



Faith Aflame: 360 Degrees

Living as God's Child: Starting Right

On July 29, 1996, British Olympic sprinting champion Linford Christie failed to defend his 1992 gold medal as the fastest man in the world. He was not beaten by another runner. He left the track without ever getting into the race. At perhaps one of the most important moments in his racing career Christie made a false start. Not just one false start, but two. Christie was disqualified from the one race that defined him as an Olympian. R. Scott Rodin described it this way in his book, *Stewards in the Kingdom*:

All the speed, strength, training and mental preparation that led to that critical moment had been wasted. The hopes of the British people and the prospects of a new Olympic record were dashed. Christie would leave a broken man and a brilliant career would forever be remembered for that one infamous moment of failure. All because of a false start. (page 15)

"Stewardship is the practice, the work, the vocation of a steward. It is the 'how to,' the ethical imperatives of the call to be a steward. The very term indicates that we can move past the whole discussion of what it means to be a steward and focus on the practice of stewardship. This is a false start." (page 16)

Talking about the practice of stewardship before understanding what it means to be a steward is a false start. ***Why are false starts in stewardship dangerous?***

Rodin writes, "By definition, a steward is under the command of one who owns the resources that are to be stewarded. Steward is a title of a servant, one hired to undertake this activity on behalf of the owner. Therefore we must ask, 'Whose steward are we? To whom do we owe allegiance in our work?'" (page 20)

The right place to start when it comes to Christian stewardship is to ask the important question, "***Whose steward are you?***"

- How do *you* answer that question?
- Why is it so important to start here?

Stewardship Prayer

Lord God, You alone are the source of every gift, from the vast array of the universe to the mystery of each human life. Everything we are and everything we have come from You.

Fill our minds with Your truth and our hearts with Your love. Guide us as we serve in Your name and make us good stewards of the gifts You entrust to us.

In Jesus Name, Amen.

How do the following passages help you to answer that question?

1 Corinthians 3:16

Colossians 1:16

Psalms 31:14-15a

A follow-up question is equally important, "***How did you get to be a steward?***"

How do the following passages help you to answer that question?

Ephesians 2:1-6

2 Corinthians 5:14-15

Galatians 4:4-5

Once these questions are answered another arises, "***How then should I live as a steward?***"

How do the following passages help you to answer that question?

1 Corinthians 10:31

Ephesians 2:10

1 Peter 2:9

When we start in the wrong place in stewardship a prayer of confession is appropriate. Pray together the following confession written by Rev. Joe Sullivan:

Dear Lord, I confess that the Bible's diagnosis of me is true: I am sinful—through and through. I have become increasingly devoted to getting ahead in this life more than pointing others to eternal life. I often fail to use what I have for Your mission and try harder to have more for myself. I am not yet wholly dedicated to knowing You or making You known. For the sake of the perfect life of Jesus and His complete sacrifice upon the cross, forgive me all things. And through the power of Christ's resurrection from the dead, help me to live with new dedication to love You with all my heart, soul, mind and strength. Amen.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9