

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church  
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Stewardship: Understanding It's All God's  
Luke 14:16-24  
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## INTRODUCTION

We are all stewards of many things. Stewardship is involved in everything we do. If something is entrusted to you, you are the steward of that. If you've been asked to be the executor of an estate, you are the steward of that person's property, working for the person who's asked you. As a job, a steward is one who works as a liaison between the Union and workers, doing what's best for both sides. Flight attendants used to be called stewardesses. Originally the word stewardship was used for the food buyer of castles. The word steward comes from the word housekeeper. Eventually, in Europe, the stewardship role of food buyer for a castle grew to become the caretaker of the castle. So, stewardship involves the planning and managing of resources. One of the most common uses of the term today is environmental stewardship.

## SCRIPTURE Luke 14:16-23

<sup>16</sup> *Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. <sup>17</sup> At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' <sup>18</sup> "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.' <sup>19</sup> "Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.' <sup>20</sup> "Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.' <sup>21</sup> "The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.' <sup>22</sup> "'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room. <sup>23</sup> "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. <sup>24</sup> I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'"*

# **1-THE FIRST PERSON MISSED THE BANQUET BECAUSE HE HAD PLANS THAT GOT IN THE WAY.**

## **EXPLANATION**

In this parable, we have three excuse-givers. One used his land as an excuse to not come to the banquet. Another used his cattle, and another used the fact that he just got married.

The first person missed the banquet because he had other plans. No one buys land without plans. No one buys land without having already checked it out. This man already knew what it looked like, but he said he had to go see it now. What was the man actually going to do? Was the man actually going to check out the land that he just bought and already knew about, or was he going there to walk his property and think about his plan?

People buy land for different reasons. People buy land for investment purposes, recreation purposes. People buy land to grow crops, to have cattle, to build buildings. Some people buy land just hoping to sell it for a profit later on, but anyone who buys land has plans for it.

The first excuse giver had to go see his property. In looking at his plans and considering his plans, he completely missed out on a fantastic banquet. All our plans should be the Lord's, and they should not be so inflexible that we miss out on the banquet that God has for us.

## **ILLUSTRATION**

I read about a pastor who was excited to retire after many years in the ministry. He went to a hospital to visit a man and found out that the man's recovery was going to take several months. The sick man said he just didn't know how he was going to make ends meet. The retired pastor said, "How can I help?" The sick man jokingly said, "Hey, you could go work my job for me." But the retired pastor went to the grocery where this man worked in the seafood department and said, "Can I work in this man's place? I'm retired. I have an income; just pay him as you normally would." To the surprise of the retired pastor, the grocery store manager said, "Okay,

if you can start now because I need somebody.” So, this retired pastor got a crash course in seafood.

He thought he was retired from the ministry, and he thought he was just helping a sick man, but what that retired pastor didn't know is that the seafood department was going to become the pastoral care department of the grocery store. After his sick friend got better, the pastor asked to keep working part-time at the store only because of the ministry opportunities he encountered there. The pastor's plans were one thing, but God led the man to plans that would accomplish God's will.

In the summer of 1986, I was a hungry college student. I was at the Baptist Student Union of the University of Tennessee. I decided to go to summer school to get ahead in school, and I wanted to get a cheap meal. They had a cheap meal for a dollar, and while I was there, the director of the Baptist Student Union said that a church about 20 miles away called, and they needed a summer youth worker. He was asked to announce to the small crowd that if anybody wanted to be a summer youth worker to see him afterwards. My plans were to just go get an inexpensive meal, and just when I thought it was safe, after I had that sandwich, God called me to a summer job, which turned into a permanent part-time job, through which God gave me this life calling.

In this story, the person who went to check out his land missed out on the great banquet because he was inflexible with his plans. Think about it, the land would have been there the day after the banquet.

## **APPLICATION**

Are you flexible with your plans, or do you miss out on blessings because you have to work your to-do list? I used to hear of the idea of God's will being a set of blueprints for our lives and that if we didn't find those blueprints, if we missed them in some way, we might miss out on something, and we might be out of sync with God's will for the rest of our lives. As I've come to understand this, you've heard me use the word journey before, God's will for our lives is a journey. God's will for our lives is not a set of blueprints where we can look at the whole finished product. It's a journey, and sometimes it's difficult or impossible to see past the hill in front of us, but when we stay on the road, and we stay on the journey, we'll eventually reach that hill. Then we'll see over the hill to see what God has for us

next. The journey that we're on has to be flexible because God has a way of changing our plans.

A man told me once that he was afraid to give his plans to God. He had a fear that God would wreck his plans if he surrendered them to God, and who knows? If he was making evil plans, then maybe God would have wrecked his plans, but if you give your plans to God, God will make those plans bigger and better and more satisfying than if you kept them for yourself. In the Bible, God says, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11) The Bible also says, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." (Jeremiah 29:13) Let's not miss out on God's great banquet because our lives are so inflexible with our own plans.

## **2-THE SECOND PERSON MISSED THE BANQUET BECAUSE HE HAD BELONGINGS THAT GOT IN THE WAY.**

**SCRIPTURE** Luke 14:19

*<sup>19</sup> "Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.'*

### **EXPLANATION**

The second person missed out on the banquet because he had belongings that got in the way. Think about it. Nobody buys cattle without having seen them first, especially in this day when oxen had to be strong enough to plow and pull. So, surely the man had already checked out the cattle. He would have been unwise to spend money blindly on oxen that he'd not seen. I want you to think of cattle as belongings, things, stuff. Not only should we give our plans to the master, we should give our belongings to him. After all, he already owns them.

In Acts chapter 5, we have the story of Ananias and Sapphira who sold a possession, and they came to give the money to the apostles. They lied about it and kept the money for themselves, and it happens to be that this possession was land. When Peter confronted them about this, they both fell over dead. They didn't understand the principle that their possession was God's.

## ILLUSTRATION

All of your belongings really do belong to God. He's just loaning them to you. He's just allowing you to be the steward of those things for a little while.

There's a famous radio talk-show host that talks about how he has talent on loan from God, and if you hear him you may or may not agree, but I like the statement. In reality, all we have is God's. He's just letting us have them for a temporary period of time, and when we're gone, he'll pass those on to someone else.

The Bible talks about the first fruits being given to God. The idea of first fruits is that we give to God the first of what we earn. I've always given regularly. I've always tithed through the churches of which I'm a member. As a boy, my parents gave me a quarter every Sunday to put in the little offering envelope. My brothers and sisters also got a quarter to put in the offering envelope. The idea behind this worked because when I started earning my own money from mowing grass and cleaning out garages and all the other odd jobs that I did as a young teenager, I automatically began giving from that amount.

My daughter attends UT Chattanooga. She went to her church a few Sundays ago where the pastor spoke about giving, and he said that studies are showing that people in their 20s and 30s just don't give like people that are older. She said, "I'm so glad you gave me that quarter when I was a child because this is just another area that I don't have to struggle in." So, the quarter that my parents gave me worked. The quarter that we gave our daughter worked because it helped condition our minds to the reality that 10% is the Lord's. Ten percent is the easiest of all percentages to figure.

I've heard theological discussions on why the tithe was set at 10 percent. We can look at it theologically from a bunch of different points of view, but I think it's just because it's simple. Ten percent of 27 is 2.7. Ten percent of a thousand is 100. My dad taught me how to estimate things based on 10 percent. I think it was two weeks ago, our staff looked at the budget for the next year, and we were going through the budget line-item by line-item. Since we had the totals of the previous ten months, it was easy to estimate the cost for the next two months of doing business by taking 10 percent and multiplying it by 2 for the remaining two months. Now, did I

completely confuse you? Probably, but when you grow up in a preacher's family you learn how to think in tithes.

What if the Old Testament laws required 9.87 % or 11.65%, we might have a lot of confusion on our hands.

## **APPLICATION**

Back to the man's cattle, he missed the banquet and blamed it on his cattle. The cattle would have been there the next day. He could have gone to check on his cattle and then come back to the banquet. I mean, what did he do? Did he go spend the night with his cattle? Did they need a bedtime story? What was the big deal here? Really, he just needed an excuse, and he came up with the first lame excuse he could come up with to avoid the banquet. Let's not miss out on God's banquet for life because we are so focused on our belongings, our things, our stuff, because let's remember it's his anyway. He can take it from us just like that; let's be good stewards of what he's given us, and let us give regularly to support the needs of the church.

## **3-THE THIRD PERSON MISSED THE BANQUET BECAUSE HE LET A RELATIONSHIP GET IN THE WAY.**

**SCRIPTURE** Luke 14:20

<sup>20</sup> *“Still another said, ‘I just got married, so I can’t come.’*

## **EXPLANATION**

The third person missed the banquet because he just got married. He must have been a newlywed. I wonder if he went home and told his bride that he turned down the banquet marriage? This represents relationships. All relationships are God's. Any relationship we have with somebody needs to be surrendered to God. In this story, the man blames his wife. Do you see the irony here? How many wives do not want to go to a nice dinner? The man's wife would not have to cook. She would not have to serve the table. She would not have to clean up. A great master, having such a fantastic banquet, would have had more food and wonderful dessert and probably

entertainment. If this man went home and told his wife this, he probably had to cook his own supper that night. He was a poor steward to his wife because he kept her from meeting the master and enjoying his generosity.

Marriage represents the highest possible relationship. All of your relationships belong to God, the heavenly master. Human relationships are a part of the everyday fabric of life. It's not possible to live without relationships.

## **ILLUSTRATION**

Two and a half years ago I was tasked by my office to go sit on a board, a panel, for a week and interact with people that I had not met, to make decisions. I remember thinking on the way, "I'm not going to make any friends at this event. I don't want to talk to anybody at this event. I have so many things going on right now in my job and in life, the last thing I need is more friends." You know, I made friends during that week, and some of those people contacted me within the last couple of months and said, "You've been on my mind. What's going on? I've been praying for you." Isn't that wonderful?

Your family, your co-workers, the man or the woman in the convenience market, God knows how you interact with them. When the price of gas reached \$4 a gallon, I stood in line for my gas, and I heard all these people complaining. I wanted to complain too. I saw the look on the convenience store worker, and I said, "Thank God for this \$4 gallon of gas because it's still better than walking," and that guy looked up. He said, "You are the first person to say anything like that." I thought, "Yeah. I'll probably be the last," and I really didn't mean it. But he said, "Everyone is blaming me for the price of gas, and I have absolutely nothing to do with it," and he smiled and said, "I think this is the first time I smiled all day."

## **APPLICATION**

Inconsequential, or at least the appearance of inconsequential, relationships that you have every day are put there for some reason. You may have the ability to help someone have a better day. You may be the only person that shares the love of Christ to someone working one of these jobs or any job. Are you a good steward of the kind word that the master might have you to say on his behalf?

Let's go a little deeper. How about work? Do you realize that God has you on mission in the relationships with your co-workers or with your customers? You cannot divide your Christian life from your work life. You just can't divide it. It's one and the same. I was on a plane one time, and I heard this woman say in front of me, "Oh, yes, I believe in God, but he's not welcome at my work."

There may be times at work where you have to be assertive. There may be times when you get frustrated, but don't lose sight of your witness. If you've blown it, ask for forgiveness. Are you a good steward of Christian conduct with those that you interact with on a regular basis? How about your family? Are you one way at church and another way at home?

Several years ago, a teenage girl wanted to talk with me about her dad. She said, "He's a fake because at church he's one way, and he gives and he supports these things, but at home he's a different person. He talks to us terribly. He talks to mom. He degrades us. He puts us down. He's a fake."

Those were such hurting words to hear a teenage girl say. It's important to be good stewards of the relationships God has put in our lives. It's important not to miss out on those special opportunities with some of those relationships. Let's go back to the man who missed out. He missed out on the father's banquet because his relationship got in the way, but it didn't have to. All of these excuses were lame excuses. Let's not miss out on the Master's banquet for life by blaming others.

Despite the discouraging words from people, the servant kept inviting others. Why did the servant keep inviting others even though people told him no at least three times? Because he was too busy serving the master. He and the master did not let the naysayers discourage him, and despite the discouraging results, the master kept telling the servant to keep inviting people and to go out and invite anyone. Why? Because, as the preparer of the banquet, he knew how good it was going to be, and he just didn't want anyone to miss out for any reason.

There's an old quartet song called *Come and Dine*. Some of you have heard it. The words go like this, "Come and dine. The master calleth. Come and dine. Jesus has a table spread where the saints of God are fed. He invites his chosen people, come and dine. With his manna he does feed and provides our every need. Oh 'tis sweet to trust in Jesus, all the time." The parable of the great banquet is a parable for us

not to miss out on what God wants us to have by throwing up lame excuses. We can make adjustments. We can do away with our plans. We can do what's necessary to be at the banquet, the buffet of life, that God offers us.

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