

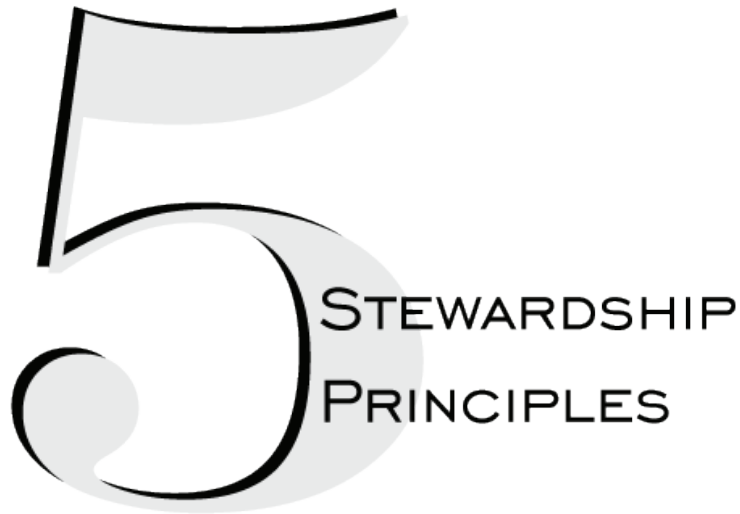
# 5 STEWARDSHIP PRINCIPLES

Scriptural Reflections on the Blessings of Giving

Written by Rev. John Heckmann, previously published in *LWML Treasured News*



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STEWARDSHIP  
PRINCIPLES

by

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# INTRODUCTION

We have considered the “Seven T’s of Christian Stewardship,” and now I would like to change our focus. Let’s look at our lives as Christians from a different angle.

One of the things that we all must deal with, no matter how rich or poor we think we might be, is greed. Greed, contrary to what we want to believe, is not confined to those who are rich. Those who have very little seem to easily become preoccupied with their material needs. Affluence tends to give a higher and higher value to things as the whole standard of living rises. Things that were luxuries become necessities and our covetous spirit continues to grow.

My father-in-law, Mr. Orval Dehning, told me some 33 years ago, when I was still dating his beautiful daughter, this axiom (and it is very true), “expenses always rise to meet income.” No matter how much our heavenly Father blesses us, the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh will tell us that it is not enough. They will use every tool at their disposal to convince us that we always need more and to make us constantly unhappy and discontented with the blessings God has lavishly showered down upon us.

To be sure, everything we have is a gift from God, but even these material blessings, as they grow closer and closer to our heart and become our heart’s desire, can even shut God out, taking His place in our lives. That is why St. Paul calls upon us in Colossians 3:5 to: *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is Idolatry.*

So, the question for us to ponder for the next few topics is: “How can we who have been so richly blessed by God be on guard against the greed and covetousness that so easily and incessantly continues to creep into our lives?”

# STEWARDSHIP PRINCIPLE #1

I would suggest that there are at least five principles we could look at that would help us in our awareness of, and alertness to, the schemes of the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh as they tempt us toward greed and covetousness.

The first principle would call upon us through the power and working of the Holy Spirit in our lives, through the Word and Sacraments, **to believe that Jesus Christ is our only Savior from all sin, and give His teachings priority in our life.**

With that desire in mind, we pray with Simon Peter when Jesus asked Him and the other eleven if they wanted to follow in the path of so many others and turn their back on Him looking for a new teacher: *“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God”* (John 6:68-69).

What a blessing is ours that, through our Holy Spirit created and nurtured faith, we can with the boldness and confidence of St. Peter, and countless other saints who have gone before us, confess as he did in Matthew 16:16, *“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,”* or in Mark 8:29, *“You are the Christ.”*

**Heavenly Father, I believe. I pray that You would help my unbelief, strengthening me through Your Holy Spirit to give Your Word and all that it teaches, as well as the blessed Sacraments, priority in my life. In the name of Jesus. Amen!**

# STEWARDSHIP PRINCIPLE #2

As we are looking at how we, who have been so richly blessed by God, can be on guard against the greed and covetousness that so easily and incessantly continues to creep into our lives, can we look at a second biblical principle? Earlier we said one tool in this fight is to know and rejoice in the fact that through the power and working of the Holy Spirit in our lives, through the Word and Sacraments, we are equipped to give His teachings priority in our lives as we rejoice in the fact that Jesus Christ is our only Savior from all sin.

The second principle we can look at is an excellent stewardship thought that you have heard before in these pages, namely that **our heavenly Father is the owner of EVERYTHING and that we are the managers of those things and every aspect of this very life with which He blesses us.**

That is the way it has been from the beginning as we read in Genesis 2:15 that our Father and theirs *took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it.* That is still our task as good stewards of all with which our Father has blessed us. We are the crown of God's creation to whom He has said, *“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth”* (Genesis 1:28).

And then He goes on to reiterate that all of this is a gift from His hand as He says beginning at verse 29, *“Behold, **I have given you** every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, **I have given** every green plant for food.”* And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was **very good.** And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day (Genesis 1:29-31). (Emphasis added.)

Yes, everything that is “ours” has been given to us by God to care for while we make our journey through this life on into eternal life. What a blessing from God and what an opportunity to serve Him as we serve one another through our Christian stewardship!

**Heavenly Father, thank You for everything with which You have blessed me in body and soul. Empower me to manage every bit of these gifts with godly wisdom. In Jesus' name. Amen!**

# STEWARDSHIP PRINCIPLE #3

We continue to look at how we, who have been so richly blessed by God, can be on guard against the greed and covetousness that so easily and incessantly continues to creep into our lives. Now we will consider our third principle as we see **the incredible need to control the focus of our lives.**

One tool in this fight against greed and covetousness is to believe that Jesus Christ is our Savior from all sin and to give His teachings priority in our life. This only happens through the power and working of the Holy Spirit in our lives through the Word and Sacraments.

You will also recall that we were reminded that our heavenly Father is the owner of EVERYTHING and that we are the managers of those things and this very life with which He blesses us.

Now, as we said, we highlight the incredible need to control the focus of our lives. What does God's Word have to say about our need to focus every aspect of our lives on our Triune God?

Consider first of all Deuteronomy 6:4-9. *“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”*

That, as experience has taught each of us, is an incredible task that can only be accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Means of Grace in our lives. And what joy is ours to know that when we fail, and fail we will to keep that proper focus, that there is forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus Christ, spilt on the cross of Calvary for you and me and all people!

Consider also the focusing words that our Savior shares with us in John 6:27 as He calls upon us to not work for the *“food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on Him God the Father has set his seal.”*

And finally the words of Christ once again in Matthew 6:33 as He calls upon us to *“seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”*

**Lord Jesus, empower me to always keep my eyes on You, the author and perfecter of my faith.  
Amen!**

# STEWARDSHIP PRINCIPLE #4

Another tool in this fight against greed and covetousness and the misuse of the gifts God has given to us is through the power and working of the Holy Spirit in our lives, through the Word and Sacraments, to believe that Jesus Christ is our only Savior from all sin, and give His teachings priority in our life.

We are reminded that our heavenly Father is the owner of EVERYTHING and that we are the managers of those things and this very life with which He blesses us.

We have an incredible need to control the focus of our lives; therefore, let's consider what it means to be **organized and generous in our Christian giving.**

As we look at this stewardship principle, St. Paul exhorts us in 1 Corinthians 16:2 to, *on the first day of every week . . . put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper.* I would commend this stewardship principle to you as you and your family prayerfully consider what first portions of your time, talents, treasures, testimony, touch, tissue, and trash you want to return to the Lord. As you do this, you will not be tempted to check and see how much of these items are left over and then decide how much to give to the Lord through various avenues. Come up with a plan of giving, give that portion first, and everything else will fall into place.

As we have studied before, our God says to us in Malachi 3:10, *“Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.”*

I can tell you from repeated, first-hand experience, He will and He does. The other verses we can consider are the inspired words of St. Paul as he says in 2 Corinthians 9:6-11, *Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. As it is written, “He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.” He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.* Enough said.

**Heavenly Father, guide us as we organize every aspect of our lives and grow in the generosity of our Christian giving. In Jesus' name. Amen!**

# STEWARDSHIP PRINCIPLE #5

Now for the fifth and final principle for us to review. One tool in this fight against the misuse of the gifts God has given to us is accomplished through the power and working of the Holy Spirit in our lives, through the Word and Sacraments, to believe that Jesus Christ is our only Savior from all sin, and to give His teachings priority in our life. You will also recall that we were reminded that our heavenly Father is the owner of EVERYTHING and that we are the managers of those things and this very life with which He blesses us. We have discussed the incredible need to control the focus of our lives, and have also considered what it means to be organized and generous in our Christian giving.

Now we are blessed to see how, when we **cultivate Christian contentment**, we will more easily be able to withstand the slings and arrows of the evil three. With that in mind I offer to you three portions of Holy Scripture for your consideration and study.

The first is Philippians 4:11-13 where we read in the God-breathed words of St. Paul, *I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*

The second portion of Scripture includes the inspired words, once again, of St. Paul to the young pastor Timothy as he counsels him and us by saying, *godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs* (1 Timothy 6:6-10).

Our final reference also shares with us the words of God through St. Paul to Timothy as he admonishes this young man, and each of us, *in whatever our station of life, to not only take to heart, but also counsel others, not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life* (Timothy 6:17-19).

**Heavenly Father, teach me to live in such contentment and certainty. Amen!**