

Stewardship

When God created humans, He made them to have dominion over all of the earth (Gen 1:26). Dominion was not intended to be domination or exploitation. Dominion is God's call for man (human beings) to be good and gracious managers of His creation, not selfishly seeing the world as a means to their own self-centered ends. The things of the world come to be seen as possessions by those who see themselves as owners, not as stewards. But He desires people to see Him as Sovereign of all things which He gives to men as *stewards*, not owners. He does not want possessors with selfish pursuits, but managers of His creation, as Acts 2:44-45 and 4:32.

They shared *all things in common* (Acts 4:32). The reason Acts 5:1-2 was so serious was that self had dominion over their own possessions, which they did not make common to all. They were to be stewards, not owners. Acts 5:4 — The land was their *own possession*, but after it was turned into money it was under their stewardship. It was not still owned, but put into their stewardship to give as they saw fit, which normally was as Acts 4:35 — making the apostles stewards of it (Acts 4:35-37; Lk 21:2-4). Lying and covetousness was their sin, exposing the attitude (Phil 2:2-5) of the first church member. Was that *all* their own possessions, as Lk 14:33? Did they see *none* of it as their own, as Acts 4:32? “All” is what comes from the love of Rom 5:5. That is why the sin of selfishness — self-love — was so great in Acts 5:1-11, as demonstrated by the Pilgrims in Plymouth.

Stewards of a *ship* are the ones who utilize and manage all the resources which are provided for the betterment of the ship. They have dominion over all the vital aspects of the ship, each in his own special gift and work, having authority over each and every aspect of the ship. They are good and gracious managers of the whole entire ship, not in selfish pursuit of their own self-centered ends, but seeing themselves only as custodians

and teachers (in their own special expertise) of all who come aboard, especially youth to be apprenticed on board.

This stewardship calls for absolute commitment to the good and goals of the ship. Of course, just one irresponsible, worthless steward can bring the whole effort down. So each one must be wholly devoted to the ship's Captain, who is Messiah. This means single-minded commitment to Him. So to be a *steward*, the concept of the word is one's commitment to the ultimate goal of the ship and the authority of Messiah, which requires all one's time, talents, gifts, and endeavors. If one is married, *both* are obligated to see the final goal reached. As one embarks on a journey across the ocean, the goal is to reach the other shore.

Stewardship is utilizing and managing all resources for the glory of our Master and His ship. For its upkeep and betterment, a steward is a manager, as one who manages an estate, to control the movement, to have charge of and direct a team of managers, to succeed in accomplishing the goal, to carry out His business (Lk 19:13), that the pleasure of Yahweh would prosper in His hand (Isa 53:10). Management means being hands-on directors of every movement of the ship.

Stewards are those put in charge of a large estate, as administrators of God's property, as those responsible for the good, the safekeeping of everything, including food and drink, cleanliness, keeping everything shipshape (Lk 12:42-48; 16:2,8; Tit 1:7; 1 Cor 4:1-2; 1 Pet 4:10; 1 Cor 9:17).

A *steward* (#3523) is one who manages the affairs of the *ship*, who administers all its needs, upkeep, tidiness (1 Cor 4:1; 1 Pet 4:10; Tit 1:7). A steward is one who manages a house and is accountable to the owner. It is a responsibility for which he is held accountable (1 Cor 4:2). *Servants* in 1 Cor 4:1 had no unique position, but *stewards* did. A steward was a servant who administered all the affairs of his master's household, though he himself owned nothing, as Joseph in Gen 39:2-19.

Apostles manage the message and ministry God has entrusted to them, and each one's praise comes from God (1 Cor 4:3-5). A steward was not to worry about the evaluation of those around him, or even his own self-assessment. He needed only to please his master, who is the ultimate judge. Stewards make no pre-mature evaluation of others; they serve their master, but encourage other stewards (Pr 17:17) as brothers allied in the same purpose.