

# Steps of a Disciple

## Part Seven - Stewardship

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### **INTRODUCTION:**

The Steps of a Disciple is not easy at all. Like a toddler, there's a lot of perceived danger, a lot of starting and falling flat on your face. Let's be honest, much of the steps or disciplines of being a disciple of Jesus Christ is hard. And, with each new step, the risks are raised and the commitment deepens.

If you remember, the journey begins by you asking God to save your soul and forgive you from your sins. There's an element of desperation when you come face-to-face with acknowledging that you have sinned against a holy God and that, due to your sins, you are facing an eternal punishment in hell. When the reality of that washes over your soul, you turn to the only One who can save you. At that moment, you become God's child.

There's something else that occurs, that we don't often speak about. That something else is "ownership." Now, already, some of you are fidgeting in your seat because we really don't like that word "ownership" when it comes to us. We have phrases like, "It's my life;" "It's my choice." Even after we are saved by the precious blood of Christ, we still resist anyone chiming-in on what we should do with "our" life.

### **ISSUE NUMBER ONE: Ownership**

The issue boils down to ownership. For you and for me, to develop these steps/these disciplines in our life, it really comes down to the issue of ownership. Does God have the right to expect me to do this or that and to avoid this or that in my life. I mean, why does God think He can sit on high and expect me to follow Him—especially when it's challenging?! Let me show you a couple of verses that address that head-on:

1 Corinthians 6:19-20; I Corinthians 7:23; 1 Peter 1:18-19

Here's the hard fact—you are God's. God redeemed or purchased you and the payment He made for you was the precious blood of Jesus Christ. When I got saved, when you got saved, we became God's property. It's all about us understanding and living in the space that everything we have, including our very lives has become His. Disciples of Jesus Christ must come to terms with the idea of "ownership."

I would suggest to you, that the Steps or Disciplines of being a Disciple of Jesus Christ become much easier when we resolve in our heart that we are His.

So, as we have already seen in this series, God calls us to being a:

- Disciple obedient in Baptism
- Disciple obedient in hearing from Him through Bible Reading & Study
- Disciple obedient in talking to Him through Prayer
- Disciple obedient in living in community through the Local Church

Today, I want to talk to you about the next step or discipline of discipleship, being a disciple who is being obedient in the area of Stewardship.

Stewardship is recognizing and obediently living with the understanding that everything belongs to God. Everything belongs to God. Look at Psalm 24:1

What is that verse teaching us? It's talking about "ownership!" Everything is the Lord's. The Psalmist makes sure to eliminate any small print, loopholes or gray areas. He said, "The earth is the LORD'S, and all it contains, The world, and those who dwell in it."

What's the ramification of that Biblical teaching?

- My life
- My spouse
- My children
- My job
- My car
- My boat
- My furniture
- My money, etc.

Aren't really mine after all. Instead it's:

- His life
- His spouse
- His children
- His job
- His car
- His boat
- His furniture
- His money, etc

God has placed all of those possessions of His into my care as His steward. That brings us to our second issue, Stewardship.

## **ISSUE NUMBER TWO: Stewardship**

A Steward has the responsibility to manage all the resources of life for the glory of God, acknowledging God as provider.

God intends for you to be a good steward over the resources He gives you. To condense all those resources, we're talking about the Talents, Time and Treasure He gives you. Let's look at the teaching of Jesus from Matthew 25:14–30.

Jesus told this parable of a master with three servants. Remember, a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. This is another parable on faithfulness.

The master went on a journey and gave each servant a specific amount of money, talents. The talents were of silver (silver money in Matt. 25:18). A talent weighed between 58 and 80 pounds. Thus the master entrusted his servants with considerable amounts of money. The amounts were in keeping with the men's abilities.

Two of the servants were faithful in caring for the master's money (vv. 16–17) and were accordingly rewarded for their faithfulness with additional wealth, additional responsibilities, and sharing of the master's joy (vv. 20–23).

The third servant, having received the one talent, reasoned that his master might not be coming back at all. If he did return someday, the servant could simply return the talent to his master without loss from any poor investment (v. 25). But if he failed to return, the servant wanted to be able to keep the talent for himself. He did not want to deposit the talent in a bank where it would be recorded that the talent belonged to the master (v. 27).

His reasoning indicated he lacked faith in his master; he proved to be a worthless servant. As a result, he lost what he had (v. 29; cf. 13:12), and was cast into judgment.

***This Parable of the Talents stressed the need to serve the King while He is away.***

## **ISSUE NUMBER THREE: Treasure**

Remember, I said earlier that we are to be godly stewards of the talents, time and treasure God entrusts with us. The Bible has much to say about being good stewards of the treasure God entrusts into our care.

### **Giving Tithes**

A tithe is, by definition, the giving of a tenth of your income.

For 15 Centuries between Moses and Jesus, the law of the tithe was in place. Now, understand—under the Law, that wasn't just a single 10th. Actually, when you study the Old Testament there were three 10th's! Yes, you heard right.

There was the **Lord's Tithe**, described in Leviticus 27:30 & 32. This money was collected to help the nation, much like we pay taxes to our government.

There was the **Levite's Tithe**, described in Numbers 18:20-32, which was given to the priests, because they didn't have an inheritance in the Promised Land. This took care of the preachers and singers who ministered in the temple.

Then, there was the **Charity Tithe**, described in Deuteronomy 14, which was given every third year for the purpose of caring for the widows, strangers and those in need.

If the two yearly tithes (The Lord's Tithe & The Levite's Tithe) were added up and the third tithe were amortized annually, the annual percentage of the financial giving added up to about 23%.

But, some would argue, that we are no longer under the Law of Moses—and they would be correct. However, the practice of giving a 10th of one's income pre-dates the giving of the Law. Tithing goes back at least as far as Abraham, according to Genesis 14, we read that Abraham, after rescuing Lot, met with Melchizedek, the king of Salem and paid tithes to the Lord. The New Testament book of Hebrews reveals that Melchizedek was a type of Christ, so we have an early example of tithing—God's man paying tribute to the Lord by giving Him 10%. In Genesis 28, we find another example of tithing when Jacob promised to give one-tenth of everything he had to the Lord.

The Old Testament established certain standards for giving to God's work. The New Testament says that we are to give as God prospers us, I Corinthians 16:2—the amount to be given doesn't have a pre-determined percentage listed but is clearly proportional to how God has prospered the individual. A good understanding of the collected giving within a church congregation is this: It's not equal gifts—it's equal sacrifice.

The example Jesus gave us in the story of the widow's mite is that the aged widow gave *all* she had. The rich young ruler was told to give all that he had to the poor.

The early church in Jerusalem tells us that the believers had all things in common, even selling their property and giving all the money to the church.

Christ's command to Zacchaeus the tax collector was to give 50% of his goods to the poor.

Instead of trying to curtail the amount a Christ-follower should give in these New Testament times, the New Testament's teaching emphasizing giving cheerfully, giving in abundance, giving sacrificially. Giving a tenth of our income is a good starting place.

## **Giving Offerings**

These are special gifts, which go beyond the tithe, to support short-term needs. We find the Apostle Paul talking about receiving such offerings in Philippians 4:15-18.

### **Giving Sacrificially**

After the giving of the tithes for the support of the local church ministry and the giving of offerings, the New Testament also speaks of financial gifts which dig into the area of true sacrifice, as described for us in II Corinthians 8:1-5.

### **CONCLUSION**

As I said at the beginning of this message, taking the steps of a disciple of Jesus Christ is hard. For some, if not many, *this* step is especially difficult and I do not in any way wish to minimize the challenge this discipline is for you and your families to faithfully practice. Yet, I would be aborting my responsibility as your Pastor, if I did not bring this message to you.

Here is what God's word says to you and to me in Malachi 3:10:

10 "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.

Let's pray....