

# LESSON 1

## Understanding Biblical Stewardship

### As a disciple, your attitudes toward finances and giving must be rooted in acknowledgment of Biblical truth.

Psalm 24 establishes that “the Earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it.” Your agreement with this statement depends on one simple thing: your belief that the Holy Scriptures, divinely revealed to its earthly authors and thus available to us today, is God-inspired, inerrant, living and active, eternal, and useful for teaching.<sup>1</sup>

Such belief defines the phrase “Biblical worldview.” Put simply, “Someone with a biblical worldview believes his primary reason for existence is to love and serve God.”<sup>2</sup> Only from this perspective, firmly established in both heart and mind, can we truly receive instruction and revelation as disciples of Jesus Christ. A Biblical worldview forms the basis of our acknowledgement of Truth, our adherence to it through obedience, and our celebration of it through worship.<sup>3</sup> And the fruit in our lives reveals how serious we are about all three.

Our first lesson explores what the Bible has to say about stewardship and how our response to Truth reveals our heart.



### Biblical worldview defines stewardship for the believer.

In general, “stewardship” involves the transfer of responsibility, to another by a trusting owner, of the management and development of the owner’s property, possessions, assets, and interests. Biblical stewardship, therefore, recognizes (a) that what we have, we’ve been given<sup>4</sup>, and (b) that the Giver expects and equips us to manage it well.<sup>5</sup>

God-honoring stewardship requires us to:

- Recognize Who owns title to all we have; everything belongs to God.<sup>6</sup>
- Acknowledge and count our blessings.<sup>7</sup>
- Understand that blessings flow through us at all times.<sup>8</sup>
- Pro-actively show that it is more blessed to give than receive.<sup>9</sup>



### Share specific examples from your lives, of how your worldview has impacted decisions you’ve made (financial or otherwise).

#### TEACHER’S NOTE:

The idea here is to get the group to dig a little and share life with others. Lead a discussion about how they arrived at their decisions, and how their behavior supports a Biblical perspective. A great sidebar question to explore here: “How often do you take God’s input & perspective into account when making decisions?”

#### SUGGESTED ANSWERS:

- Cars: used vs. new / buying vs. leasing
- The music their kids listen to

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- Sending their kids to a private Christian school
- How they spend their free time
- How they spend “extra” discretionary funds as they become available
- Supporting a third-world child (Compassion, WorldVision, adoption, etc.)
- Other answers...

### TEACHER SUMMARY:

Conclude this discussion by establishing the simple fact that our worldview defines what we value, and that what we value gets our time, attention, and money.

A Biblical worldview assures us that we need not debate our role as His stewards. Rather, the question becomes, “How do we know what to manage, plus how & when to do so?” Biblical stewardship encompasses time, talent, and resources (possessions & income).<sup>10</sup> As His disciples, we are responsible to:

- Discern the things of God<sup>11</sup>
- Manage the resources He reveals in a manner that honors Him.
- Disperse His blessings with purpose and expectation.<sup>12</sup>

### If we agree about stewardship, but have different financial priorities and resources, how we do support a specific, common objective?



### TEACHER'S NOTE:

Guide this discussion point toward the issue of humility and unity. When we come under the leadership/authority/guidance of others we bring honor to the Lord. As revealed in the two greatest commandments<sup>13</sup>, unity with others (loving them as ourselves) is second only to unity with the Lord (loving Him fully).

### SUGGESTED ANSWERS:

- By submitting to the vision as presented by our leadership
- By esteeming others higher than ourselves<sup>14</sup>
- By outdoing one another in zeal for Christ<sup>15</sup>
- By serving! Step into roles of gifting (those known and those emerging) and volunteer readily.
- Other answers...

### TEACHER SUMMARY:

Re-assert to your group or class that unity in the campaign effort will only come about when each participant commits to the specific role(s) that they alone can fulfill as a uniquely gifted member of the Body of Christ.<sup>16</sup> This kind of fruit naturally emerges from individuals who adhere to a strong Biblical worldview.

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### Our response to Biblical truth about stewardship reveals our heart.

“Understanding,” the wise man tells us, “is a fountain of life to those who have it.”<sup>17</sup> When we humbly grant the searchlight of the Holy Spirit full access to our lives, we gain understanding about how things really are, not how we’ve convinced ourselves they are, or want them to be. How we respond to Biblical truth:

- Shows our priorities.<sup>18</sup>
- Reveals whether something exerts control over your life that should not have that power (i.e. idols).
- Indicates obsessions (excessive pre-occupations) and/or materialism and exposes our distractions - particularly things we covet.

Functioning as productive, trustworthy stewards of the King’s resources requires us to yield to His leading as well as His discipline and instruction. Because there are consequences to our decisions and actions, our current spiritual state is a reliable barometer of our ability to exercise wisdom and restraint.

- The widow who gave all was fully committed to her gift and completely unconcerned with others’ impressions.<sup>19</sup>
- We reap what we sow; are we paying attention to the seed, and to the soil?<sup>20</sup>

It does not take lengthy self-assessment to admit that as individuals, households, churches, companies, non-profits, governments, etc., we have room to improve in how we manage His resources. We are entrusted with much.<sup>21</sup> Not if, but when, we have fallen short (sin), then bearing the “fruit in keeping with repentance”<sup>22</sup> means that something has to change, outwardly and with effect.



### What does God expect of us? (in general, and in specific to this campaign)

#### TEACHER’S NOTE:

This last point helps to set the tone for the remaining three lessons – and for the campaign as a whole! Strive to convey this question in terms of the privilege of involvement, not as an obligation under perceived pressure. Move from “general” to “specific” as you engage your participants. A helpful analogy is to guide them along the lines of parenting: what do earthly parents expect of their children? How much more blessing follows - both financial and otherwise - when we please the Lord in our role as His children?<sup>23</sup>

#### SUGGESTED ANSWERS:

- Non-\$ oriented answers first: repentance; fear of the Lord; obedience; humility; pursuit; holiness; prayerfulness; surrender; thankfulness.
- \$-wise in general: generosity & kindness; awareness; willingness; sacrifice.
- Campaign-specific: prayerfulness! anticipation of sacrificial offerings; a servant’s heart.

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**TEACHER SUMMARY:**

The ideal way to conclude this discussion point is to take a moment to cement it in prayer; you may lead it, or ask a faith-filled participant whom you trust, to do so. You will still need to discuss the “DO!” section below, so this is not meant to suggest a class-ending time of prayer. Rather, a prayer of commitment at this time will help to prompt a sensitivity to this question in the hearts of your participants.

**PERSONAL / HOUSEHOLD APPLICATION**



**DISCUSS** How do you/your family look at money & giving? Where is your treasure? Be honest and humble.

**DECIDE** What changes will you make to pursue a life of holiness and obedience?

**DO!** Repent and re-commit the fullness of your resources to His purposes. Set specific goals with respect to prayer, serving, and participation.

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1	2 Tim 3:16	15	Rom 12:10
2	Tackett, Del. Focus on the Family online article, <a href="#">“What’s a Christian Worldview?”</a>	16	1 Cor 12
		17	Prov. 16:22
3	John 14:6 (NIV reference?)	18	Matt 6:21
4	James 1:17	19	Luke 21:1-4
5	Luke 12:48b	20	Gal 6:7, Hos 10:12
6	Psalm 50:10, 8:6	21	Luke 12:48
7	Matt 6:31-33	22	Matt 3:8
8	Ecc 5:19, 1 Chron 29: 10-14	23	Matt 7:11
9	Acts 20:35		
10	Eph 5:15-17, Matt 25:14-30, Luke 16:1-13		
11	Eph 1:9		
12	Prov 21:20, 3: 9-10		
13	Luke 10:27		
14	Phil 2:3		