

A Meditation on Stewardship

The Christian is responsible for his own personal capacities and abilities, the physical, mental, and spiritual gifts that enter into one's efforts toward responsible living and effective Christian services in the world. The Christian faith is wholistic and is therefore concerned with our bodily existence, our emotional and mental health, the use of our intelligence, our private and public conduct and the productive use of our natural and spiritual abilities.

Body. As a living soul, man is both body and spirit. Like other biological organism man's body is essential to life. His biological needs and functions that must be met include nourishment, exercise, rest, relaxation and sleep. The body is so vital to human existence that the biblical hope is for a future resurrection of a spiritual body before the redeemed enjoy the fullness of eternity (see 1 Cor. 15). The good steward will keep his physical organism functioning at peak efficiency through proper diet, exercise, rest and relaxation, adequate sleep, weight control, and intelligent health habits.

In urging care and discipline of the body, Paul calls the Christian's body the temple of God or of the Spirit (see Rom. 8:11). We are to glorify God in our bodies (see 1 Cor. 6:19-20) by presenting them as a living sacrifice to God (see Rom. 12:1)

Mind. The great commandment charges us to love God with the mind. The mind partly distinguishes man from other animals. It is integral to obeying God's command to manage the earth and to responding to the claims of the kingdom of God. The Christian should develop his intelligence to the limits of his own capacity and the opportunities available in his society. In a time of exploding scientific and technological knowledge, the Christian should utilize his intellectual gifts in the total pursuit of the knowledge that

enriches life. That should include Christian education. Knowledge should lead to the wisdom that enables human being to cope with the practical stuff of living, to know and do the will of God, to live as responsible steward.

Abilities. The steward's abilities fall into two categories corresponding with creation and redemption. We have natural abilities we are born with and develop in the maturing process. They may be intelligence, technological skills, musical or other artistic abilities, managerial qualities, personality, leadership gifts, manual abilities, or other skills. The Christian steward is responsible for discovering and developing his best aptitudes and abilities in ways that allow him through his vocation to make a maximum contribution to humanity and the present world, and not merely to make a living or to attain prominence or wealth.

The Christian also receives spiritual gifts that God confers on all members of the body of Christ (see 1 Cor. 12:4-6). His gift is essential to the healthy functioning of the church and is to be used in the internal life of the church and in the church's ministry and mission in the world (see 1 Cor. 12:7; Rom. 12:6). First Peter 4:10 specifically links the steward's role with the use of his spiritual gift in the life of the church and in service to the world.

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Question for meditation

Since whatever we have comes to us through the grace of God, what portion can we give back to God of our time, talent, and resources for God's purposes and mission?