


STEWARDSHIP



Oikonomos


Transliteration:

oikonomos

(conversion from Greek to English)

Pronunciation: *oy-kon-om'-os*

Strong's: 3623 - ***oikonomos***



Definition: a noun denoting one who “oversees or manages household or civic affairs.” It was most commonly, although not always, the job of a slave in the household. The feminine form of the noun is usually translated “stewardship,” highlighting the task, the responsibility granted such a person.

Sermon: “House Management”

Scripture Focus: Luke 16: 1-15

The word "oikonomos" is used mostly in the New Testament. Each of the ten texts in which it is used illuminates a little more the meaning of stewardship and frames the NT picture of the believer as a “house manager” for God in this world. The biblical concept of stewardship, beginning with Adam and Eve and developed more fully in the NT, is that God is owner and provider of all that any of us possess. Since all belongs to Him, it is incumbent that all be used for His purposes and glory. A collective responsibility was given to humanity to have dominion over the earth, care for it, and manage it for His glory. Individually, whether financial resources, real property, other valuable items, time, influence, or opportunity, the believer is to seek the mind and will of God for every decision. God not only expects that we return a portion of what He gives us as tithes and offerings, He expects for all that we have to be used in ways which please and honor Him. He expects that we, regardless of vocation, will exercise responsible stewardship, on His behalf, of every day that we live. One day His eternal kingdom will come. In the meantime, we are to live as if it has already come.

The literal sense of “manager” or “steward” is found in **Luke 12:42**: “And the Lord said, “Who then is the faithful and prudent manager whom his master will put in charge of his slaves, to give them their allowance of food at the proper time?”

This parable cautions us to live in continual anticipation of Christ, so as not to be caught off guard when he returns. The final part of the parable notes that we are stewards of what God has given us--and that along with the resources he entrusts to our care comes responsibility to use them wisely.

In Luke 16:1, “The Parable of the Dishonest Manager,” *oikonomos* is translated as **manager**. “Then Jesus said to the disciples, there was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property.”

This is an unusual parable about a dishonest manager. We are told here that our behavior when entrusted with small things--talents, money, or opportunities--reflects on our ability to deal wisely with greater things. If we want to be trusted with greater blessings or resources, we need to demonstrate that we can use what we already have for God's glory.

In Romans 16:23 the likely translation is director of public works or treasurer: “Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greet you.”

Metaphorical reference to “steward” is found in 1 Corinthians 4:1:4: “Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God’s mysteries.” Here *oikonomos* is a designation of the apostles as “custodians” of the Gospel message, the full accounting of God’s revelation.

In other verses the metaphor of steward or trustee relates to the role of the old covenant law in the life of God’s people prior to Christ’s coming. (see Gal 4:2). In Titus 1:7, one is spoken of as the bishop, as a “steward of God” and 1 Peter 4:10 alludes to the “stewards” of God’s gifts: “Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.”

There are two words that send the average congregation and common churchgoer into fear and panic, from the leadership and pastorate, that fears to offend or drive people away, to the church member who may be too far stretched in time and giving, and cannot give anymore, to the person who does not want to be convicted, lest he be forced to reach for the sacred will of his wallet or the exercise of His call. Yet, these two words are simple, and needed, because the church and the body of Christ could not function without them being proclaimed and exercised: These simple words are Stewardship and Evangelism.

Why such fear? Perhaps they necessitate a response that requires us to get up and do when we would rather sit down and don't. So, a cold shiver goes up the back of our complacency. These two words strike at the very heart and will of plans and ideas that we have set up for ourselves. They strike at our comfort, and the way of life we like and have designed for ourselves. Perhaps they even put us in front of the mirror of duty and requirement, of responsibility and a response to our free gift of grace, which we would rather not give. Then there is the world of complacency, where a Christian will just "pew sit" his or her way through life in his walk with Christ. A Sunday visit from time to time is more of a greater sacrifice than he or she can handle. His or her time is booked with the duty of his or her own plans and ideas. So when stewardship comes up, one realizes one's own failings. Guilt rears its ugly head, and calls for the primeval reaction of fight or flight. Thus, we can think we can fight against such requirements and proclaim they are not needed so we do not have to meet them. Or, we can run to another church that has no such requirement, so we can hide our inadequacies. "I received my gift of grace, yet I will not send a thank-you, nor will I use it. It is to sit on my shelf for my comfort and insurance only." And, for the most part, God will let us keep it there.

That is the beauty of grace--no strings attached. But, what good is a car if all it does is stay parked? Without care, it will rust, degrade, and be of no value, even with 0 miles on the odometer. Yes, grace is given without strings attached, except for our faith. But, as the book of James proclaims, what good is it? What good is our salvation if it is only good for comfort and security? Of course, there is no greater Comfort or Security than our faith in Christ, so, why should we worry about temporary earthly pleasures, when so much more awaits us?

But, these words of Stewardship, sometimes referred to as tithing or Evangelism, and sometimes said of discipleship, do not need to be scary. Stewardship can be an act of love, and even fun! It can be a response to His love, which will give us much, much greater comfort than any plans or ideas on our part. Perhaps Christians want to give, but they do not know how. Maybe they just need to be told that all we have is not really ours to begin with. We are just temporary stewards of His treasures, time and talents.

With such a view, we may see a pleasure in giving, and see the benefits as they help build the body of Christ.