

Series: Financial University
Title: "Stewardship of Life"
Text: Proverbs 16:3-4a
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I love football season.

My husband is one of those lucky husbands's who gets to watch football all he wants to, because I like to watch football too.

Now we do differ on whom we cheer for.

He prefers the sad and losing Falcons while my heart belongs to the winning and victorious **Bengals**.

We have also watched our granddaughter Chloe cheer this football season for the Vandalia wee Aviators.

We have watched those 3rd and 4th graders play their hearts out on the field in rain, mud and cold as Chloe and the other girls cheer them on to victory.

The legendary and former coach of the Green Bay Packers, Vince Lombardi said:

"I firmly believe that any man's finest hour, the greatest fulfillment of all that he holds dear, is that moment when he has worked his heart out in a good cause and lies exhausted on the field of battle - victorious."

Lombardi was one of the great coaches of all time.

He understood that winning or victory is the result of a process that begins at the most basic level.

He started each year's spring training by holding up a football and saying these words, "Men, this is a football."

His purpose was to move from the simple to the complex, concentrating on the essential components which lead to success.

It has been our goal through this Financial University sermon series to guide you to a fuller understanding of biblical stewardship, by starting with the basics and building on that sure foundation.

So let me start this morning by saying to you, "This is a Bible."

Every principle, each step to freedom, each concept that has been presented these past 3 weeks on **Stewardship** has come out of this guide for life.

They have not been our ideas or suggestions - they are from God.

Jesus taught 16 of the 38 parables on this subject and the apostles wrote about it in the New Testament epistles.

The Bible offers 500 verses on prayer, less than 500 verses on faith, but more than 2000 verses on money and possessions.

Seems as if God knew that our money and possessions would be an important issue.

Most people, even most Christians, instantly think of money when they hear the word "stewardship."

There simply seems to be no way of getting around that perception.

And the fact is we shouldn't try to get around that perception because stewardship does involve our management of money and our generosity with it.

Martin Luther astutely observed, “There are three conversions necessary: the conversion of the heart, the conversation of the mind and the conversion of the purse.”

Of these three, it may well be that we find the conversion of the purse the most difficult.

However, stewardship deals with the **whole person**,

not just the purse.

Stewardship is not just an investment of time, talent, and treasure in the kingdom of God, but an investment of self.

Proverbs 16 tells us to: *Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.*

This means that if you want to succeed – if you want victory – commit your plans to God and then work hard to make them happen.

Trust God as if it all depended on him but work as if it all depended on you.

To do that, we need to be good stewards of our lives not just our resources.

The Proverb goes on to say: *The Lord works out everything for his own ends (or purposes).*

So stewardship is the proper management of our life in order to enhance God’s kingdom. As we gain a better grasp of the stewardship of life, we will experience more and more victory in our lives.

This morning we are going to look at 7 stewardship assets that each of us possess to one degree or another.

My prayer is that as we **commit** these assets **more fully to the Lord and to his purposes**, we will become better stewards of life and we will experience more victory in our lives and for the kingdom of God.

The first is:

The Stewardship of Vision

Which enables you to look at life through eyes of faith and see things from God’s perspective.

Throughout the Bible we see examples of God giving spiritual vision to ordinary people who went on to do extraordinary things.

Noah – built an ark even though he had never seen rain because God had given him a vision of a great flood that would destroy the earth.

Abraham was given a vision that he would be the father of a great nation even though he was childless and old.

Moses, David, Joseph, Daniel and many others.

Of course along with the stewardship of the vision comes the responsibility of fulfilling it.

Now you may be thinking, I do not have visions as grand as those.

I would disagree with you.

This church was given a vision of building on an addition that would enable its people to reach out to the community and share the love of Christ.

We do that through Wed night dinners, Upward basketball and cheerleading, a contemporary service that reaches those who may never have come to a sanctuary and so many more ways. Now that the addition is paid off, I trust God will give

us the vision of how to utilize this addition in even more ways to enhance his kingdom here on earth.
 God gives spiritual vision to all of us that enables us to look at life through eyes of faith. Spiritual vision that helps each of us on our life's journey, to focus on life's goals and to set our hearts on life's rewards.
 We live in the present but we keep our spiritual vision on the future so we may finish life's race well.
 The two most practical ways we can do this are to follow God's Word everyday and to pray continuously for spiritually open eyes.

The Stewardship of Influence

Affects other people through our relationships with them as we act with integrity. Every person exercises influence. Your sphere of influence may differ greatly from one person to the next but everyone is influential in very definable ways.

How we each are stewards of that influence can be the difference between success and failure for us and for those whose lives we affect.

Because of the way my mom stewarded her influence, I have always known that God is a loving God and that I am his beloved child and that knowledge eventually led me into the ministry.

Kirk Nowery in his book, "The Stewardship of Life" says that only two things last forever – The Word of God and the souls of human beings.

Since that is the case, there are three primary objectives for the Christian in the stewardship of influence:

- Influencing people to know the One True God
- Influencing people to believe in and follow Jesus Christ
- Influencing people to live a Christian life that reflects Christ in a positive light in all they say and do – *that is what my mom did.*

The Stewardship of Commitment

Reminds us of promises to keep and purposes to fulfill.
 The central identifying characteristic of a Christian is commitment demonstrated through love – consistent, committed, Christ-like love.
 Jesus himself called us to love the Lord with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and to love others as ourselves.
 The stewardship of commitment extends to every role, every responsibility, and every important relationship.
 We need to be committed to people – by being thankful for them, thoughtful of them, and trustworthy with them.
 We need to be committed to prayer – effectiveness in the Christian life is inseparably connected to one's effectiveness in prayer.

On your estimate of giving slips you will see that we ask about your pledge to pray for this church. It is of great importance to this church that you are good stewards of commitment to prayer.

Our effectiveness as a church body is inseparably linked to our effectiveness in prayer as individuals and as a church body.

We have a group that meets each Wednesday morning at 10:00 in the prayer chapel whose sole goal is to pray for this church, its leaders, and its ministries.

You are each invited to come and join them. The more committed this church is to prayer – the more I believe we will see God move in our midst.

And We need to be committed to principles – it is a matter of integrity.

Stewardship of commitment is a heartfelt decision to please the Lord in word, deed and attitude of heart.

The Stewardship of Time

We need to allot our moments and days wisely, to please God and accomplish his purposes.

C.S. Lewis wrote, “Humans live in time and therefore attend chiefly to two things: to eternity itself and to the Present. For the Present is the point at which time touches eternity.”

Because the Christian has eternal life, we know that this life is not the sum total of our lives.

However, it is the point in time where our present, our now, touches Eternity.

So we must make the most of the time we have while we are here on earth to glorify God.

Paul reminds us in Corinthians what Proverbs 16 had said, though he words it a little differently – Paul says, “whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, do it all for the glory of God.”

Everything, even the most mundane tasks can be dedicated to God.

From God’s perspective, the measure of a life is not determined by length but by depth – how we steward our days in faithful service to Him, for Him and in His name.

At home and in my office, here at church I have the words to Psalm 31:15a written where I can see them.

It says, “My times are in Your hands.”

It reminds me to turn my days over to the One who gives me breath for the day that I may accomplish for him what he would have me do – Today.

Sometimes that means my day goes a completely different way than how I had planned it.

That’s okay with me so long as I am doing what God is calling me to.

The Stewardship of Opportunity

Reminds us to use every chance we have to evangelize – in the comments we make, in the opinions we share about a thousand-and-one different things, we can incorporate the truth of the Word of God and the message of the Gospel.

To use every chance we have to empathize – caring for the hurting, serving with humility.

To use every chance we have to energize – To energize others and ourselves through the power of the Holy Spirit at work within us.

This power helps us encourage others and stand for what is right.

This morning you are going to be blessed to hear from Holly Heyroth. Holly come on up. Holly is going to share with you how she is stewarding a great opportunity to go back to Tanzania as a missionary for Grassroots and work in the

Angel House Orphanage. Grassroots is one of the missions we support here at Tipp City Church.

Holly is already experiencing victory in her life by saying YES to God and this opportunity to enhance his kingdom.

Holly is giving us the chance to experience victory today by exercising some of our assets of stewardship to help her.

We get to be good stewards of opportunity by not letting Holly leave here today without praying for her – which allows us to use our asset of stewardship of commitment also.

In addition, perhaps you will want to make a commitment to Holly to continue to pray for her while she is in Tanzania.

Holly is also giving you the chance to exercise this next asset.

The Stewardship of Resources

This gives us the opportunity to dedicate all our monetary and material resources to the Lord.

We may not be able to go to Tanzania ourselves but we can help Holly go and represent Christ for us by helping to fund this worthy cause.

The stewardship of resources is serious business.

That's why Jesus spoke of it so often –

God's will is that we give it serious attention.

We must have the right perspective on our resources, and that is only possible if we have the right focus on our source.

Everything we have – every earthly resource we have – comes from a heavenly source – God.

God is our faithful supplier and His plan is that we be His faithful stewards.

Our resources actually belong to God – but he gives us the privilege of using them, enjoying them and managing them for His glory.

I have had the great pleasure of helping Terry Egan facilitate the Financial Peace University class by Dave Ramsey that we are offering here at the church.

The reason I am doing that is that Kevin and I wanted to be better stewards of the resources God has blessed us with and we wanted some guidance and direction in that area.

All of these assets I have mentioned are simply loaned to us while we are here on earth. They are loaned to us to invest in such a way that we gain the greatest return and God gets the greatest glory.

Kevin and I knew that we could do better with the assets God was giving to us.

Each week during class we share victory stories - stories of how we are becoming better stewards of our resources for our greatest return and God's greatest glory.

I have asked a couple of the 21 people who are taking the class to come forward this morning and share with you a victory story they have experienced while taking this class. As they are coming forward let me share with you one of ours. One of Kevin and my goals is we want to be debt free. We look at some of the foolish choices we made and today realize that it is more important for us to not go and do everything we want because we would rather pay off all our debt. So by using Dave's principal of naming each dollar that comes into our budget, we

were able to pay off our car a year early. Naming every dollar means that we designate where every dollar we have will go and when our money is used up for a particular item such as groceries, we stop spending money on that item for that week. I must confess that this one simple principal has changed our lives immensely.

Which brings us to the last stewardship asset,
The Stewardship of YOU.

You need to manage your own life to honor God in all you do and how you go about doing it.

Sadly we often think like Moses did when God called him – that everyone else is gifted to serve God but not me.

That is a lie that Satan wants you to believe.

God loves you and wants you just as you are; yet He sees in you not what you are, but what you can be in His Hands.

You are a human being, created by a loving God, designed in His image and destined for His purposes. You are special in His eyes and you have a role to play in His eternal plan.

Every blessing and benefit in your life is a factor in the stewardship equation of life.

However, making the most of all that you have and all that you are doesn't come down to you.

It comes down to “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

The stewardship of life is an ever-increasing abundance of God's blessing on the one who seeks Him earnestly, loves Him wholeheartedly and follows him unreservedly.

The stewardship of life is about love, devotion, integrity, diligence and every thing else I have talked about this morning. But mostly it is about faithfulness.

Which brings us back to the very first Bible verse we spoke of and based this series on: *I Corinthians 4:2*

“Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.”

May the God of all faithfulness give you strength and wisdom to be a faithful steward in His name and for His glory.

Resources: Bible, Enough by Adam Hamilton, Financial Peace University by Dave Ramsey, and The Stewardship of Life by Kirk Nowery