

Command #21: Be a good steward of what God has given you.

Matthew 25:14-30 // Jerry Barber and Greg Singerle

Condensed Version

Read Matthew 25:14-30 and discuss these questions with your disciple(s):

1. How does this parable continue the theme Jesus began in Matthew 24:36 and repeated in 25:13 (“watch”)?
2. Compare the response to the master of the first two servants in verses 19-23 with the response of the third servant in verses 24-25. What does the third servant say that reveals to us why he was not a good steward? How does that apply to our response to God’s command to us to be good stewards?
3. What is the one main point Jesus is trying to teach in this parable?

Study: (answers follow below)

1. How does this parable continue the theme Jesus began in Matthew 24:36 and repeated in 25:13 (“watch for the Lord’s return”)?
2. A talent represented the amount of money it would take a day laborer to earn in 20 years, so these are large sums of money Jesus is discussing. What lesson(s) can we derive from that truth as we apply it to our Christian life?
3. What two truths does verse 19 emphasize?
4. Compare the response to the master of the first two servants in verses 19-23 with the response of the third servant in verses 24-25. What does the third servant say that reveals to us why he was not a good steward? How does that apply to our response to God’s command for us to be good stewards?
5. What rewards does God promise to good stewards?
6. Can you summarize some of the lessons this parable teaches?
7. Note: pay careful attention to the fact that this is a parable, not a systematic theology lesson. As always with parables, we should look for the one primary point Jesus was trying to make, rather than trying to find meanings in every detail of the parable (often those details are given to round out the story and make it realistic or to add “shock value”). In one sentence, what is Jesus’ main point in this parable of the bags of gold?

Answers:

1. Jesus told his disciples to be watching for the return of the Lord. This parable gives the proper way to watch—by being a good steward of what God has given you while He is away.
2. God is a God of grace and generosity. EVERYTHING we have is given to us by Him in order to use for His glory. We should not compare ourselves with others.
3. The length of the time that the master is away (“after a long time”) and the accountability required of the servants when he returns (“settled accounts with them”).
4. Attitude towards the master was the determining factor of the stewards: the proper attitude resulted in wise investment on the part of the first two, while the wrong attitude resulted in bad stewardship and laziness by the third. He said, “I knew that you are a hard man.” Applying this to our relationship with God, how you view God will determine how you invest your money and your life.
5. Greater responsibility and sharing the joy of the Master
6. God is the owner of everything. We are stewards, not owners, and everything He gives us is gracious and generous. Stewarding God’s gifts well (i.e., working to advance the kingdom) is the best way to “watch for Christ’s return.” God will reward the faithful with increased responsibility and sharing in his joy. Attitude towards God is the foundation of our trajectory in life.
7. God generously rewards those who view Him properly and invest their lives wisely.

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Worship:

What is a steward? Our thoughts often go to a manager who has been given the responsibility to run a household and manage the accounts and affairs of another. I (Greg) don't know about you, but in my mind this creates the picture of Mr. Carson from Downton Abbey! So when I think about myself as a steward, I often fall into the idea that I am a steward of the material things that God has given me. And while that aspect of a steward managing a household and another's assets is found in the Bible, to stop at the idea that a steward is only a manager of worldly possessions would be to miss the point by a wide margin.

Generally speaking, a steward is a person who manages something that has been given to him or her for the benefit or profit of the owner. In what way was Jesus a steward? After all he gave up his riches and rights as God and He had no earthly possessions. But if Christ asks us to be stewards then He is the perfect example of stewardship and, therefore, the role of a steward must go well beyond the definition of one who takes care of worldly possessions. Jesus was the steward of God's word. He was also the steward of people. Friends, we need to dispel of the myth that you or I will hear the words "well done!" if we manage worldly possessions, albeit well, but we are not a steward of that which is far more precious – God's word/the gospel – by proclaiming it and making disciples to the glory of God. Let's look at some of Jesus' examples of stewardship.

Questions:

John 13

1. What do you admire about Jesus as a steward of people from these verses?

Matthew 22:35-40

2. Jesus quoted many Old Testament scriptures but why can we look to these verses as a summary of Jesus' stewardship of God's word?
3. What word is mentioned most in Jesus' summary of all the teaching in the law and prophets?
4. So what do you think is the most important characteristic of a steward of God's word or a steward of God in general?
5. What do you admire about Jesus as a steward of God's word from these verses?

Answers:

1. He led by example; He did the lowest job Himself before He asks others to do it; He understood all things belonged to God; He cared for those entrusted to Him; He completed the task despite the misunderstanding and objection of those He was stewarding – He looked only for God's approval; He understood how critical it was to give His attention; He was perfectly patient; He was reassuring; He was truthful even about negative things; He was the example to emulate;

He took betrayal well; He prepared others for bad/surprising things to happen; He was honest about His feelings; He identified those who would betray Him to protect the others; He was concerned about others caring for each other; He went ahead to prepare the way; He knew others intimately; He was honest with others, especially when they trusted in themselves and not Him.

2. Because Jesus said that all the teaching of the law and prophets depended on the two commandments He quoted.
3. Love!
4. To love God and to love others.
5. Jesus stood on nothing else but the word of God; Jesus knew that God's word was the answer to every question and challenge; Jesus shared God's word even with those whose intentions were not sincere; Jesus spoke plainly and clearly; Jesus always spoke on the level of those who were listening; Jesus was able to summarize all God's teaching into two sentences!

Obey:

Consider what you need to know and do in order to put this command into practice. Answer the following questions that may help you apply the command:

1. What has God entrusted you with? List all sorts of things:

2. How are you investing what God has entrusted you with for the benefit of His kingdom?

3. Can you name at least one practical step you can take this week to be more like the two good servants in this parable?

Train:

If disciples only hear the truth from you, they will not retain much. But if you discuss it together, pray about it, come up with practical ways to implement it, and encourage them to teach others, they will REALLY learn and retain it.