

MP Stories of Stewardship

Stories of Stewardship: Lessons in Trust, Surrender, and Sacrifice

1.0 Understanding Stewardship: More Than Money, It's a Matter of the Heart

Welcome. We are about to explore the profound spiritual concept of stewardship, a principle that reshapes how we view everything we have and everything we are. At its core, stewardship is the understanding that we are not ultimate **owners** but trusted **managers**. Everything in our lives—our money, our homes, our time, our abilities, and even the very breath in our lungs—is a gift from God. He is the true owner, and we are lovingly held accountable for how we manage what He has entrusted to us.

This idea is foundational to a life of faith, shifting our perspective from self-centeredness to God-centered responsibility. As Pastor j framed it:

"Stewardship is a biblical concept that humans are not owners of their life. You're not owners of your possessions... God ultimately is the owner of everything. We are not owners, but we are responsible and accountable to God because He's the true owner of the things that He's given us."

To bring this powerful concept to life, we will now journey through the personal, relatable experiences of three individuals: **Anita**, **Jim**, and **Scott**. Their stories reveal the heart transformation required to move from a mindset of ownership to one of faithful management.

We begin with Anita's story, which illuminates the internal struggle that often marks the first step on the path of stewardship: the battle for control.

2.0 Anita's Story: The Journey from Control to Surrender

Anita's testimony reveals a central lesson for anyone beginning this journey: true stewardship begins with surrendering the deep-seated need for **control**.

Early in her walk of faith, Anita and her husband operated from a mindset of scarcity. They felt they simply "couldn't afford to tithe" and would give sporadically. However, God began to reveal a pattern. When they chose not to give, "something major would break." This repeated, costly experience was a gentle but firm lesson. The "light bulb finally came on," and they made a commitment to give first, trusting God with the rest.

This shift from control to trust yielded tangible fruit. At one point, they desperately needed a second car but had no financial means to acquire one. They prayed, surrendering the outcome to God. Within a week, they received a car with a clear title, a direct provision that solidified their trust. Through these experiences, Anita learned invaluable lessons about letting go.

Anita's Lessons on Surrender

- **Surrendering Control is an Act of Trust:** For Anita, letting go of a tight grip on their finances and plans was the primary way she learned to truly trust God as the ultimate provider. She realized He wasn't trying to take *from* her, but to form something *in* her.
- **Faithfulness in Serving Builds Endurance:** Anita discovered that when she prioritized "kingdom business"—serving God's purposes regardless of her personal struggles—God provided the peace and the solutions for her own needs.
- **A Deeper Relationship is Forged in Inconvenience:** Her most powerful insight is that a superficial faith is easy. She powerfully concludes that she would never have the deep, trusting relationship she now has with God if she had "only given when it was convenient."

Anita's journey from control to surrender shows that the first step in stewardship is an internal one. This leads us to Jim's story, which demonstrates the clear and tangible results that follow a settled choice to trust.

3.0 Jim's Story: The Clear Choice Between Trust and Self-Reliance

Jim's testimony provides a stark, practical contrast between the outcomes of trusting God versus relying on his own plans. His journey is a collection of "landmarks" that prove God's faithfulness, making future trust less of a struggle and more of a reflex.

He shares two powerful, contrasting stories from early in his marriage that set the course for his understanding of stewardship:

- **The Trusting Choice:** With only \$30 left to last the week, his wife encouraged him to give it as an offering. He obeyed, and a few days later, they received an unexpected check in the mail for \$300. God showed him what He could do with an act of trust.
- **The Self-Reliant Choice:** Later, they received a lump sum of money. Instead of tithing first, they decided they "really need carpet" and used it all for that purpose. The result? The "carpet didn't last long." God showed him what happens when self-reliance takes precedence.

Jim's most significant test of faith came when he was laid off from a job he had held for 20 years. For eight long months, with no income, his primary 'job' was to find work—a task at which he says he was "failing miserably," not receiving a single interview. Instead, he poured his time and energy into serving the church during a period of chaos and transition. He focused on stewarding the church, and in the end, God rewarded him with a job that was "way better than I ever had before."

Jim's journey teaches that once you "settle it in your heart" that you are a steward of God's resources, the constant internal debate fades away. Trust becomes a reflex built on the memory of God's past faithfulness.

While Jim's lessons were forged through years of trial and error, Scott's perspective was rooted in a single, foundational moment of devotion that made stewardship an immediate and logical next step.

4.0 Scott's Story: The Logical Response of a Grateful Heart

Scott's testimony offers a unique perspective. For him, stewardship wasn't a concept he had to learn over time; it was a **logical and immediate response** to the life-changing experience of his conversion at age 25.

His entire framework for giving is built on a simple, powerful "if-then" statement that constantly brings him back to his core motivation: gratitude.

"If God died for me, robed himself in flesh as Jesus Christ, and died on the cross for me, then of course I'm going to give back with my time, my talent, and my treasure."

This logic was tested early on. As a brand-new teacher with very little money, Scott felt God prompting him to pay the credentialing fees for a young woman in the church who was in an even worse financial situation. He wrestled with the command, knowing he didn't even have enough to pay his own bills. But remembering *why* he serves, he chose to obey. Then, out of nowhere, a family member gave him money, providing just enough to cover his own needs.

From this foundation of gratitude, Scott developed what he calls the "**rhythm of discipline**," a consistent and intentional approach to managing everything God has given him.

- **Finances:** He automates his 10% tithe. It's not a weekly debate; it's a fixed part of his financial rhythm.
- **Time:** He makes a conscious choice to be present "every time the doors are open," even when he is tired or stressed. It's a disciplined commitment.
- **Talent:** He serves with the microphone on Sunday mornings. He admits that in his flesh, he doesn't always feel like it, but he trusts that if he shows up in obedience, God will show up in power.

Each of these stories, though different, points toward the same essential truths. Let's synthesize their lessons.

5.0 Three Journeys, One Truth: What Their Stories Teach Us

Though Anita, Jim, and Scott walked different paths, their experiences converge on a single, unified truth about stewardship. The following table highlights the central struggle each faced and the key lesson they learned on their journey.

Speaker	The Central Struggle	The Key Lesson Learned
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Anita	The need to Control outcomes and resources.	True stewardship is surrendering ownership, which deepens trust and relationship with God, especially when it's inconvenient.
Jim	The choice between Trusting God or relying on his own understanding.	Consistently choosing obedience and faithfulness builds a history with God that makes future sacrifices easier and more joyful.
Scott	Living a life of Sacrifice as a logical act of devotion.	Stewardship is a consistent rhythm of discipline born from gratitude, which acts as a spiritual "umbrella of protection."

In the end, their stories teach us that stewardship is not a burdensome duty performed out of obligation, but a grateful response to the incredible love and provision of God. It is a journey that often involves sacrifice—of control, of resources, of comfort—but it is a path that leads not to loss, but to a life of deeper trust, unshakable peace, and profound purpose.

The final aim, as Anita so beautifully shared is holding onto the hope of one day hearing the words, "Well done, my good and faithful servant."

We are not here to please others, but to live for an "audience of One".