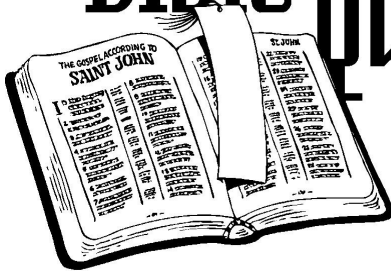
Matthew 6:24 tells us that there are "two masters," and we cannot serve them both. Our management decisions reveal which master we are serving. Too many people take the blessings and resources that God has given them and use them in serving the wrong master. There will be a day of reckoning. Just as the servants were called to give an account of what they had done with their talents, we are also responsible for our management of all God has given us. Each one who has been a "good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21) will be rewarded. Those who have been poor managers through neglect or selfishness or rebellion will be punished (Matthew 25:30).

#4 – There Are Requirements for Good Stewards

Titus 1:7 tells us that stewards are to be "blameless." By definition, to be *blameless* is to be "above reproach, morally pure." The Bible makes it clearer, telling us in Colossians 1:22 that because of the price Jesus paid through His death on the Cross, we are to live a life without blame, or without sin. A good steward is one who has repented of his sins and accepted Christ into his life. The second requirement we read about is that we must be "found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2). Someone who is faithful keeps his promises, can be relied on, and shows himself trustworthy in obeying commands and fulfilling his responsibilities. When Adam was given the Garden of Eden to manage and care for, he was told "to dress it and to keep it" (Genesis 2:15). This required work. So it is with all that God has entrusted into our care. A faithful, blameless steward will be a Christian, a hard worker, one who is loyal to the Master, and one who can be trusted.



Bible Quiz



1. What are some of the responsibilities of stewards? _____

2. Why was being a steward in Bible times a favored position?

3. What is the definition of *stewardship*? _____

4. Name three stewards and their masters described in the lesson: _____

5. What are some specific things the Bible tells us that God owns? _____

6. Another word for a steward is manager. Which definition of *manage* from the lesson helps you understand what stewardship is? _____

7. What principle should we always keep in mind when making decisions about God's property? _____

8. Who are the two masters described in Matthew 6:24? _____


9. The lesson says that there will be a day of reckoning. What does that mean? _____

10. What are two requirements of good stewards? _____

11. What are some other qualities of a good steward? _____

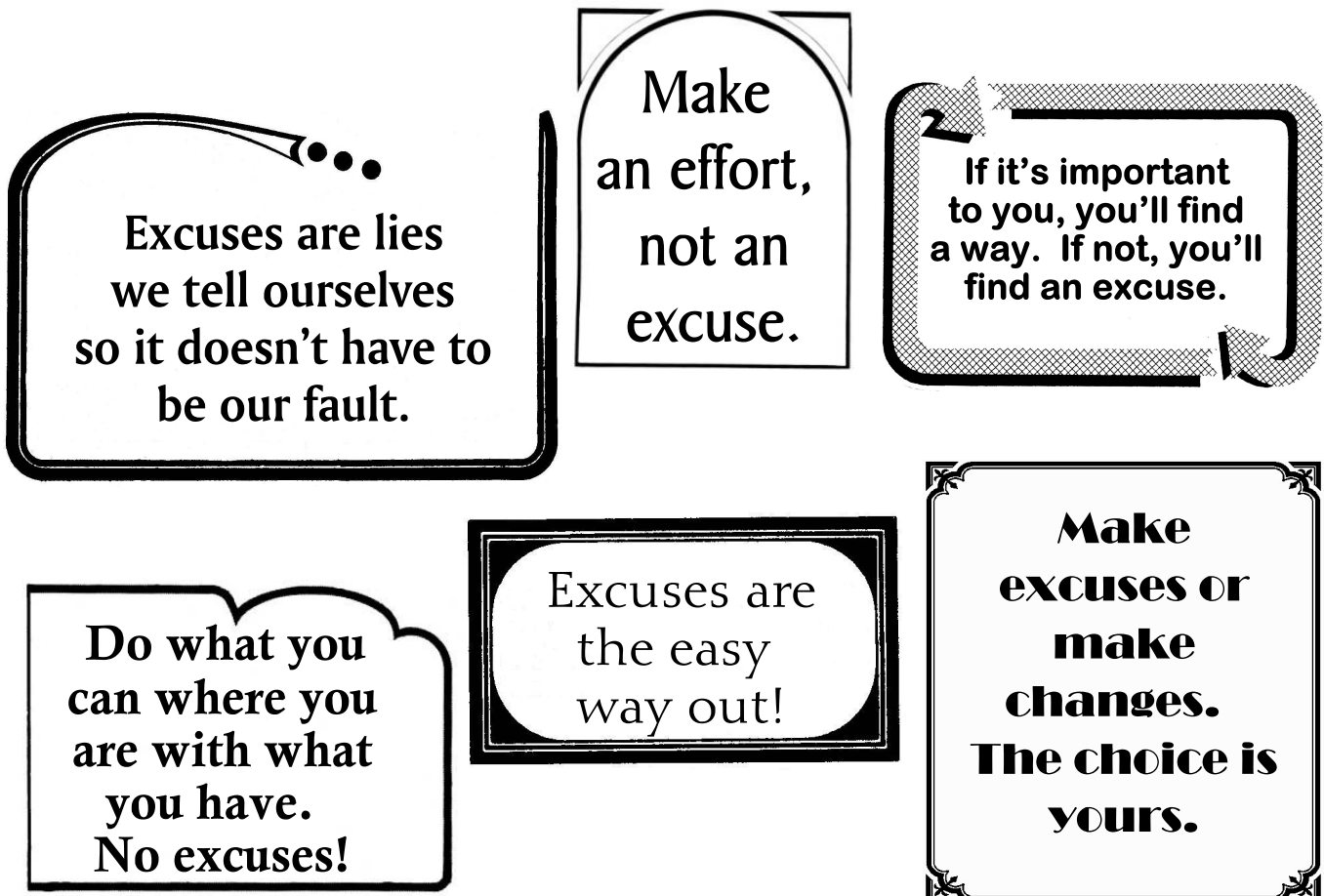
Excuses for Poor Stewardship

- “I’m not organized.”
- “I’m not talented.”
- “I don’t have time.”
- “I worked for it; it’s mine.”
- “I’ll do it later.”
- “Someone else can do it better.”



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EXCUSES

Look at the quotes about excuses below. Consider these as possible answers to the "Excuses for Poor Stewardship" listed above.



Excuses are lies we tell ourselves so it doesn't have to be our fault.

Make an effort, not an excuse.

If it's important to you, you'll find a way. If not, you'll find an excuse.

Do what you can where you are with what you have. No excuses!

Excuses are the easy way out!

Make excuses or make changes. The choice is yours.