



HOW WE SERVE
VALUE # 6

STEWARDSHIP

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WILLIAMS

Stewardship...

We need to continually remind ourselves that we don't own anything, we are simply **stewards** or managers of what God chooses to entrust to us. This idea of stewardship goes back to the beginning when God created all things, including men and women. In Genesis 1:27, we find God giving mankind dominion over the Earth. In other words, He placed us in charge and made us **stewards**, or caretakers of the Earth. Our ancestors, Adam and Eve, were tempted and became dissatisfied with just being **stewards**. They wanted to be owners. We face the same temptation today, and often live as though all we have is actually ours, not His. We have to realize at the outset, that we have ALWAYS been **stewards**, not just since we have accepted a Christian faith. I have two granddaughters, one of them being two years old. As you can imagine, the two year old has a distinct opinion of what is "mine". We learn this nature early, and then as they continue to mature, as Annalise has lately, they begin to realize, that everything is NOT mine.

I recently read this funny "Toddler's Creed," but it humorously makes the point:

If I want it, it's mine.

If I give it to you and change my mind later, it's mine.

If I can take it away from you, it's mine.

If I had it a while ago, it's mine.

If it's mine, it will never belong to anybody else, no matter what.

If we are building something together, all the pieces are mine.

If it looks like mine, it is mine.

But here's the truth: God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7), "and He promises that he who is generous will be blessed" (Proverbs 22:9), so let us be great **stewards** and generous givers. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35)

At BR Williams, we want to manage all of our resources (people, time, money, assets both intellectual and tangible, abilities, etc.) remembering ALL things come from God. As scripture tells us, "Whatever is good and perfect comes to us from God, the Creator of all light..." (James 1:17). God is the One who generously gives us things, even the ability to work and produce, and He wants us to enjoy His blessings. But we must always remember this truth... "We brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it." (1 Timothy 6:7) John D. Rockefeller was one of the wealthiest men who ever lived. After he died someone asked his accountant, "How much money did John D. leave?" The reply was classic; "He left all of it." Scripture clearly informs us there is no sin in having things, even having a lot. The sin comes when we refuse to hear God's reasons for giving us things. He gives to us so that we can share with others. He blesses us so that we can be a blessing to others. With every gift from God there is a responsibility to manage those relationships and resources in a way that brings Him honor.

You have probably heard the phrase, "You can own things, but don't let them own you." Jesus said it this way: "You cannot serve two masters, for you will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth." (Matthew 6:24) We must daily surrender our selfish desires and refuse to hold things or people tightly. Daily we must remind ourselves to live for God, not for more stuff. Having a giving attitude is so much better than having a greedy attitude. We gravitate to people who are generous because they pour blessings into us. We can choose to be a reservoir or a river. A reservoir collects water, all inflow with no outflow, whereas with a river, the water flows in and through, out to other rivers and streams. The Dead Sea is called that for a reason, no outflow. My hope is that we strive to out-give and out-serve one another.

It is my opinion that all marriages would last forever, if both individuals committed to trying to out-serve the other spouse. It is generally where one or both of the spouses get selfish, that marriages begin to break down. There is an interesting relationship between our understanding of **stewardship** and servanthood.

John Maxwell and Stephen Graves said it well:

"Serving others. It does not come naturally. We are born bent in the opposite direction. Instead of having a fine-tuned radar directed outward toward other people's needs and betterment, we are usually focused on taking care of number one, ourselves. We are skilled at arranging information, opportunities, even relationships around our self-interested grid. "What's in it for me?" is often the single criterion. Then, along came Jesus . . . the One who cast aside what was good for Himself and acted upon what was good for us. He broke the choke hold that self-centeredness has on all of us. It still might not always come naturally, but as a person of faith, I can learn the art of focusing on someone else's interest instead of my own. Until I learn and embrace the discovery that it is not all about me, I will never enjoy the deep fulfillment and pure goodness of helping others.

When I am the constant center of the universe, my world of work will always shrink down to a boring, empty stillness. No example of selflessness will ever be greater than what Jesus Christ did. Don't clutch too tightly the things that "rightfully" belong to you. Technically speaking, sound theology says things do not really belong to us—they are on loan, and we are only their stewards. All things really belong to God, and we are each delegated to care for them.

Practically speaking, however, we feel as if things do belong to us, so we clutch those things tightly. We hold and we hoard. We hide and we stash. We maneuver and manipulate. To unravel this death grip of selfishness, we have to pry our fingers off what we are holding on to. Giving them up means holding them with an open hand. You have to voluntarily give up your rights, your prerogatives. There is no other path to servanthood. (Life@Work, pp.

133, 159)

I encourage you to see **stewardship** as an investment. Jesus said, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store 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 will your heart be also." (Matthew 6: 19-21) Randy Alcorn, in *The Treasure Principle*, points out that though we cannot take anything with us, we can use the resources God entrust to us to send things ahead of us to heaven. We can invest in eternity, and that investment yields astronomically high returns. (p. 18) Think about it. Every day we can store up treasures in heaven. How? By the way we treat one another, by the way we share, by giving joy, by encouraging someone, by believing the best and seeing the best in others, by defending one another, by sharing Biblical truths with one another, etc. Jesus taught us that when we serve one another, we are actually serving Him. Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these, Brothers of mine, even the least of these, you did it to Me". (Matthew 25:40)

God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7), and He promises that he who is generous will be blessed (Proverbs 22:9), so let us be great **stewards** and generous givers. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35) And notice Jesus taught that your heart follows what you treasure. If you treasure things, your heart and love will be for those things. If you treasure serving and loving others, your heart will be there. Being generous and serving others actually changes our own heart. It uproots our selfishness and causes us to become more gracious and humble.

Dave Ramsey wrote,

“Humility is right understanding of myself and my place in the world. It’s the opposite of entitlement. Humility recognizes that God is 100 percent responsible for every blessing, every success, every outcome, and every reward in my life. I only have these things because God gave them to me. Sure, I worked hard, but God provided the result. Humility, then, leads into gratitude. That’s an understanding not only of ownership and the source of the blessing, but also of the price that was paid to provide that gift. Gratitude is evident in the way we manage the gifts we’ve been given. When I have a spirit of gratitude—when I am faithful with the little things because I know I don’t really own any of it—the strangest thing happens. God gives me more to manage. And the more He gives, the more convinced I am that I don’t own it.” (from *The Legacy Journey*, pp. 29-30)

It’s a good exercise to make a list of the resources that have been entrusted to you (the specific job you have been asked to do at BR Williams, the people in your life - personal and professional, your unique gifts and abilities, your limited and precious time, possessions, money, etc.) We often forget that one day we will give an account to God for how we managed His resources.

Read the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25. Here Jesus reminds us that one day He will ask us what we did with what He gave us and His story clearly communicates that we are not to squander or simply maintain His resources. He expects us to use them wisely. I think we all want to hear God say, “You were faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your master.”

This “Resource Covenant with God” may help you, as it has me.

- My primary quest is for Your reign in my life, not for more resources.
 - I will do my work as unto the Lord. You are my boss.
- I will responsibly manage all of the resources You choose to entrust to me.
 - I will honor and obey You with the first fruits of my labors.
 - I will make my resources available for You to use as You see fit.
 - I will not judge my worth, or that of others, by quantity of resources.
- I will give thanks for all things and be content with whatever You choose to entrust to me.
 - I will not worry about my resources (my lack or abundance).
- If resources get in the way of my relationship with You, I will get rid of them.

I’m thankful for the privilege to work alongside so many faithful stewards and generous givers of your time, your talents and your resources.

Love, Greg Brown

