

20/20 View of Stewardship

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It has often been said that *hindsight is 20/20*. What this means is that afterwards we see clearly what should have been done before. The Bible encourages us to look down the road in life. See the consequences that will follow a decision before the decision is made. Instead of acting impulsively or seeking immediate gratification, we should look ahead of our action and consider the ultimate results that would occur from such. We should see 20/20 all the time with the help of God's word.

The year 2020 is almost upon us. Our elders have known other congregations that have had a theme of focus through the new year. Churches have aimed at improving in prayer, evangelism, or compassion for the year's goals. We thought it might be good to concentrate on **Stewardship** for 2020. This means we will have several sermons and bulletins on the subject, but we would also like to encourage the men to think about it when they offer invitations, fill in teaching classes, or make announcements of things the members could be doing.

In the Bible, the **steward** is a servant who is put in charge of his master's goods or household. He basically is a manager. He has authority to make decisions, but the choices he makes must be aimed at pleasing his master. The products he is using do not belong to him. They are temporarily in his care.

Perhaps the position is best illustrated by the parable of the shrewd steward found Luke 16:1-8.

16:1 *And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a **steward**; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. 2 And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy **stewardship**; for thou mayest be no longer **steward**. 3 Then the*

*steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the **stewardship**: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. 4 I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the **stewardship**, they may receive me into their houses. 5 So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? 6 And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. 7 Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. 8 And the lord commended **the unjust steward**, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.*

The **steward** was in charge of his master's business. His work involved giving products to men who would pay them back likely with interest. He was accused of cheating and an examination would prove the charge to be true. While he still had the master's "rubber stamp" he used it to doctor the papers of the borrowers. They would change the amount they owed and he would put the master's mark on them to make them appear genuine and legal. The action made the debtors indebted to him, so they would provide for him when he lost his job. The action further cheated his master, but the master commended him for his shrewdness. He used his temporary power to secure his future. This is what Christians should be doing. We should use this life to secure eternal life for ourselves.

The parable is not meant to endorse the steward's actions. It is presented to teach us the importance of using what is at our disposal. The time will come when we may not have the things we have right now. We could lose our money, job, health, family, house, time, energy, and such like. What are we doing with them now that we have them? Will we look back on this day in the future and see clearly what we should have done? Will only our *hindsight be 20/20?*

As **stewards** we are entrusted with many things that belong to the Master. We are supposed to use them in ways that would please Him. We do not actually own the car, the house, the family, or the life. They are all in our care. We make decisions regarding them all. But in reality they all belong to God, and we are allowed to use them while we are here on earth.

1 Peter 4:7-11 strikes me as a good passage to keep in mind for the year. *But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as **good stewards** of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: **that God in all things may be glorified** through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

At the end the Master will examine what we have done with the gifts He has given us. Did we minister (serve)? Did we practice hospitality with our abilities? Did we use our tongues as oracles of God's truth? The gifts and the right way they are used to serve others results in glory being given to God.

We were not given our mind, body, and time so that we can advance ourselves in riches and popularity. Our talents are not given to us so that we can show off and humiliate those with less ability. **As good stewards** we realize what we have in our power does not really belong to us. It is not to be used to please us. It is to serve others and to achieve God's glory.

1 Cor 4:2 says, "*Moreover it is **required in stewards**, that a man be found **faithful**.*" Will the Lord be pleased with our management of the time and talents He has entrusted to us? Will we be deemed as faithful stewards when Jesus returns?