

Talking Points: "Faithful Stewardship: The Heart of the 10 Commandments"
Delivered by A. B. Johnson 090918

Exodus 20:1-17; Matthew 22:34-40; Romans 12:17-21; 1st Corinthians 13:4-13

Good morning. I know that people usually tune out when preachers and pastors begin to mention the word "stewardship". Usually, when the word stewardship is used in Christian conversation, it is often used with just the very narrow definition of 'stewarding your money, finances, or tithes'.

As we have been studying the 10 commandments in the sermon's recently, the text spoke to me that Stewardship is at the heart of everything God has asked us to do. So we are going to tarry or linger just a moment longer in God's commands to us.

A "Steward" is someone who is entrusted with responsibility over the affairs and material goods of another person. For instance, an executor of a will is a steward in that they are asked to oversee the distribution and doing the will of a person's earthly possessions after that person has died.

An exceptionally good steward works to improve upon what has been entrusted to them. *Stewardship*, then is the job of supervising or taking care of something that has been entrusted to you.

In Jesus' time, the steward was often the manager of the household. The steward was not the owner of the assets, but a responsible administrator of the owner's property.

God establishes Himself as the creator and owner of everything. He moved the Psalmist in Psalm 24 "*The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.*" At the start of Genesis, God creates everything and puts humanity in the Garden to work it and to take care of it.

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It is clear that man was created to work and that *work is the stewardship of all of the creation that God has given him*. This is the fundamental principle of biblical stewardship. God owns everything, we are quite simply, managers or administrators acting on His behalf.

Author Bill Peel in his essay *Theology of Work* writes about responsibility as God's stewards and writes, *Although God gives us "all things richly to enjoy," nothing is ours. Nothing really belongs to us. God owns everything; we're responsible for how we treat it and what we do with it. While we complain about our rights here on earth, the Bible constantly asks, What about your responsibilities? Owners have rights; stewards have responsibilities.*

We are called as God's stewards to manage that which belongs to God. While God has graciously entrusted us with the care, development, and enjoyment of everything he owns as his stewards, we are responsible to manage his holdings well and according to his desires and purposes.

And that's why it's so important that we understand the 10 commandments as God's instructions to us, His caretakers and managers of all that He has put into our lives.

In the 10 commandments we read in our first scripture reading, that we are stewards of our worship of God. Worship is an expectation. Not just of worshipping God but of not worshipping that which is not God. That means that we have to steward our time so that time spent with God and His word is a priority in our lives.

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Exodus 20 further reminds us that God is a jealous God who asks that we not share our hearts with anyone but Him, but must steward our relationship with Him as a priority. He is to be the object of our love, adoration, praise and worship, and He blesses us and our carries those blessings into further generations when we do this.

And then Exodus 20 begins that shape how we are to steward our relationships with others. We should honor the life of others, whom God also created, by not taking someone's life in the act of murder. We should honor our parents, and in this God brings a promise of long life in the land God has placed before you.

Husbands and wives are stewards of their fidelity and must steward that relationship properly by stewarding our desire, as desire turns into temptation and yielding to temptation becomes sin of adultery.

We should our desires by not jealousy coveting, or yearning to possess or have something that belongs to others. If we don't properly steward our desire, that desire can quickly turn to theft or doing sinful things to have what someone else has, or worse, not fully appreciating what God has given to us.

And Christians are stewards of God's creation, proper worship of God, proper care of other persons, and proper care of their own hearts and desires. God's chosen people knew this, which led one of them in Matthew to test Jesus by asking him, "Teacher which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replies, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and

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greatest commandment. The second is like it *Love your neighbor as yourself.*"
(Matthew 22:34-40).

The heart of the exercise of proper stewardship is found, not in the ritualistic following of the law of God, but in the love of God. If we are to be really good stewards, the love of God must be at the center of *why* we do what we do.

Do you love God? Love His people. Love your enemies. Do you really love God? Purpose in your heart to love others and do good to others, especially those in the household of faith (Galatians 6:10). Do you love God? Then show those who have hurt you how much, by demonstrating the love of God to them.

Where there was separation, Jesus comes to bring grace and the expression of Godly love. Jesus showed His love for us in this, that while we were still sinners He died for us. The Romans passage this morning reminds us that we should not be overcome by evil, but we should overcome evil with good.

If we properly manage or steward our relationship and our emotions, love of Christ is the by-product of that choice and becomes the only way that we can overcome the tricks of the enemy with the Good of God. Do you love God? Love like Christ. *As far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*" (Romans 12:19).

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We can't really love like Christ or steward relationships and emotions as we are commanded, until we are able to make the choice to express this love that Christ says all the law and the prophets hang.

It is the love that was written to the church at Corinth. 1 Corinthians 13 tells us what love is. It paints a picture of an emotion with action words. It is a picture portrait painted with the strokes from the heart of God.

Love is patient, kind, not envious, not prideful or boastful. It honors others. It's not self-seeking, not easily angered. Love rejoices in the truth. It protects, trusts, hopes, perseveres.

The 10 commandments are not easy things for humanity to always follow. God knew this and sent Jesus to demonstrate what true stewardship of relationship looked like. In accepting Him we have the presence of the Holy Spirit to fill us so that we have the ability to grasp onto true love to live the way God commanded.

We are called to be good stewards of God's faithfulness, His grace, His expression of love in our worship and service of Him and in our relationships with others.

The question for us each day, how are we stewarding the relationships that God has put into our lives? Do we love, worship, and serve God like we should? Do we show love to others, even when they may not deserve it?

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God instructed us with His Word, filled us with His Spirit, showed us His love as gave His Only Begotten Son that we might be able to stand and manage all that He has commanded.

AMEN.

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CHALLENGE

We are called to be good stewards of God's faithfulness, His grace, His expression of love in our worship and service of Him and in our relationships with others.

Ask yourselves and God this week, how are you stewarding all that God has put into your life? Do you love, worship, and serve God, and love others like you should?

BLESSING

Go now, with God as your only wisdom and strength.
Proclaim Christ crucified,
and seek riches only in the love of God's Word
and in zeal for God's house and His ministry.

And may God's just demands be your nourishment & delight.
May Christ be the power and wisdom of God to you.
And may the Holy Spirit keep you, thought and word,
in God's good grace.

BENEDICTION

Rom. 15:13 - May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

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FIRST SCRIPTURE READING: (OT) Exodus 20:1-17

And God spoke all these words:

- ²“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.
- ³“You shall have no other gods before me.
- ⁴“You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶ but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.
- ⁷“You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.
- ⁸“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.
- ¹²“Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.
- ¹³“You shall not murder.
- ¹⁴“You shall not commit adultery.
- ¹⁵“You shall not steal.
- ¹⁶“You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.
- ¹⁷“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

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SECOND SCRIPTURE READING: (NT) Matthew 22:34-40

³⁴ Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. ³⁵ One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

³⁷ Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

THIRD SCRIPTURE READING: (NT) Romans 12:17-21

¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. ²⁰ On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

FOCAL SCRIPTURE READING: (NT) 1 Corinthians 13:4-13

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

⁸ Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. ¹¹ When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. ¹² For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

¹³ And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.