

TAKEAWAY:

God owns everything, and we are called to be faithful stewards of His resources—our time, talents, possessions, and opportunities. Stewardship is not just about money; it's a holistic mindset that shifts us from ownership to management for God's purposes. Faithfulness and fruitfulness go hand in hand: we honor God by using what He has entrusted to us for kingdom impact, spiritual growth, and the good of others.

INTRODUCTION QUESTIONS:

- When you think of "stewardship," what comes to mind? Is it more categorical (money, ministry, possessions, etc.) or wholistic (the larger picture of life)?
- Give an example of a time when you have struggled with holding on to something in your life.

UNDERSTANDING:

Have a group member read Psalm 24:1-2, 1 Chronicles 29:10-14 and Matthew 25:14-30

- How did this sermon help you better understand these passages of scripture? Is there anything that was mentioned during the sermon that stuck out to you?
- What does it mean to say "God owns everything"? How might this shift our daily mindset?
- In the Parable of the Talents, what separates the faithful servants from the unfaithful one?
- In what ways does this parable push us to move beyond a mere numerical or material understanding of stewardship to one that encompasses spiritual growth, kingdom impact, and intentionality in using our gifts for God's purposes?

APPLICATION:

- What is one area of life where it is hard for you to remember that God is the owner?
- How can you practice gratitude this week as a steward of God's gifts?
- What specific talents are currently "buried" within our group and what is one specific action we can take in the next month to multiply those talents through discipleship and evangelism efforts?

GO DEEPER:

The Go Deeper section has two potential functions. It can supplement your small group discussion by providing extra discussion material. You can also use these sections as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting and to deepen your study of stewardship.

- **From Ownership Mentality to Stewardship Mentality:** Psalm 24:1 reminds us that "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it."
 - How does Ps 24:1 inform the Christian's responsibility regarding environmental stewardship and social justice (caring for the poor, marginalized, and the world itself)? If God truly owns it all,

how should that truth practically change the way you approach financial planning (saving, spending, giving) and the way you view your career/vocation?

- Read Gen 1:1-31 (pay particular attention to vv. 26-28); Gen 3:1-24 (pay particular attention to vv. 1-7); 2 Cor 5:18-6:10 (pay particular attention to vv. 5:18-20; 6:1-2).
- God calls Adam and Eve to steward God's creation. Discuss God's creation mandate to Adam & Eve and how they failed in this regard. How is this mandate redeemed in Christ? Paul encourages the Christian to co-labor with God; what does this look like?
- How does moving from a mindset of "ownership" (where we feel entitled to use our resources however we want) to a mindset of "stewardship" (where we manage God's resources for His purposes) change your perspective on your daily decisions, especially regarding your finances, time, and career? Apply these questions to the principle of giving and especially to this idea: "I gave God my tenth; I can spend the rest as I desire provided it is not toward sinful activities."

- **Defining "Fruitful Return":** The first two servants in Matthew 25 were praised for generating a "fruitful return" on the master's investment.
 - Read 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; Luke 16:10-13
 - Paul describes the work of an apostle as being a "steward." The Greek for this term is *oikonomos* (οἰκονόμος) which can also be translated "the manager of a household." While the office of an apostle is unique in the New Testament, the idea that followers of Jesus are to be stewards or managers is certainly applicable. According to Paul, what is the primary requirement of a "manager of the mysteries of God"? What do you think Paul means by "the mysteries of God"? (see Ephesians 3:3-6)
 - How could faithfulness as a "manager of the mysteries of God" lead to fruitfulness in ministry?
 - What does Jesus have to say about our faithfulness in smaller things in Luke 16, and how does that offer insight into a person's character? What role does integrity play in fruitfulness according to Jesus?
 - Why are faithfulness and fruitfulness consistently connected throughout the Scriptures?
 - In practical terms (family, work, community), what does "fruitfulness" or "return on investment" look like in your life as a steward? How do you ensure your management of God's gifts brings glory to Him and benefits others, rather than just accumulating for personal comfort?
- **Quotes:**
 - Our role as stewards not owners: "For all things belong to the Lord, and we are but stewards; let us therefore use them as belonging to another, not as our own" (John Chrysostom)
 - The danger of being owned by your talents: "Whatever you possess, that very thing possesses you" (Augustine of Hippo).
 - Talents for the common good: "Man should not consider his material possessions as his own, but as common to all, so as to share them without hesitation when others are in need" (Thomas Aquinas). Extrapolate this idea to your time, gifts, etc.
 - John Wesley's three-part maxim of Christian economics: "Gain all you can, save all you can, and give all you can."
 - Self-stewardship vs. God's lordship over our lives: "The true Christian is a man who has ceased to think of himself as his own and has in principle handed over the management of himself to God" (J. I. Packer).

PRAYER:

Pray for renewed awareness that everything belongs to God, and ask for wisdom to use each gift faithfully.

