



Faith Aflame: 360 Degrees

Living as God's Child: The Rightful Owner

Two men were quarreling over the ownership of a certain piece of land. They came to a rabbi and asked him to settle the dispute. The rabbi said, "I shall ask the land to which of you it belongs." He put his ear to the ground and then said, "The land says it belongs to neither of you, but that both of you belong to it. *Dust you are, and to dust you shall return.*"

The question of ownership is important for people today. Success is often measured by how much "stuff" one has. People often find a sense of security (a false sense of security to be sure) in how much they have. More than a few have argued over who owns what.

Ownership is also a key issue for the Christian steward, but in a completely different way.

The Christian steward recognizes that he/she is **not** the owner.

The term "stewardship" immediately identifies the steward as one who is not the rightful owner of that which is to be stewarded. "Stewards," R. Scott Rodin writes in *Stewards in the Kingdom*, "are by definition not owners, but they have a relationship with the owner in order to be a faithful steward."

"The Biblical truth," says Charles R. Lane in *Ask, Thank, Tell*, "that it all belongs to God—is the cornerstone of everything we have to say about stewardship." (page 22)

Tell why you agree or disagree with Lane's comment that ownership is the cornerstone of everything we have to say about stewardship.

What do the following passages say about this?

Genesis 1:1

Psalms 24:1-3

Deuteronomy 8:11-18

Revelation 21:1

Stewardship Prayer

Lord, I sometimes live as if I am the owner. I sometimes believe that I have what I have because I deserve it or because I earned it.

Forgive me and empower me to live as Your steward acknowledging that everything comes from Your gracious hand.

In Jesus Name, Amen.

Lane adds two cautions that need to be considered regarding the issue of ownership.

The first caution has to do with our **false sense of ownership**. Getting this one wrong can make a true sense of stewardship impossible, because the steward falsely imagines that the owner's property belongs not to the owner but the steward. (page 29)

What are the implications for the Christian if he/she falls into this false notion?

The second caution has to do with **the false notion that we have what we have because we deserve it**, and because we have earned it by our own intelligence and hard work...Our American culture has trumpeted the 'self-made man'...the rags to riches story of a person who has pulled himself or herself up by the bootstraps and made something out of nothing has a long-standing place in our nation's mythology...This individualism flies right in the face of Moses' words to the Israelites (in Deut. 8:11-18). Countless forces over which we have no control have helped make us what we are. The brains and the hard work for which we want to take credit are God's, and God entrusts them to us. (page 29)

What credit do we deserve for what we have? (Read again Deut. 8: 11-18)

Lane concludes:

Rather than taking credit for my wealth, my wealth ought to cause me to ponder why God has chosen to so bless me. Rather than focusing my life on amassing wealth that dramatically exceeds my needs, I ought to focus my life on using the wealth that God has entrusted to me to help those who have less. (page 29)

What if we don't think we have wealth?

Do most Christians live as if God is the owner of everything or as if they were the owner? Explain your answer.

What difference will it make if I have an attitude in which I take credit for my wealth verses if I have an attitude which ponders why God has chosen to so bless me?

What can I do this week that will demonstrate that I really believe that God owns everything?

Closing: Close with a prayer acknowledging God as the owner of everything. Ask Him to give wisdom in managing His gifts according to His will.

