

Stewardship is Lordship

We have been in a long series and I know we are scheduled to go back into the series we started in the spring entitled: “So you want to be a Christian,” however I want to take a week and talk to you as a pastor for a weekend. There are times when a pastor sees things and feels things that need to be shared. One of the descriptions used throughout the Bible to describe pastors is the term shepherd.

It is in that spirit that I offer this teaching today. A true shepherd has a heart of compassion for his flock.

*And I will give you **shepherds** after my own heart, who will guide you with knowledge and understanding.* Jeremiah 3:15 NLT

Sadly throughout the Bible we also read that often the shepherds did not do the job that God gave them to do. Because of that we find passages like this:

*For the leaders of my people— the Lord’s watchmen, His **shepherds**— are blind and ignorant. They are like silent watchdogs that give no warning when danger comes. They love to lie around, sleeping and dreaming.* Isaiah 56:10 NLT

*The **shepherds** of My people have lost their senses. They no longer seek wisdom from the Lord. Therefore, they fail completely, and their flocks are scattered.* Jeremiah 10:21 NLT

By God’s grace I don’t want to be a shepherd that holds back or neglects to sometimes just lay it out as straight and as clear as possible.

I have had a growing sense that we are long overdue for a sermon or teaching on stewardship. Right away some of you will hear that word and think money but stewardship is about much more than money. In fact there are three areas that I am deeply concerned about for us as a church. I am concerned about you and hope that you will take these words seriously and think about them in regards to your life.

It is my prayer that God will use these next few minutes and speak deep into our hearts and lives. I don’t for a minute believe that one sermon is going to necessarily turn everyone’s world upside down or right side up but I do hope to be helpful for some of you that may have ears to hear and hearts that are receptive.

Here are the areas that I want to highlight today. We are to be stewards over these areas of our lives.

God: Our faith Family: Our families Church: Our finances

Our faith

“Our faith” can include a lot of things but I want to focus on the core of our faith in Christ. Being “saved” or born again means radical life change. We are admonished in Hebrews to:

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for He is faithful that promised;)
Hebrews 10:23 KJV

Being a Christian will mean that you act like one. This entire year I have tried to shape and share messages that target this topic. After today I am going back to more topics about what it means to be a Christian.

Have you ever wondered why I might be doing that?

It’s an odd job I suppose but in the long run a true Shepherd/pastor is called to evaluate the flock of God. That’s a fancy name for the church. It is my calling and responsibility to be vigilant and attentive to those who take the name of Christ and represent Him with their lives.

I am calling for us today to examine our faith in Christ. I am asking you to evaluate your life and the things you do as well as what you don’t do.

Sometimes we are like the Kamikaze pilot who flew fifty missions. (think about that) You make a commitment to start, but then don't carry through? Have you found that making commitments is a whole lot easier than keeping them? Promises are easily made -- to God, to family, to ourselves. In fact, we all could be better members of 'Promisemakers' -than 'Promisekeepers.

Have you had daily time alone with God?

Have you been faithful in reading and studying the word of God?

When is the last time you memorized a scripture?

Have you been faithful to live honestly in your dealings with others and the government?

Are you practicing and honoring the Sabbath to keep in holy?

Have you shared your faith with someone else and pointed them to Christ as the answer?

Is there anyone you are holding a grudge against?

Have you spread falsehoods about another -- slander?

Have you repeated hurtful truth about another --gossip?

Do you have any unmade restitutions?

Have your thoughts been pure and free from lust?

How much time have you wasted watching TV?

Have you seen questionable movies, magazines, or videos?

Have you been fully submissive to authority?

Who is it that you are tempted to envy, or be jealous of?

Is there any believer with whom you are out of harmony?

Who are you discipling and mentoring? How?

Was there a time when your love for God was stronger?

How have you attempted to make peace between others?

Have you taken anything not belonging to you, large or small?
What sexual sin have you been most tempted to commit?
Are you doing something in your life that may be a stumbling block to others?
Have you avoided outbursts of anger or rage?
Are you inclined to be boastful?
Have you been tempted to give up? How? Why?
Have you avoided fighting, quarreling, dissension, and factions?
Have you practiced the self-discipline of patience?
Have you avoided obscenity, foolish talk, and coarse jokes?
When was the last time you exercised self-denial by fasting?
Have you exaggerated or lied about anything?
What spiritual growth books have you read in order to deepen your faith?
Have you had a critical spirit toward others?
Is there hate, malice, or ill will in your heart for anyone anywhere?
Is there any sin, inward or outward, which has dominion over you so that you are habitually falling in this area?

Our families

These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. ⁷ Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. Deuteronomy 6:6-9 NLT

“And anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf is welcoming me. ⁶ But if you cause one of these little ones who trusts in me to fall into sin, it would be better for you to have a large millstone tied around your neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea. Matthew 18:6 NLT

Our families are one of our biggest responsibilities. This is not just about children; the Bible talks much about our responsibilities toward our spouses and parents as well. Now if you are here and are single don't you dare check out on this one. We practice family ministry in this church and that means there is a place for everyone to affect and influence the children and youth of our church family.

Again let me give you some personal questions for reflection.

Have your thoughts been pure and free from lust?
Have you courted your spouse on a regular basis?
Do you have a daily time set aside to talk to and listen to your spouse?
Is there any emotional attachment with someone of the opposite sex that could develop dangerously?

Have you given unselfishly to your spouse's needs?
Are there any unresolved conflicts with your husband or wife?
How often have you had family prayer time?
How much time have you spent with your children? Doing what?
Are you discipling your child? Spouse? How? When?
How are you improving in your relationship with your husband or wife?
When did you last give a thoughtful gift to your mate?
In what special ways have you shown love to your mate?
How have you shown submission and respect to your husband?
How have you shown love and tenderness to your wife?
Have you taught your children that the body of Christ is more important than sports or other activities?
Have you prioritized church and serving others in your life so that those you are responsible for are learning to serve as well?
Do you encourage your children to trust Christ and serve Him with no reservations?
Have you allowed your family to participate in entertainment that is questionable from a Biblical perspective?
Have you made your family or those you are responsible for a priority in your life?

Our finances

Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. ⁶ Seek His will in all you do, and He will show you which path to take.

⁷ *Don't be impressed with your own wisdom. Instead, fear the LORD and turn away from evil.*

⁸ *Then you will have healing for your body and strength for your bones.*

⁹ *Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the best part of everything you produce. ¹⁰ Then he will fill your barns with grain, and your vats will overflow with good wine.* Proverbs 3:5-10 NLT

How have you given to the needy or helped to alleviate someone's suffering?
Are you avoiding unnecessary debt?
How are you avoiding materialism?
How have you expressed thanksgiving to God and others?
Have you spent money you really didn't have on things you really didn't need?
Have you abused your financial power over others?
Have you deceitfully manipulated people for your own benefit?
Have you been guilty of worry, anxiety, or distrust of God for all your needs?
In what ways have you shown brotherly kindness with your resources?
Have you taken anything not belonging to you, large or small?
Have you selfish ambition? How pure is your desire to achieve?
How have you cared for the needy with your resources?
To whom did you show Christ's love this week with your resources?

With whom do you intentionally rub shoulders with to remind you that the rest of the world does not have what we have?

Are you a generous person?

What does your check register suggest that you worship?

Do you faithfully set aside a tenth of your income to support the work of Christ especially in your local church?

Have you tithed on a regular basis?

Biblical principle

There are scriptures all throughout the Bible talking very openly about how God blesses those who give back to Him and honor Him first before they spend on themselves.

Genesis 28:20-22:

Malachi 3:6-12:

Historical precedent

Tithing has been practiced since the beginning of the written history of our world. Adam and Eve's son's were practicing it and in fact we ought to learn a lesson from the practice of early disobedience from them.

Randy Alcorn: "As a New Testament follower of Christ, in the most affluent society in human history, there's no way I could ever justify giving less than 10 percent when God has required that, really, of the poorest Israelite."

You know what God blesses? It's not the rich giving big amounts that aren't a sacrifice; He blesses those that don't have it to give who give it by faith and then stand back and watch God do the rest. Dare you trust Him that much?

Financial promise

The focus of Biblical tithing is on what you can do, out of a grateful heart, to serve God, not on what you can get out of it.

I remember several years ago when a couple in our church made the decision to start tithing. They are young and I am sure it seemed like an unbelievable amount of money to write a check for. I can't go into the details of their lives but God has watched over them and in fact they continue to give above and beyond and God keeps trusting them with more.

So there you go. Three areas that I think God wants to do more in us than we could ever imagine.

Guard your faith.

Guide your family.

Give your first finances back to God.

Test yourselves to make sure you are solid in the faith. Don't drift along taking everything for granted. Give yourselves regular check-ups. You need firsthand evidence, not mere hearsay that Jesus Christ is in you. Test it out. If you fail the test, do something about it. . ." 2 Corinthians 13:5-6 The Message

Warren Wiersbe tells about the time the late William Randolph Hearst sent out his agent to secure particular art pieces. After months of searching, the agent reported that he had finally found the treasures. They were in Mr. Hearst's warehouse. Hearst had been searching frantically for art pieces he already owned.

Most of us have looked elsewhere before we decided on God. And we've already tried hard since coming to God, and we're just tired. Paul's encouragement to us is that we take a spiritual inventory, and that we ask God to show us what we already have from Him.

How are you doing in these areas we talked about today?

Is there anything God has spoken to you about today?

Is there something that you need to talk to God about today?

Is there something more that you think you ought to be doing for Him?

Do you think it might just be possible that you need to deepen your faith, fight for your family or trust God with your finances?

Prayer:

Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

Oh, give me back my joy again; you have broken me—now let me rejoice.

Don't keep looking at my sins. Remove the stain of my guilt.

Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me.

Do not banish me from your presence, and don't take your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you. Psalm 51:7-13 NLT