

**STEWARDSHIP IN THE NEW TESTAMENT:  
THE GOSPELS AND ACTS**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Whenever the subject of stewardship is brought up in the Western churches, it often reminds them of tithing, fund raising drive for an annual budget, a building project, missions or charitable giving, that is, mostly money. Edwin A. Briggs writes, “Until recent years, stewardship customarily has been equated with ideas used to persuade people give money to Christian causes. If a minister preached a sermon, the congregation was very sure that some form of appeal for an offering or a financial drive would soon follow.”<sup>1</sup>

According to a survey conducted on stewardship, one third of ninety persons questioned about it responded with negative feelings: “The word triggers in me an unbearable sense of duty and guilt. When I hear the word I want to run,” when asked “What is stewardship?” “money,” “not again,” “Oh, no!” “collection plate,” “dammit!”<sup>2</sup> This may probably be so because those who had been surveyed have never understood Christian giving as willing and joyful givers, whether it is tithing, building fund, missions, or charitable giving. Otherwise, they would not feel so negative about giving in the first place. A cursory literature search on stewardship by the present writer shows that more than two-thirds of two dozen books searched on stewardship were on giving and finance.

In contrast to the Western churches, among the Korean churches the term “steward” usually refers to lay workers, elders, kwonsas,<sup>3</sup> deacons, and deaconesses of the church. Stewardship means mostly the faithful services of these church officers in the church either as Sunday school teachers, choir members, or ushers. The word is regularly used at the beginning of each year in reference to the one or

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<sup>1</sup>Edwin A. Briggs, *Theological Perspectives of Stewardship*, The General Board of Laity, the United Methodist Church, 1969, 3-4.

<sup>2</sup>George S. Siudy, “*Stewardship and Renewal in the Church*,” *Journal of Stewardship* 34 (1981): 7.

<sup>3</sup>*Kwonsa* is a term for an honored deaconess, either elected or appointed in Korean churches, who is usually above 45 years of age with many years of service as a capable deaconess in the church. Her ministry includes mostly intercessory prayers, visitation, and ministry of encouragement to the church members.

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two-day annual Stewardship Retreat to motivate, mobilize, and train the old and new church workers to prepare them for the ministries of the church for the coming year. Faithfulness and dedication are invariably stressed. Often three T's are talked about: faithful giving of time, talents, treasures for the church. However, stewardship is more than a fund raising scheme or mobilization of the church workers, for it holds a broader and far reaching significance to Christian life.

Stewardship means total “responsibility.” However, the term is often used to describe the simple principle of the tithe. The original root meaning of the word “economics” has been emphasized with the result that the tenth has been given conspicuous attention.<sup>4</sup> *Haushalterschaft* in German retains too faithfully the economic connotation of the *Oikonomia* of classical Greek. *Treuhaenderschaft*, trusteeship, *Liebesdankbarkeit*, gratitude of love, each of them expresses some important aspect of stewardship but not its full significance.<sup>5</sup> Stewardship sometimes signifies a way of thinking about the acquisition and management of ecclesiastical monies and properties.<sup>6</sup>

Stewardship is not necessarily equivalent to mission. Mission is contrasted with stewardship, which is cultivated in the congregational life in order that the mission might be carried on. Stewardship sometimes is also used as the material means by which the spiritual end is achieved.<sup>7</sup>

The English word “steward” appears in the literature in the eleventh century as “*stigweard*,” “*stig*” probably meaning a house or some part of a house or building, and “*weard*” (later, ward) meaning, of course, “warden” or “keeper,” someone who manages the household or property of another.<sup>8</sup> A steward is a servant of a rich man, or a man who has authority and influence, or kings. In the Bible, “steward” and “servant” are often interchangeably used in the Gospels and Acts—for instance, in Luke 12:42-48 and 16:1-8; but a steward is sometimes more than a servant. He is a full representative or deputy of his lord, who enjoys his confidence. A steward in the Old Testament is a servant,

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<sup>4</sup>Roy L. Smith, *Stewardship Studies*, New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1954.

<sup>5</sup>T.A. Kantonen, *A Theology for Christian Stewardship*, Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1956, 4.

<sup>6</sup>Douglas John Hall, *The Steward: A Biblical Symbol Come of Age*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990, 12.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>T. A. Kantonen, 3.

but not an ordinary servant who simply takes orders and does the bidding of others. He is a rather superior servant, a sort of supervisor or foreman, who must make decisions, give orders, and take charge (Gen 43:19; I Kings 16:9). *"Der Haushalter war eine Sklave, den sein Herr zum Werwalt uber Hausgesinde oder sogar unber seinen ganzen Besitz seinsetzte . . . Sein Amt war eine besondere Vertrauensstellung."*<sup>9</sup>

We now turn to the Gospels and the Acts in the New Testament to discover the meaning and significance of stewardship. In the first five books of the New Testament are found 56 passages which are related more to servant or less to steward and from which we can do an inductive study on the general picture of steward/servant, what he is entrusted with, the biblical examples of steward, the rewards of the good servant, and the punishments of the wicked servants. The present writer uses steward and servant interchangeably according to the usage in the Gospel of Luke 12 and 16.

## PICTURE OF A STEWARD

**1. A steward is a servant who belongs to his master to carry out his wishes on his behalf, like a soldier who has to absolutely obey his superior officer.**

Matt 8:9 "For I am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it.

8:10 "When Jesus heard him, he marveled, and said to those who followed him, 'Truly, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.'

8:11 "I tell you, many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

8:12 "While the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.

8:13 "And to the centurion Jesus said, 'Go; be it done for you as you have believed.' And the servant was healed at that very moment."

Luke 7:8 "For I am a man set under authority, with soldiers

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<sup>9</sup>"Haushalter," *Biblich-Theologisches Handwortenbuch: Zur Luterbibel und zu Neuern Uebersetzung*, Göttingen: Vanderboeck & Ruprecht, 1964.

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under me: and I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my slave, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

**2. A steward is more than a mere servant, though he is still a servant, a notch higher than a servant, the head of the servants, given responsibility and privilege to be in charge of the affairs of his master. He is the one, for instance, who directs the wedding feast of the family at Cana on behalf of his master.**

John 2:8 “He said to them, ‘Now draw some out, and take it to the steward of the feast.’ So they took it.

2:9 “When the steward of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward of the feast called the bridegroom.”

**3. A servant is subordinate to his master. He is never greater than his master.**

Matt 10:24 “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.”

John 13:16 “Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him.”

**4. A servant is treated like his master in identity, performance, and even suffering.**

Matt 10:25 “It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household.”

Matt 21:35 “And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another.

21:36 “Again he sent other servants, more than the first; and they did the same to them.”

Matt 22:5 “But they made light of it and went off, one to his farm, another to his business,

22:6 “While the rest seized his servants, treated them

shamefully, and killed them.

Matt 22:7 “The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

22:8 “Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding is ready,’ but those invited were not worthy.”

Luke 20:10 “When the time came, he sent a servant to the tenants, that they should give him some of the fruit of the vineyard; but the tenants beat him, and sent him away empty-handed.

20:11 “And he sent another servant; him also they beat and treated shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed.”

**5. He sometimes suffers for the sake of his master in the process of the performance of his duty.**

Mark 12:2 “When the time came, he sent a servant to the tenants, to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard.

12:3 “And they took him and beat him, and sent him away empty-handed.

12:4 “Again he sent to them another servant, and they wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully.”

**6. The servant may be persecuted, when his master is persecuted.**

John 15:19 “If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

15:20 “Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also.”

**7. His task is determined by the master in light of his past performance. He is expected to be good, faithful, and do good work when he is given a task.**

Matt 25:14 “For it will be as when a man going on a journey called his servants and entrusted to them his property.

25:15 “To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away.”

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Matt 25:23 “His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master.’”

### **8. The master sets his faithful and wise over his household to manage and care for the daily needs of the master.**

Matt 24:45 “Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time?”

### **9. A servant must try to determine the precise wishes of his master. He uses his mind asking questions in order to learn his will from the master.**

Matt 13:27 “And the servants of the householder came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then has it weeds?’

13:28 “He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The servants said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’”

### **10. The master may send his servant to get his fruit from the tenants.**

Matt 21:34 “When the season of fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants, to get his fruit.”

### **11. The master may send his servant to invite guests to his wedding feast.**

Matt 22:3 “And sent his servants to call those who were invited to the marriage feast; but they would not come.

22:4 “Again he sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, Behold, I have made ready my dinner; my oxen and my fatted calves are killed, and everything is ready; come to the marriage feast.’”

Matt 22:9 “Go therefore to the thoroughfares, and invite to the marriage feast as many as you find.

22:10 “And those servants went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.”

**12. A steward may ask him to pay the wages of the laborers on behalf of his master.**

Matt 20:8 “And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.’”

**13. A good servant performs the business of his master with enthusiasm. He goes out to work at once to trade with the talents entrusted to him and doubles them.**

Matt 25:16 “He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them; and he made five talents more.

25:17 “So also, he who had the two talents made two talents more.”

**14. A good servant is humble and lives by the goodwill of the master. He fell on his knees and besought the master.**

Matt 18:26 “So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’

18:27 “And out of pity for him the lord of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.

18:28 “But that same servant, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat he said, ‘Pay what you owe.’

18:29 “So his fellow servant fell down and besought him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’

18:30 “He refused and went and put him in prison till he should pay the debt.”

**15. A good servant reports all his findings to his master. He assists his master for him to make good decision by providing all the necessary information.**

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Matt 18:31 “When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place.”

### **16. A servant is expected of the master to behave according his standard.**

Matt 18:32 “Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you besought me.’

18:33 “‘And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’”

### **17. A good servant is watchful of the comings and goings of his master.**

Mark 13:34 “It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch.

13:35 “Watch therefore—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning—

13:36 “lest he come suddenly and find you asleep.

13:37 “And what I say to you I say to all: ‘Watch.’”

### **18. A faithful and wise servant stays awake to receive their master and serves him regardless of the time. Servants may be male and female.**

Luke 12:37 “Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes; truly, I say to you, he will gird himself and have them sit at table, and he will come and serve them.

12:38 “If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those servants!

12:42 “And the Lord said, ‘Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time?’



12:43 “Blessed is that servant whom his master when he comes will find so doing.

12:44 “Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.

12:45 “But if that servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed in coming,’ and begins to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink and get drunk.”

**19. A servant lives and dies according to the word of his master.**

Luke 2:29 “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word.”

**20. A good servant follows the order of his master and carries out his wishes, comes back to report to their master and waits for further instruction.**

Luke 14:17 “And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come; for all is now ready.’

14:18 “But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it; I pray you, have me excused.’

14:19 “And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them; I pray you, have me excused.’

14:20 “And another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’

14:21 “So the servant came and reported this to his master. Then the householder in anger said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame.’

14:22 “And the servant said, ‘Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’

14:23 “And the master said to the servant, ‘Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.’”

**21. A good servant must single-heartedly serve only one master.**

Luke 16:13 “No servant can serve two masters; for either he

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will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

### **22. A good servant regards himself unworthy when he fulfills his duty.**

Luke 17:7 “Will any one of you, who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep, say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and sit down at table’ ?

17:8 “Will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare supper for me, and gird yourself and serve me, till I eat and drink; and afterward you shall eat and drink’ ?

17:9 “Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded?

17:10 “So you also, when you have done all that is commanded you, say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.’”

### **23. A servant expects the day of accounting with his master.**

Matt 18:23, “Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.

18:24 “When he began the reckoning, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.

18:25 “And as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made.”

Matt 25:19 “Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them.”

### **24. A good steward is wise in dealing with affairs of his master.**

Luke 16:1 “He also said to the disciples, ‘There was a rich man who had a steward, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his goods.’

16:2 “And he called him and said to him, ‘What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your stewardship, for you

can no longer be steward.'

16:3 "And the steward said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the stewardship away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg.'

16:4 "'I have decided what to do, so that people may receive me into their houses when I am put out of the stewardship.'

16:5 "So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?'

16:6 "He said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.'

16:7 "Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' He said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.'

16:8 "The master commended the dishonest steward for his shrewdness; for the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light."

## **WHAT ARE THE SERVANTS ENTRUSTED WITH?**

### **1. Willingness to endure the malignment by the enemies for the sake of his master**

Matt 10:25 "It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household."

### **2. Immediate obedience of the master's command**

Luke 7:8 "For I am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me: and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it."

### **3. Keeping the word of his lord,**

Matt 15:20 "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also."

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### **4. The charge of home and household chores**

Mark 13:34 “It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch.”

### **5. Food preparation and serving at the table**

Luke 12:42 “And the Lord said, ‘Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time?’”

Luke 17:8 “Will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare supper for me, and gird yourself and serve me, till I eat and drink; and afterward you shall eat and drink’?”

### **6. Inviting the guests to his master's banquet**

Luke 14:17 “And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come; for all is now ready.’”

### **7. Directing the wedding feast-the food and the drink**

John 2:8 “He said to them, ‘Now draw some out, and take it to the steward of the feast.’ So they took it.

2:9 “When the steward of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward of the feast called the bridegroom to inquire where he had kept the best wine.”

### **8. Plowing fields and keeping sheep**

Luke 17:7 “Will any one of you, who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep, say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and sit down at table’?”

### **9. Sowing seed in the field**

Matt 13:27 “And the servants of the householder came and said

to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then has it weeds?’ ”

### **10. Bringing the fruit from the tenants of his master's vineyard**

Luke 20:10 “When the time came, he sent a servant to the tenants, that they should give him some of the fruit of the vineyard; but the tenants beat him, and sent him away empty-handed.”

### **11. Diligent trading with the assigned property of his lord whether one, two, or five talents as given**

Matt 25:16 “He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them; and he made five talents more.”

### **12. Caring for the fellow servants**

Matt 18:33 “And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?”

### **13. Paying the wages of the hired laborers**

Matt 20:8 “And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.’”

### **14. Handling of the debts and the debtors on behalf of his master**

Matt 18:24 “the debt of ten thousand talents”

Luke 16:1-8 “people's debts of oil and wheat” and “debts of fellow servants”

Matt 18:27 “And out of pity for him the lord of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.”

### **15. Reporting of the misbehavior of the debtors to his master**

Matt 18:31 “When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their

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lord all that had taken place.”

## **16. Serving God**

Luke 16:13 “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

## **17. Prayers**

John 15:16 “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.”

## **18. Loving one another**

John 15:17 “This I command you, to love one another.

15:18 “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.

15:19 “If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”

## **19. Endurance of the world's enmity**

John 15:19 “If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”

## **WHO ARE IDENTIFIED AS STEWARDS?**

### **1. A nation of Israel is a servant of God to proclaim salvation for all. Stewardship extends to the evangelistic task of a whole nation.**

Luke 1:54 “He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy.”

Luke 1:69 “He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the

house of his servant David.”

**2. David is a servant of God entrusted with a message, who spoke by the Holy Spirit.**

Luke 1:69 “He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David”

Acts 4:25 “..who by the mouth of our father David, thy servant, didst say by the Holy Spirit, ‘Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples imagine vain things?

4:26 ‘The kings of the earth set themselves in array, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed.’”

**3. Jesus is a Servant of God. He is the Holy, the Righteous, the Chosen, the Beloved, the Well Pleasing, the Spirit-filled, the Glorified, the Risen Servant of God to bless the people in turning every one from their wickedness.**

Matt 12:18 “Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles.”

Acts 3:13 “The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him.

3:14 “But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you.”

Acts 3:26 “God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you in turning every one of you from your wickedness.”

Acts 4:27 “For truly in this city there were gathered together against thy holy servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,

4:28 “to do whatever thy hand and thy plan had predestined to take place.”

Acts 4:30 “..while thou stretchest out thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of thy holy servant Jesus.”

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### **4. The Apostles were the servants of the Most High God. They are entrusted with His Word to speak with boldness.**

Acts 4:29 “And now, Lord, look upon their threats, and grant to thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness,

4:30 “while thou stretchest out thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of thy holy servant Jesus.”

Acts 10:7 “When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those that waited on him.”

Acts 16:17 “She followed Paul and us, crying, ‘These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.’”

### **5. Chuza was Herod's steward who provided for Jesus and His disciples out of their means.**

Luke 8:3 “And Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.”

### **6. All Christians are stewards, more than servants, but now friends of Jesus, who Himself was a Steward and makes known to them what He had heard from His Father as to how to live as stewards of God.**

John 15:15 “No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

15:16 “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.”

## **THE REWARDS OF A GOOD STEWARD**

### **1. There is a day of reckoning for all the servants.**



Luke 19:13 “Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten pounds, and said to them, ‘Trade with these till I come.’

19:14 “But his citizens hated him and sent an embassy after him, saying, ‘We do not want this man to reign over us.’

19:15 “When he returned, having received the kingdom, he commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by trading.

19:16 “The first came before him, saying, ‘Lord, your pound has made ten pounds more.’”

## **2. A faithful and wise servant will be blessed and receive the reward of greater blessings.**

Matt 24:46 “Blessed is that servant whom his master when he comes will find so doing.

24:47 “Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.”

## **3. The master rewards the good servant, who does his work well even over a little and enjoys the favor of his master. To him who has more will be given more.**

Matt 25:21 “His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master.’

25:22 “And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.’”

Luke 19:17 “And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.’

19:18 “And the second came, saying, ‘Lord, your pound has made five pounds.’

19:19 “And he said to him, ‘And you are to be over five cities.’

19:20 “Then another came, saying, ‘Lord, here is your pound, which I kept laid away in a napkin;

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19:21 “for I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man; you take up what you did not lay down, and reap what you did not sow.”

19:22 “He said to him, ‘I will condemn you out of your own mouth, you wicked servant! You knew that I was a severe man, taking up what I did not lay down and reaping what I did not sow?’

19:23 “‘Why then did you not put my money into the bank, and at my coming I should have collected it with interest?’

19:24 “And he said to those who stood by, ‘Take the pound from him, and give it to him who has the ten pounds.’

19:25 “(And they said to him, ‘Lord, he has ten pounds!’ )

19:26 “‘I tell you, that to every one who has will more be given; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away.

19:27 “‘But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them before me.’”

### **4. A servant who serves others is recognized as great. Service to others is the greatest work that can be done by any one.**

Matt 20:26 “It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant.”

Matt 23:11 “He who is greatest among you shall be your servant.”

Mark 9:35 “And he sat down and called the twelve; and he said to them, ‘If any one would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.’”

Mark 10:43 “But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant.”

### **5. A good servant is cared for by his master. When a paralyzed servant was sick, his master went to Jesus and sought help from him. He was healed.**

Matt 8:6 “..and saying, ‘Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, in terrible distress.’

8:7 “And he said to him, ‘I will come and heal him.’

8:8 “But the centurion answered him, ‘Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only say the word, and

my servant will be healed.’”

**6. The servant who serves Jesus will have the privilege to be with Him and be honored by the Father.**

John 12:26 “If any one serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, he shall my servant be also; if any one serves me, the Father will honor him.”

**A PICTURE OF A WICKED STEWARD**

**1. A wicked servant presumes the wishes of his master.**

He does not ask his master to confirm his will. He behaves wickedly, mistreats his fellow servants, gets drunken while his master is gone, behaves selfishly without being sensitive to his master.

Matt 24:48 “But if that wicked servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed,’

24:49 “and begins to beat his fellow servants, and eats and drinks with the drunken,

24:50 “the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know.”

**2. The wicked servant behaves from fear of his master and does not produce what is due to the master.**

Matt 25:18 “But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master’s money.

25:19 “Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them.”

**3. The wicked servant presumes to know his master and behaves on his presumption of the wishes of his master.**

He mistrusts people and devalues his master, motivated by fear rather than love. He is good for nothing. He does not even think of the way to improve the situation. He does harm to his master, not giving

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him what is due to him. He is wicked inside, slothful, presumes, loses what he was given, worthless, and will be cast out of the community and suffer punishment.

Matt 25:24 “He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not winnow;

25:25 “so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’

25:26 “But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sowed, and gather where I have not winnowed?

25:27 “‘Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest.’

25:28 “So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has the ten talents.

25:29 “For to every one who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away.

25:30 “And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.”

### **4. The wicked and unfaithful servant will be punished for his misbehavior.**

Luke 12:45 “But if that servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed in coming,’ and begins to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink and get drunk,

12:46 “the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will punish him, and put him with the unfaithful.

12:47 “And that servant who knew his master’s will, but did not make ready or act according to his will, shall receive a severe beating.”

## **SUMMARIES AND CONCLUSIONS**

A steward is a servant who belongs to his master with full responsibility to manage all of his household and businesses including his personal needs as his official representative according to the precise wishes of the master to care for the best results.

We have seen from the passages in the four Gospels and Acts that what he has to handle was everything which belongs to his master: home, household chores, food preparation, serving food and drink at the table, managing property and money, wedding, guests for the banquet, plowing fields, sowing seed, keeping sheep, bringing the fruit from the tenants, caring for the fellow servants, paying the wages of the hired hands, handling of all the debts and the debtors, providing necessary information for his decision making. He is entrusted with service to God, prayer, love for one another. What is left out? Practically nothing. He is responsible for everything.

Christian stewardship is a total accountability and responsibility before God, nothing less than a complete life-style. Our sovereign Master is God Himself. We live fully before Him as responsible stewards in all areas of life, nothing excluded. It is not just tithing or a financial campaign slogan.

The nation of Israel, King David, the Apostles, all Christians including Christ Himself are the servants of God. Christ is the most glorious example of a steward for us. We have him as our model to emulate. There are the rich blessings waiting for the good, faithful and wise stewards on the day of accounting with the return of the Risen Lord, while there await the sorrows for the wicked, lazy, careless servants; for they will be cast out into darkness and wail and gnash teeth there forever. All must heed the warning!

Stewardship begins when we meet the Master and pledge our love and loyalty and trust to Him. We have a privilege to be called greatest when we serve God, our neighbors, and His creation well with a total dedication and with the help of the Holy Spirit in our heart.

Probably, the Prodigal Son portrays a steward well. He received his inheritance from his father and yet squandered it like a wicked steward and became worthless. However, the father has never forgotten his son and has been waiting for him every day and receives into his bosom the wayward son who comes home broken. Now his son is welcomed and given a new life. The son is willing to serve the father like a servant, though he himself a son, out of a grateful heart, not out of fear and guilt. We are all like the prodigal son. Out of gratitude we

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dedicate ourselves totally as stewards to serve God and our neighbors, with all of life, time, spiritual gifts and talents, the Gospel and ministry, possessions, community and natural resources. We must place stewardship at the center of our life in the home, in the neighborhood, at work, at church, in the nation, and in the world.

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