

# Week 4 - Compensation & Wrap Up

## Review

- In our first three weeks, we did an introduction and covered the first 4 of 5 ways we are Called to Stewardship: Charge, Content, Compass and Character.
- Today, we are going to cover the final C, Compensation. If time permits we will discuss the Practice of Stewardship through a few of the Domains.
- The definition of biblical stewardship?  
**What you do with the life God has entrusted to you.**
- 6 domains of stewardship?
  - (1) Spiritual
  - (2) Physical
  - (3) Relational
  - (4) Financial
  - (5) Vocational
  - (6) Societal
- Our anchor Bible passage for this study? Matthew 25:14-30
- Some great feedback from last week's lesson was about how the doctrine of the Imago Dei is foundational for biblical stewardship. In summary, we are called to steward creation and every aspect of life because we were created to represent God and exercise His rule under His authority.

## Compensation

### The Master's Return - Matthew 25:19-30

- The master returning from his journey is meant to be symbolic of Christ's second coming and the subsequent judgement. Christ's return will be a time of both judgement and reward.
- We can see both of these in Rev 11:18, "The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth."
- Paul said in 1 Co 4:5 of the coming judgement, the Lord "will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart...and each one will receive his commendation from God."
- In this parable, we see Jesus, without apology, holding out that reward is a worthy motivation for a steward. But, is this at odds with Protestant Christians who affirm that justification is by grace, through faith alone, not according to one's works?
- Let's take a closer look and see why an eternal reward for our faithfulness is NOT at odds with the free gift of salvation, and why embracing reward as a motivation will make you a better steward of your life, and ultimately bring more glory to God. We will also look at the judgment side of the stewardship equation.

### Reward for Faithful Stewardship

- Mt 25:20-23
- The master returned and rewarded the two servants who invested their talents and doubled their money.
- There is a pattern that emerges and is repeated for both the first and second steward - what do you see in this pattern?  
Presentation ⇒ Commendation ⇒ Promotion ⇒ Invitation

- Presentation - The servant comes forward and presents his work to the Master.
- Commendation - The Master responds with “well done, good and faithful servant”
  - We were created to crave the affirmation of the authority figures in our lives. Every desire to hear “well done” from a parent, coach, teacher, mentor or boss is a faint echo of the deeper longing God put in our hearts to hear “well done” from the Master himself.
  - We want to receive glory from those who we deem glorious. Think about a child and parent. An employee and the CEO. An athlete and their coach. The desire for glory is normal, but it is misdirected. The object we were made to find most glorious is God himself. For He is the being who is most glorious and worthy of our admiration and praise. And we were created to desire the affirmation that can only come from God. It’s baked into our design as image bearers.
  - The Apostle Paul spoke of “an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison” that awaits us on the other side of the sufferings of this life (2 Cor 4:17). CS Lewis argued that this weight of glory we are awaiting is the commendation of Jesus Christ. It is that “well done good and faithful servant”, from the Parable of the Talents.
- Promotion - Then the Master adds, “you were faithful in a few things, so I will put you over many things.”
  - Trust, trust and more trust. Because the stewards were trustworthy with the talents entrusted to them, the master promised an even greater trust. Likewise, we can expect a greater trust in heaven if we are faithful with our time, talents and treasure.
  - You might be thinking that getting more responsibility in heaven doesn’t sound like a reward - rather a burden. But, think about the many biblical references to God setting his people over cities and nations; Parable of the Minas in Luke 17, the prophecies in Daniel 7 and Rev 2. But, remember that in heaven we won’t be affected by sins like doubt, fear, anxiety, selfishness, etc. We will just rejoice that our Master has rewarded us - nothing could be better. All of those promises of crowns to believers (1 Co 9:24-25, 1 Th 2:19, 2 Ti 4:8, 1 Pe 5:4, Re 2:10) aren’t just fancy headwear, but representations of rulership.
  - God’s plan from the beginning was that mankind would rule over creation. Throughout the story of redemption, the restoration of this original order has always been part of God’s plan. He has always been seeking to make a “kingdom of priests” (Ex 19:6, Is 61:6, 1 Pe 2:9, Re 1:6)
- Invitation - But, He doesn’t stop there, he says “enter into the joy of your Master”
  - The thrust of the invitation is the word “joy”. The ultimate reward is not just the commendation and promotion, but that we will participate in the joy of our Lord. What is the chief end of man...?
  - Ps 16:11 “You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.
- As discussed in an earlier lesson, talents represent all that God has entrusted to us as servants: time, talents, and treasure. The point of this parable is that our faithfulness in that task will be met with reward when Christ comes back. We will present what we’ve done, receive a commendation, be rewarded with a promotion over more responsibilities in heaven, and be invited into the fullness of eternal life with Jesus!

## The Rightness of the Reward

- When the NT talks about laboring for heavenly reward, for a Protestant Christian, this can all seem odd for 2 reasons - the PLACE and the MOTIVATION of reward.
  - (1) Isn't the reward for the Christian simply eternal life? And isn't that reward secured by faith alone in Jesus Christ? So how can we say that our reward is in any way tied to our faithfulness? Wouldn't that be salvation by works?
  - (2) Isn't it wrong to be motivated to do good because of the reward - isn't that a selfish way to look at obedience?
- (1) The PLACE of reward for our works
  - It is true that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone. But, there is more to eternal reward than just going to heaven.
  - Eph 2:8-9 "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."
  - But, Paul immediately says in the next verse that salvation is indeed accompanied by good works that He has planned for us... Eph 2:10, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."
  - Good works do not contribute to our salvation, but they do follow it. The reward for our good works is NOT salvation - that is secured by faith in Jesus Christ. Instead, our faithfulness as believers is rewarded with additional treasure (and work) in heaven.
  - It is kind of God to have made this clear through the authors of Scripture. Another passage that speaks to this is 1 Co 3:10-15, where Paul describes that Christ laid the foundation of salvation, and we only build on it with good works...and, if fact, if we Christians produce bad works, they get burned up, but we don't lose our salvation over it. So, our salvation doesn't depend on the amount of good works, or the lack of good works. But, good works definitely follow from those who are saved.
- (2) The MOTIVATION of reward for our works
  - The NT also makes a case in several places for the motivation of reward for our good works.
  - Mt 6:19-21, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."
  - What do we see (or not see) here related to stewardship?
    - Laying up treasure on earth is temporal, it will not last. Our mindset should be on our eternal reward, rather than temporary.
    - Jesus doesn't say "be good for goodness sake", that is Santa's line! He promises a reward for doing good in this life.
    - His point is that sacrifices we make with regard to temporal treasures will be well worth it, because there is a permanent reward for faithfulness in heaven.
  - It certainly does feel good to give, but when Paul quoted Jesus to the Ephesian elders saying, "It is more blessed to give than receive" (Acts 20:35), he wasn't using that expression in the same way we so often do. He wasn't saying "It's better to give because it makes you feel nice inside." Jesus literally meant you

will be more blessed by giving than receiving, eternally speaking. There will be a reward for generosity.

- Yes, we want to obey God and be faithful stewards because we know it glorifies God and, as Christians, we find real joy in glorifying Him. But, we shouldn't insist that obedience always be done without a view to the reward - that runs counter to Scripture and God's design for how human beings are motivated. Here are 3 NT examples:
  - Eph 6:8 says we are to do our work NOT for the praise of men, but for the praise of God "knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord."
  - Or see Ro 2:6 which says, "God will render to each person according to his deeds"...and the reward will be "glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good (2:10).
  - In fact, Heb 11:6 says that whoever would come after God must believe that He rewards. For what is faith but trust? And what is trust but believing the words of the one you trust are true?
- Here are just a few areas of obedience which the Scriptures say we will receive rewards for:
  - Self-denial (Matt. 16:24–27)
  - Compassion for the needy (Luke 14:13–14)
  - Loving our enemies (Luke 6:35)
  - Generosity (Matt. 19:21)
  - Enduring hardship and persecution in faith (Heb. 10:34–36; Luke 6:22–23)
  - When we are motivated to obedience for the sake of reward, we are honoring God because we are believing His promises. We walk by faith in the promises of God, and God promises reward.
- A final thing of note - our ability to do these good works that please God and result in our reward is also a gift of grace. The only reason anyone can be a faithful steward is because, "It is God's who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Phil 2:13). So, we should be careful about feeling pride in our good stewardship. The only appropriate posture is one of thankfulness and humility.

### The Master's Wrath

- Now, let's turn to the other side of the judgment coin, from reward to wrath.
- The final servant was unfaithful and disloyal. He did have to present (accountability) to the Master, but he was not met with Commendation, Promotion or Invitation. He was cast into outer darkness.
- Mt 25:24-30
  - As we discussed in a previous lesson, he didn't take the time to fully understand the Master's expectations before the journey.
  - Next, he cowered in fear instead of acting in faith, or he was just bitter and spiteful to not invest the talents.
  - But then, in addition to failing to obey in faith and invest as a good steward, he shifted the blame of his actions back on the Master, revealing what he truly thought about the Master's character. He accused the Master of being a harsh and thieving man.

- Psalm 81:15 speaks of those who “pretend obedience” to God, but ultimately will be found out and punished. That’s what happened to the third servant. He did not even do the bare minimum to try to steward the Master’s talent.
- Let’s walk through those verses:
  - Who are those “to everyone who has”? The faithful stewards who have earned the trust of the Master.
  - “More shall be given”, Jesus said multiple times when we are faithful with little, we receive more (Lu 16:10).
  - “He will have an abundance” refers to the compounding nature of eternal investments, i.e. the faithful Christian life compounds to more and more trust and fruitfulness.
  - “The one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away” refers to those whose lives bear no fruit.
- What happened with the third servant?
  - (1) God took the talents and gave them to the servant who had 10.
  - (2) The wicked servant was thrown into outer darkness.
  - Why would the Master give the talents to the servant who had 10?
    - It is a shrewd business move for one. The Master knows who is trustworthy with the most talents, so he gives them to the first servant. This is not an indictment of the second servant at all.
    - “Abundance” can come in varying quantities. Another example of this is the parable of the seed and sower (Mt 13:8) where the seed that fell on the good soil produced crops, “some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.”
    - Since these are all graces, and completely undeserved, the recipients are not entitled to equal shares, and the Master is not obligated in any way.
- Did the third servant lose his salvation? Why or why not?
  - It can’t be a true believer who has lost salvation through disobedience. That is impossible. For salvation is a gift of God, and He keeps to the end those who are being saved.
    - Salvation is a gift of God (Eph 2:8-9, Ro 6:23, Titus 3:4-7, John 1:12-13, Ro 3:23-24)
    - God preserves those he saves (Jn 10:27-29, Phi 1:6, Ro 8:29-30, Jude 24-25, 1 Pe 1:3-5, He 7:25, 1 The 5:23-24, 2 Tim 1:12, Heb 12:2, Ro 8:38-39)
  - This person is the wheat among the tares (Mt 13:24-30), the goat among the sheep (Mt 25:31-46).
    - Sometimes unbelievers reveal themselves through apostatizing (1 Jn 2:19)
    - Sometimes false believers blend in until the very end.
    - Though they may have enjoyed the blessings of the visible church for a time and shared in her gifts (He 6:4-8), even that will be taken away (Mt 25:28) and given to the true and faithful believers (25:29).
- What is this warning represented by the third servant?
  - Examine your life and doctrine. Have you really trusted Jesus Christ? If you have, but are not investing your life into God’s kingdom, then get busy.
  - If you haven’t really trusted in Jesus Christ, repent and believe today. Just being a member of a church is not enough, serving in the nursery is not enough, giving

money is not enough, being a good person is not enough. A day of reckoning is coming when all will be revealed and both punishment and reward will be doled out.

## Conclusion

If you are not a true believer, you will face judgment and wrath. But, there is great hope in this parable for true believers. God entrusts us with talents that he promises to equip and empower us to invest in his Kingdom faithfully.

## Application Questions

- How does the reward promised for faithful stewardship differ from salvation and eternal life?
- What do you think of heavenly reward as a motivation for obedient living? Does it still seem wrong to be motivated by that? Why or why not?
- What lessons should we take from the way the righteous stewards were rewarded with commendation, promotion, and invitation?
- Why did the third steward react as he did when the master confronted him about his lack of stewardship?
- What are some things we can learn from the cautionary tale of the faithless steward?

## Discussion about Domains

### Relational

- **Principle:** God says to love our neighbors as an expression of our love for Him.
- Let's say this realm includes relationships in our family, the church, at work & in our communities.
- What are some ways that we can be good stewards of those?
  - Husbands & wives
  - Parents & children
  - Siblings & extended family
  - Church members with leaders and other members.
  - Teachers and work associates
  - Friends & neighbors
- What are some scriptures that come to mind?
  - OLD TESTAMENT
    - Leviticus 19:18 "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The foundational command for stewarding relationships.
    - Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 "Two are better than one..." God designed people to support and strengthen one another.
    - Proverbs 17:17 "A friend loves at all times..." Faithful friendship is a stewardship responsibility.
    - Proverbs 18:24 "A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."
    - Malachi 4:6 "He will turn the hearts of fathers to their children..." Healthy family relationships matter to God.
    - Micah 6:8 "Do justice, love kindness..." Stewardship includes treating others with justice, mercy, and humility.
  - ALL the ONE ANOTHER passages - Lutfi talked about 60+ of these in a recent Wednesday night devotion.

- NEW TESTAMENT
  - Matthew 18:15-17 If you brother sins against you...try to reconcile, then utilize a process of adding more people to the circle of accountability
  - Matthew 18:21-22 Forgiveness Forgive repeatedly, not merely a limited number of times.
  - Matthew 18:23-35 Parable of the Unforgiving Servant Those who have received mercy should extend mercy.
  - Matthew 22:39 "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus elevates this as one of the two greatest commandments.
  - John 13:34-35 "Love one another as I have loved you." Christ becomes the standard for our relationships.
  - Romans 12:10 "Outdo one another in showing honor." Relationships should be marked by mutual respect and service.
  - Galatians 6:2 "Bear one another's burdens." We are stewards of each other's well-being.
  - Eph 5:22-33 Husbands and Wives
  - Eph 6:1-4 Children obey your parents
  - Eph 6:5-9 Masters and slaves
  - Hebrews 10:24-25 "Consider how to stir up one another to love and good works." Christians are responsible for encouraging and strengthening one another.
- SERMON ON THE MOUNT passages
  - Matthew 5:9 Peacemaking "Blessed are the peacemakers." God's people should actively pursue peace.
  - Matthew 5:21-24 Reconciliation Be reconciled to your brother before offering your gift to God. Relationships matter to God.
  - Matthew 5:38-42 Responding to Offense Reject retaliation and choose generosity.
  - Matthew 5:43-48 Loving Enemies Love and pray for those who oppose or mistreat you.
  - Matthew 7:1-5 Judging Others Examine your own faults before addressing another person's faults.
  - Matthew 7:12 Golden Rule Treat others the way you want to be treated.
- What are some challenges you face in this stewardship?
  - Marriage: Sacrifice? Submission? Discipleship? Intimacy?
  - Parenting: Discipline? Accountability? Discipleship? Family Worship? Long-suffering? Not exasperating? Engaging on False Assurance?
  - Siblings? Extended family?
  - Work or neighbor relationships?

### Vocational

- **Principle:** Every legitimate vocation can glorify God.
- Let's say vocational includes formal education (training the mind), enablement (practicing, gaining proficiency) and work (jobs, career).
  - What are some ways that we can be good stewards of those?
  - Study to show yourself approved, work hard to train the mind & prepare for labors - work or homemaking

- Self-discipline and dedication to gain proficiency - serve with excellence
- Work as unto the Lord, not as unto man - right, godly motivation
- Know your biblical priorities and don't sacrifice them for "success" on the job or "career advancement"
- What are some scriptures that come to mind?
  - OLD TESTAMENT
    - Genesis 2:15 God placed Adam in the garden "to work it and keep it." Work is part of God's design before the Fall.
    - Exodus 35:30-35 God filled Bezalel with skill, intelligence, knowledge, and craftsmanship. Vocational abilities are gifts from God.
    - Proverbs 22:29 "Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings." Excellence creates opportunity and influence.
    - Ecclesiastes 9:10 "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might." God honors diligent effort.
    - Daniel 6:3 "An excellent spirit was in him." Daniel's competence and integrity elevated him to leadership.
  - NEW TESTAMENT
    - Colossians 3:23-24 Work heartily as for the Lord, not merely for people.
    - Ephesians 2:10 God created us for good works prepared in advance for us to do.
    - Matthew 25:14-30 The Parable of the Talents teaches faithful development of entrusted resources and opportunities.
    - Ephesians 4:11-12 God equips His people for works of service and ministry.
    - 2 Timothy 2:15 "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved..." Pursue competence and excellence.
- What are some challenges you face in this stewardship?
  - Work-life balance?
  - Godly, biblical convictions to stand your ground with courage and humility
  - Respect for authority, especially when it is ungodly
  - Not taking education or practice seriously, when you can't see the purpose
  - Moral temptations, failure.

# THE 6 DOMAINS OF BIBLICAL STEWARDSHIP

— *Every area of life entrusted by God. Everything we do for His glory.* —



## Domains of Biblical “Whole-Life” Stewardship

| Domain            | Description   | Verse 1  | Verse 2  | Verse 3  |
|-------------------|---|--|--|--|
| <b>Spiritual</b>  | Renew minds & refresh spirits through worship, word, prayer and fellowship. <b>Principle:</b> God desires faithful devotion and spiritual maturity.   | <b>Jn 15:4-5</b> "Abide in me..."                                  | <b>1 Tim 4:7-8</b> "Train yourself for godliness..."                         | <b>Mt 22:37</b> "Love the Lord your God with all your heart..."                      |
| <b>Physical</b>   | Steward bodies, health, energy, and rest as gifts from God. <b>Principle:</b> Our bodies belong to God and are to be used for His purposes.   | <b>1 Cor 6:19-20</b> "Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit..." | <b>Ro 12:1</b> "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice..."                | <b>Mk 6:31</b> "Come away by yourselves... and rest a while."                        |
| <b>Relational</b> | Cultivate & nurture relationships by loving, serving, encouraging & caring for others. <b>Principle:</b> God says to love our neighbors as an expression of our love for Him.   | <b>Lev 19:18</b> "Love your neighbor as yourself."                 | <b>Jn 13:34-35</b> "Love one another as I have loved you."                   | <b>Ro 12:10</b> "Outdo one another in showing honor."                                |
| <b>Financial</b>  | Use money, possessions, and resources for God's glory and the good of others. <b>Principle:</b> God owns everything; we are managers of what He entrusts to us.   | <b>Ps 24:1</b> "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it."     | <b>Mt 25:14-30</b> Parable of the Talents                                    | <b>1 Tim 6:17-19</b> "Be rich in good works, generous and ready to share."           |
| <b>Vocational</b> | Engage in work that uses gifts, talents, and calling to serve God and others. <b>Principle:</b> Every legitimate vocation can glorify God.  | <b>Gen 2:15</b> "Work it and keep it."                             | <b>Col 3:23-24</b> "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord."        | <b>Eph 2:10</b> "Created in Christ Jesus for good works."                            |
| <b>Societal</b>   | Steward influence in society through citizenship, community involvement, righteous justice, compassionate service, creation care, and seeking the common good. <b>Principle:</b> God's people are called to bless their communities and steward His creation. | <b>Jer 29:7</b> "Seek the welfare of the city..."                  | <b>Micah 6:8</b> "Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God." | <b>Mt 5:13-16</b> "You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world." |