



Faith Aflame: 360 Degrees

Living as God's Child: Self

Wallace Fisher in *A New Climate for Stewardship* writes, "The Christian stewardship of the self, indispensable to Christian community, requires each individual to use time, human resources and experiences, and economic goods for the purposes God approves. Here, we elect to lay aside the 'time, talent, and treasure' syndrome. It conditions church members against biblical stewardship. In church circles, the stewardship of 'time' is viewed primarily in terms of service to the institutional church; the stewardship of 'talent' focuses on service in the local congregation and the church-at-large; and the word 'treasure' means pledging and giving to the church." (page 58)

- Do you agree with Fisher's assessment that the "time, talent, and treasure syndrome" conditions church members against biblical stewardship? Explain your answer.

Time:

"A responsible stewardship of the past is within everyone's reach because God's Spirit enables each person who is responsive to him to learn from the past without getting bogged down in it." (page 60) What does **Psalm 90:1-2** have to say about our past?

"The present is every person's opportunity to serve his neighbor in need. The present is God's time. It is provided by him so that his people can serve him by serving other persons, which is what he wants done at all times." (page 62) What does **Hebrews 13:3** say about the present?

"The biblical stewardship of time enables finite humans to face tomorrow hopefully—that is realistically—because it assures them that Christ is in the future. When Jesus said 'Do not be anxious about tomorrow...Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day,' he was not denigrating personal prudence; he was encouraging humans to break their preoccupation with tomorrow and invest their energies in living responsibly today." (page 63)

- Evaluate Fisher's ideas regarding stewarding the past, present and future.
- Give some examples of how you can steward your past, present and future.

Stewardship Prayer

Gracious Lord, life is Your gift to me. In Holy Baptism You called me to be Your steward. Give me the courage and generosity to respond to Your call on my life.

Forgive me when I fail and strengthen me when I fall.

In Jesus Name, Amen.

Human Resources and Experience:

“Many parish leaders concentrate on the particular talents of various people in their congregations, coveting those talents primarily for use in and for the institutional church. They rarely encourage talented people to serve in the community...It is necessary, of course, to take a person’s talent into consideration for responsible tasks in the church—as it is in other institutions...Unless the congregation is a fellowship in which persons learn to serve God in the world, it is not practicing God’s stewardship. When Jesus’ disciples came to him with their discovery that other people were doing good works, Jesus advised them that God’s work was being accomplished in different ways, in different places, and through persons other than themselves. Church people in every generation are inclined to limit God’s liberating work to their own limited understanding of and parochial participation in it. That is natural, but it is not Christian.” (pages 64-65)

- Evaluate your church when it comes to “coveting those talents primarily for use in and for the institutional church.”
- What are some ways that Christian stewards might use their talents outside the walls of the church building? How might you use your talents outside the church?

Possessions and Personhood:

“Christianity calls for the responsible management of material goods. Biblical stewardship is concerned not only with how we obtain material goods but equally with how we use them. Jesus did not teach that the material is evil and the spiritual good. He appreciated that God, having fashioned an infinite universe and having created persons in his own image, looked on his whole creation with approval, satisfaction, and joy...Jesus’ parables reflect his joyous acceptance of his Father’s world. He wanted all people to have an equitable share of material goods. He also wanted them to handle their possessions in the best interest of self and others. Jesus did not advise Zacchaeus to get rid of the wealth which remained in his custody after his conversion. He expected him to handle it responsibly. Jesus issued no general call to asceticism. Instead, he called his disciples to obedience to God’s will in their time and place according to their individual resources.” (page 68-69)

- Discuss ways in which stewards are to handle wealth responsibly.

Creation:

We also have responsibility for managing the resources of the earth. The questions of how and for what purpose we use the natural resources available to us and how we care for the planet and its environment are important issues for us in our role as stewards.

- Discuss why it is so important to care for the planet and its environment and how we can do that in our individual lives.

Closing Prayer: Ask God to make you a better steward of all He has entrusted to you.

