

**July - September 2023**



# *Principles of Stewardship*

**Connect Group Studies**

# PRINCIPLES OF STEWARDSHIP TEACHING SERIES



## PRIMARY AIM

To fill out people's understanding of stewardship as an all-of-life endeavour that flows from our relationship with Jesus. Stewardship is distinct from generosity and it has wider application than money. Ultimately stewardship is about our attitude and application of the time, talent and treasure that God has blessed us with. It therefore aims to help people consider their own attitude and approaches to stewardship as a response to the call to follow Jesus.

According to Richard Rusbuldt, Biblical Stewardship may be defined in this way:

... a way of living grounded in what the Bible tells us about our lives as God's people in God's created world. The Bible is God's guidebook for us as we seek to live as God's stewards. It is a book of hope and help that God has given us to let us know how we should care for all the things that God has entrusted to us. It [further] provides many references to God's hopes, plans, and promises to stewards who are accounted "joint heirs" with Christ (Romans 8.17) in God's family.

## SUBSIDIARY AIMS

- To provide a biblical framework of stewardship;
- To grow in understanding of our financial giving as a component of discipleship;
- To reflect personally on how God calls each person to steward their resources in both general and specific ways.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND PASTORAL CONSIDERATIONS

In November 2022 the Lead Minister launched a new strategic vision for St Hilary's, this included the five values of worship, community, leadership, stewardship and innovation. Stewardship remains a core value for St Hilary's. The stewardship value is articulated in our strategic vision as follows: We glorify our Father by bearing much fruit and showing ourselves to be His disciples. Conscious that we have been richly blessed, we do this by utilising all at our disposal: our time, our talent and our treasure in service of our vision and mission.

## *2 Principles of Stewardship*

Our three campuses are located in some of the most affluent parts of Melbourne. Many of our Church members earn salaries much higher than the national average wage. This reality can sometimes cloud our perception or understanding of stewardship. We can give very generously (monetarily) but still have false or negative attitudes towards stewardship. Additionally as a Church we can have false and negative attitudes to money, perhaps 'tapping wealthy members for cash' rather than calling the community to healthy stewardship. After a long period of calling the Church to financial stewardship, we will spend term three doing deep teaching on stewardship as an all-of-life- endeavour critical to discipleship.

## STRUCTURE AND TOPICS

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	READING
1	Jul-16	What is Biblical Stewardship	1 Corinthians 4:1-13
2	Jul-23	Stewardship as Entrusting	2 Timothy 1:1-14
3	Jul-30	Stewardship of God's Planet Earth	Colossians 1:15-20, (Leviticus 25:1-7)
4	Aug-06	Confronting Stewardship	2 Corinthians 8:1-15
5	Aug-13	Stewardship of Money and Possessions	2 Corinthians 9:6-15
6	Aug-20	Stewardship of God's Gifts of Life and Time	Philippians 4:4-20
7	Aug-27	Stewardship of our Spiritual Gifts	Romans 12:1-8
8	Sep-03	Stewardship of our Relationships	Psalms 23:1-6
9	Sep-10	Stewardship for Kingdom Growth	Luke 12:35-48

## RESOURCES AND CREDIT

This teaching and bible study series is based on *A Workbook on Biblical Stewardship* by Richard E. Rusbuldt (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1993).

# 1 **1 Corinthians 4:1-13**

## ***WHAT IS BIBLICAL STEWARDSHIP?***

1. Which items in the following list relates to 'Biblical Stewardship'? Discuss your answers.

cars	the poor	Church	offertory
gospel	tithing	managing	land
buying	the law	grace	raising children
love	selling	animals	Wages
time	job	science	holidays

2. Pray and then read 1 Cor 4:1-13.
3. Spend a moment writing down anything that stood out to you in the passage. What did you notice?
4. In verse 1, what does Paul mean by saying that God called his apostles to be:
  - a. 'servants'
  - b. 'those entrusted' (NIV)/'stewards' (NRSV)

5. Verse 2 draws out the key reason why Paul uses the metaphors of 'servant' and 'steward'. Are we today entrusted with the same 'mysteries God has revealed' like Paul? What might being a faithful steward look like for us?
6. What are the differences between looking after something that you own, as opposed to looking after something that is entrusted to you? Discuss the differences, thinking of examples in your life.
7. Taking into account verses 2 and 3, what point is Paul trying to make about judging in verses 3-5? Is Paul saying that he will disregard what others in the church are saying about his leadership? What implications might this have for the things that are entrusted to us from God?
8. What does Paul mean in verse 7?
9. How can Christians live with the tension of owning things in our culture, while also living as biblical stewards?

10. When was the last time you were part of a church that preached about stewardship? What was your reaction when you discovered the church was going to preach on biblical stewardship? Why?

11. If you wanted to grow in the area of stewardship, how would you go about it?

12. Pray for each other.



# 2 **2 Timothy 1:1-14**

## ***STEWARDSHIP AS ENTRUSTING***

1. What are the qualities you would look for in a person if you decided to lend them your car or to house sit your home or to loan something else you value highly?
2. Pray and then read 2 Timothy 1:1-14.
3. Looking through verses 1-14, what kind of relationship does Paul have with Timothy?
4. What is the reason in verse 6 'to fan into flame the gift of God' (cf vv. 3-5)? What do you think the gift is?
5. What does God's Spirit give and not give, according to verses 7-8?
6. What are the characteristics of the gospel described in verses 9 -12? What stands out to you as you read these verses?



7. Paul believes it is worth suffering for the gospel (v.8). Do you have the same attitude? What might suffering for the gospel mean in your life?
8. In verse 12, is God entrusting to Timothy the good news, or is Paul asking Timothy to entrust himself to God? Or can it be taken both ways?
9. Do we undertake our stewardship of the gospel on our own (v.13-14)? Discuss what help God has provided to us in this critical task.
10. What does 'guarding the good deposit' look like in your life and the lives of those around you?
11. Pray for each other.

# 3

**Col 1:15-20; Lev 25:1-7**

## ***STEWARDSHIP OF GOD'S PLANET EARTH***

1. How easy is it to talk about environmental issues at work or with family? Discuss.
2. Pray and then read Colossians 1:15-20.
3. These verses are probably a hymn which Paul himself composed or adapted from elsewhere. From what is described in verses 15-17, who is Jesus and what are his works?
4. Compare verses 18-20 to 15-17. What is Jesus' key role in verses 18-20?
5. Spend a few moments praising God in prayer together using Colossians 1:15-20 as inspiration.
6. If all of creation has been made through Jesus and for Jesus, what does this mean for how we treat what God has created? What difference should it make?

7. Read Leviticus 25:1-7. This law was given to Israel for when they were settled in the promised land. Summarise the law in your own words.
8. What is the spiritual significance that the seventh year is called a 'year of sabbath rest'?
9. Why do you think verses 6 and 7 are included?
10. Are there any practical reasons for giving the land rest from work?
11. Does the law make economic sense? Discuss.
12. How do our readings from Colossians and Leviticus help inform how we are to steward our natural environment?
13. What is one thing you or your group could do over the next week to be a faithful steward of God's creation?
14. Pray for each other.

# 4 **Acts 7:54-8:8**

## ***CONFRONTING STEWARDSHIP***

1. Have you ever had to confront someone else about their use of resources (eg. Hot water or money)? Share with the group your experience.
2. Pray and then read 2 Corinthians 8:1-15.
3. How does Paul describe the kind of giving from the Macedonian churches (vv.1-5)?
4. What does 'grace' (v.1) have to do with giving from the Macedonian churches?
5. List out the different strategies Paul uses to encourage the Corinthian church to give in verses 1-9. Discuss the merits of these strategies. Would you be moved to give upon hearing what Paul had to say?

6. What role does our empathy play in giving or not giving to something?
7. What are the principles underlying Paul's encouragement to give in verses 10-12?
8. What objection to giving might Paul be addressing in verse 13-15?
9. Can you think back on times in your life when you may have benefitted from someone challenging you about your giving or use of resources?
10. What kinds of things would motivate you to give? How would you like someone to confront you in how you steward your resources?
11. Pray for each other.

# 5

## **2 Corinthians 9.6-15**

# **STEWARDSHIP OF MONEY AND POSSESSIONS**

1. Share a time when you have witnessed someone else generously giving either their money or possessions, either at work, at home or at church. What was happening and what was the motivation to give?
2. Pray and then read 2 Corinthians 9.6-15.
3. Looking at the surrounding context of 2 Corinthians 9:6-15, why is the Corinthian church being encouraged to give?
4. Paul quotes Exodus 16:18 in verse 6. How does the original context help us to understand what Paul is writing (see also Dt 8:3)?

5. Do you think Paul's instruction in verse 7 would have resulted in the Corinthians giving more or less? Discuss.
6. What is our role in encouraging other people to give? In what situations do we have a role? Discuss.
7. What does God's abundant giving to people hopefully result in, according to verses 8 - 15?
8. Do you think about giving in the way Paul describes here in verses 6-15? What are the benefits of thinking about giving in this way?
9. Share with the group some of the underlying reasons why you give to the church and/or other Christian organisations.

10. Richard Cunningham, in his book *Creative Stewardship*, suggests 11 ways of giving. Which of the following ways do you struggle with most? Which might you be willing to focus on growing in?

- a. Put first things first (Matt 6:33)
- b. Give of the self before any material gift (2 Cor 8:5)
- c. Give God the first and best you possess (Ex 22:29; Mal 1:6)
- d. Give voluntarily (2 Cor 8:3; 9:5)
- e. Give proportionately as God prospers you (2 Cor 8:12)
- f. Give generously (2 Cor 8:2; 9:11)
- g. Give spontaneously (Matt 6:2-4)
- h. Give sacrificially (Luke 21:3-4)
- i. Give systematically (1 Cor 16:2)
- j. Give humbly (Matt 6:1-4)
- k. Give in love (1 Cor 13:3)

11. Pray for each other.





# 6

## **Philippians 4:4-21**

# ***STEWARDSHIP OF GIFT'S OF LIFE AND TIME***

1. Our life is a gift and so precious. If you are happy to, briefly share the story of when and where you were born, and why you were given your name.
2. Pray and then read Philippians 4:4-21.
3. What does Paul mean for the Philippians to 'rejoice in the Lord always' (v.4)?
4. In verses 6-7, what is the benefit of the peace of God and what might Paul mean by 'transcends all understanding'?
5. What is the purpose of the list given in verse 8? Why is this verse helpful for stewarding our spiritual and mental health?

6. The emotional and spiritual health of our minds is so important. What have you done or put in place in your life that you've found helpful to look after your mind?
7. Not only are we to steward our mind, God wants us to steward how we use our time. What have you found that helps you to steward your time wisely during the week for God?
8. What is one thing you could do this week to grow in stewarding your mind and/or your time for God?
9. What is Paul's secret of being content (v.11)? (cf. v.13)
10. In verses 14-19, Paul thanks the Philippians for their gifts. What is the spiritual importance of these gifts? And what is Paul's encouragement to those who are anxious in mind (v.19)?
11. Pray with each other.

# 7

## **Romans 12:1-8**

# ***STEWARDSHIP OF GIFT'S OF LIFE AND TIME***

1. Can you think of another Christians with spiritual gifts whom you have benefited from? Share with the group.
2. Pray and then read Romans 12:1-8.
3. The 'Therefore' in verse 1 looks back at what God has done for us through Jesus in Romans, chapters 1-11. In 12:1-2, how are we to respond to God's mercy? List the different ways.
4. In verse 3, why is having humility so important when it comes to our use of gifts? And how do we make sure that we think of ourselves 'with sober judgement'?
5. Why is faith so critical with respect to the use of gifts in the Body of Christ?
6. What is the source of spiritual gifts (Eph 4:7-9) and what are their purpose (Eph 4:12-13; 1 Cor 12:7)?

7. What does Paul mean by saying 'each member belongs to all the others' with respect to spiritual gifts (Rom 12:5)?
8. What do you notice about this sample list of gifts in Romans 12:6-8? (If you have time to read and compare them, you can find other lists in 1 Cor 12:4-11, 28; and Eph 4:11).
9. Are all believers given spiritual gifts and is it possible to be unaware that you have one?
10. Spiritual gifts are not the gift of the Holy Spirit, nor the fruit of the Spirit, nor are they simply special abilities or spiritual disciplines. What steps could you take to identify which spiritual gifts you have? Who could you talk to if you are unsure?
11. Is it possible to have a spiritual gift and to withhold it? What are some ways you could steward the spiritual gifts you have been given in order to build up the church?
12. Pray for each other.

# 8

## **Psalm 23:1-6**

# ***STEWARDSHIP OF OUR RELATIONSHIPS***

1. Have there been any situations where your relationship with God has conflicted with a relationship with another person? Share with the group if appropriate
2. Pray and then read Psalm 23:1-6.
- 3.
4. What does the shepherd provide in verses 1-4? What might this provision from God represent in the life of the Psalmist?
5. The imagery moves from shepherd to the friend in verses 5 & 6. What does the preparation of a table 'in the presence of my enemies' mean?
6. What is the Psalmist confident in (esp. verse 6)? How might having the Psalmists understanding of God affect our relationship with God?
7. The possibility of a close relationship with God is an amazing gift. As James 4:8 says, 'Come near to God

and he will come near to you.’ Describe a time in your life when you have felt especially close to God.

8. Can you provide some biblical illustrations of times when God has moved towards his people and provided love and mercy?
9. In a few words, how might you describe your relationship with God at the moment? Now try to see it from the other perspective: how do you think God might describe his relationship with you?
10. What do you think stewarding our relationship with God involves in our day-to-day life? What steps can we take to better steward our relationship with God?
11. In addition to our relationship with God, we have been gifted with many different human relationships in our life. Are there any relationships currently in your life that you feel called to better steward? If appropriate share the name with the group and pray for God’s help in these relationships.
12. Pray for each other, and bring before God those who are particularly involved in helping us to steward our relationships, such as social workers, psychologists, and church leaders.

# 9

**Luke 12:35-48**

## ***STEWARDSHIP FOR KINGDOM GROWTH***

1. Have you ever been burgled or had things stolen from you? Were you prepared for this happening? Share the experience and the steps you may have taken afterwards to prevent it from happening again.
2. Pray and then read Luke 12:35-48.
3. What does the master ask of the servants in verses 35-38? What will please the master? What principles can be drawn from this?
4. The mini parable of the householder and the thief is found in verses 39-40. Who does the householder and thief represent? What is the intention of the parable? What does being watchful and ready look like for you?
5. Peter is named as asking a question of Jesus in verse 41. Jesus does not answer it directly in the verses that follow, but who might represent the manager who is put in charge of the masters servants (v.42; cf. v.22, 32)?



6. Compare the faithful servants to the unfaithful servants in the parable of the faithful and unfaithful servants in verses 42-48.
  - a. How do they undertake their given responsibility?
  - b. What is the master's response?
7. Why might the parable be extreme and graphic with regards the reward and punishment? What is the intention of the parable?
8. There will be a final Day of the Lord (2 Thes 2:2) which will come unexpectedly (1 Thes 5:2), where all will be called to give an account of their life. In this light, what does Jesus mean when he says 'From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.'?
9. Jesus wants us to steward our responsibility of his church and to make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:18-20) and to spread of the good news of salvation to all people. How do you think us individually and as a church are going with stewarding these tasks? What is your role in this?

10. How do we hold together what we know of God's grace along with Jesus' teaching and expectations about being good stewards?
11. Reflecting back over the last 8 weeks, we have looked at different areas of life that we are to steward. What did you find the most helpful? What were you most challenged by? What areas do you feel you need to continue to work on?
12. Pray for each other and for God's help as we steward our lives for our Lord Jesus.





*FEEDBACK?*

*To share your ideas and feedback  
on how to improve our bible study series,  
follow the link QR code:*



*Bible Studies written by Tavis Beer.*

*Material adapted from A Workbook on Biblical Stewardship  
by Richard E. Rusbuldt (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1993).*

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