

LESSON 1

Understanding Biblical Stewardship

As disciples of Jesus, Biblical truth must define our attitudes toward money, giving, and managing what we've been given.

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.ⁱ

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.”ⁱⁱ 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.ⁱⁱⁱ 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.



KEY CONCEPT: 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,^{iv} and (b) that the Giver expects and equips us to manage it well.^v

God-honoring stewardship requires us to:

- Recognize Who owns title to all we have; everything belongs to God.^{xi}
- Acknowledge and count our blessings.^{vii}
- Understand that blessings flow through us at all times.^{viii}
- Pro-actively show that it is more blessed to give than receive.^{ix}



DISCUSSION: What other worldviews do you encounter in today’s culture?

LEADER’S NOTE: Ensure the term “worldview” is understood by your group; otherwise, the replies may veer off course. Some answers may tend toward alternate religions or belief systems; others may focus on secular psychology or humanistic perspectives.

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DISCUSSION: How do/don't they reflect Biblical principles with respect to money, financial priorities, and the value of people over things?

LEADER'S NOTE: Point out that lots of people they know, who don't know Christ, are generous and kind. But when their "goodness" is rooted in themselves, it cannot be sustained nor are their motives necessarily aligned with the Father's. As a result, their behaviors will serve others only until their own comfort, convenience, self-interest or self-preservation is jeopardized.

Conclude this discussion by establishing the simple fact that the worldview we hold will define what we value, and that what we value gets our time, attention, and money. When our point of view differs from God's, we cannot honor Him with our decisions and behaviors.

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).^x As His disciples, we are responsible to:

- Discern the things of God^{xi}
- Manage the resources He reveals in a manner that honors Him.
- Disperse His blessings with purpose and expectation.^{xii}

KEY CONCEPT: Assume we all agree that God is the source of what we have, and that He desires (requires!) us to work together to be good stewards. If we have different financial priorities and resources, how we do support a specific, common objective?

LEADER'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^{xiii} 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^{xiv}
- By outdoing one another in zeal for Christ^{xv}
- By serving! Step into roles of gifting (those known and those emerging) and volunteer readily.
- Other answers...

LEADER SUMMARY: Re-assert to your class that unity in the church-wide 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.^{xvi} This kind of fruit will only emerge from individuals who adhere to a strong Biblical worldview.

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KEY CONCEPT: 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.”^{xvii} 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.^{xviii}
- 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.^{xix}
- We reap what we sow; are we paying attention to the seed, and to the soil?^{xx}

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.^{xxi} Not if, but when, we have fallen short (sin), then bearing the “fruit in keeping with repentance”^{xxii} means that something has to change, outwardly and with effect.



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

LEADER’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 their earthly parents expect of them? How do they respond to the honor you show them, by compliance with their priorities? How much more blessing follows when we please the Lord by fulfilling our unique roles as His children?^{xxiii}

SUGGESTED ANSWERS:

- Non-\$ oriented answers first: repentance; fear of the Lord; obedience, humility; pursuit; holiness; prayerfulness; surrender; thankfulness.

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- \$-wise in general: generosity & kindness; awareness; willingness; sacrifice.
- Campaign-specific: prayerfulness! anticipation of sacrificial offerings; a servant's heart

LEADER 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. A prayer of commitment at this time will help to prompt a sensitivity to this question in the hearts of your youth.



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.

i	2 Tim 3:16	xii	Prov 21:20, 3: 9-10
ii	Tackett, Del. Focus on the Family online article, "What's a Christian Worldview?"	xiii	Luke 10:27
iii	John 14:6 (NIV reference?)	xiv	Phil 2:3
iv	James 1:17	xv	Rom 12:10
v	Luke 12:48b	xvi	1 Cor 12
vi	Psalm 50:10, 8:6	xvii	Prov. 16:22
vii	Matt 6:31-33	xviii	Matt 6:21
viii	Ecc 5:19, 1 Chron 29: 10-14	xix	Luke 21:1-4
ix	Acts 20:35	xx	Gal 6:7, Hos 10:12
x	Eph 5:15-17, Matt 25:14-30, Luke 16:1-13	wxxi	Luke 12:48
xi	Eph 1:9	xxii	Matt 3:8
		xxiii	Matt 7:11