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Days To Victory

Stewardship Enrichment Devotionals

Week 3

The Anatomy of a Christian Steward

Legs That Walk

Day 15, Sunday, September 30

Ephesians 5:1-16

A major league outfielder who was a committed Christian said to his manager Earl Weaver, “Earl, aren’t you glad I walk with the Lord?”

Weaver replied, “I’d rather you walk with the bases loaded!”

Fortunately we can do both. We can walk with the Lord, and walk with Him in our vocation – our calling. In fact the word “walk” is one of the most frequently used terms to describe a Christian’s conduct.

In Ephesians 5, the Holy Spirit challenges us as Christians to:

Walk In Love – verse 2 says, “And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and has given Himself for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

If our walk does not reflect our talk, we fail to represent our Savior.

From the book Kids’ Random Acts of Kindness...

I did a kind random act of kindness. I woked up and herd my sister saying Milk, Milk. In stead of waking my mom I went down stares and wormed up my sisters milk and gave it to her. The End. – Maik, 5th grade

Walk In Light – verse 8 exhorts us to “walk as children of light.”

Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12). When we walk with Jesus we are walking in the light. How rewarding this is – and how revealing!

It’s when we compare ourselves with Jesus’ perfection that we really see ourselves. We may think we’re a good golfer until we compare ourselves with Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, or Tiger Woods. Then we realize how far short we fall.

It is true in every area of Christian living. When compared with Jesus, we fall short in our loving, our faithfulness, our giving, our serving. But God gives us ample opportunities to “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (II Peter 3:18).

Walk In Loyalty – Ephesians 5:15 advises that we “walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time.” The idea here is that we must walk carefully and faithfully.

Anyone who has traveled overseas has noticed the tall brick or concrete walls surrounding houses and commercial buildings. They are there for security reasons. Many are six, eight, even ten feet tall, and a foot or more thick. Frequently concrete is poured on top and before it

hardens, broken pieces of glass are embedded in it. These jagged pieces keep burglars from climbing the wall.

Once, as I looked out my hotel window in Jerusalem, I saw a cat walking very carefully across the wall - cautiously placing each foot to avoid harm from the sharp glass. It is this idea that the scripture is talking about. We are to walk carefully, avoiding all that is harmful to our Christian life and influence.

We are also to be careful about why we walk, not just how and where. This has to do with our motives.

Leo Tolstoy, in his story, "How Much Land Does a Man Need?" told of a man who went to a distant country where the headman of a tribe offered him, for a sum of money, all the land he could walk around in a day. The man was told to put his money down on a certain spot and then walk until sunset.

When he returned to his money, all lands enclosed by the path of his steps were to be his. So the man started, hurrying as fast as possible and returning after great exertion to the point of departure. But the task had been too great for him, and he fell dead where he had begun. In the end, he needed only six feet of ground. The rest was of no use to him.

When the desire to possess is so great that it demands our life, our priorities are twisted. There is something terribly wrong when our possessions dominate us – even own us.

When we walk in love, in light and in loyalty to Christ, we will recognize the importance of where and why we walk. We will hear Him say, "Come, follow Me" – and we will. The more we are willing to sacrifice our life – our time, talent, and treasure, the more walking in His footsteps will lead to joy, happiness, and peace.

Lord Jesus, help me to walk in love as You did long ago.

The Anatomy of a Christian Steward

Knees That Kneel - Part I

Day 16, Monday, September 24

I suspect most of us have heard a number of stories told about prayer, and even told a few ourselves. For example: In a church in Kentucky a loud, verbal child was being carried out under his irate father's arm. Just as they got to the door the child had one last thing to say – "Y'all pray for me now!"

Seriously, prayer is the lifeline of any church. It is impossible to do the Lord's work in the Lord's way without the Lord's power, and that comes through prayer.

The story is told of a tourist in New York who was taken to see Niagara Falls. They stood at the base and watched millions of tons of water cascading to the rocks below. "That," said the man, "is the greatest untapped source of power in the world." "No," his friend answered. "That's impressive, but the greatest untapped source of power in the world is the power of prayer through God's Holy Spirit."

In Stewardship Enrichment, we all need this power of prayer. Someone once said, "The quickest way to get a church on its feet is to get its members on their knees." The absence of prayer will lead to failure. The presence of prayer means victory. It is really that important!

If we would learn to pray, let us learn from the Master – Jesus Himself. How did He pray? When did He pray? Where did He pray? Let Him be our example and teacher.

When we look at His life as revealed in the scripture we find that:

- He prayed at all hours of the day and night.
- He prayed in the great crisis of His life.
- He prayed (alone) for others and with others.
- While He was praying miracles happened.

He prayed in complete surrender.

"Not my will, but yours be done." (Luke 22:42)

Now if our Lord practiced prayer, taught us to pray and urged us to pray, it certainly should be the number one priority of our lives.

The Bible is full of encouragement to pray. Paul said, "I urge then, first of all, that, requests, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for everyone..." I Timothy 2:1

In Philippians 4:6 we read, "... but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

Simply put, we need the power of God to do the work of God. Prayer is our power source.

Today when we pray, God works. Lives can be changed, families can be united, and children can be reclaimed when we pray. Our church can experience renewal, a new unity can be

achieved, and a spirit of cooperation and sacrifice can be a reality. Yes, miracles can and will happen when we pray.

Dr. L. R. Scarborough was an educator and preacher from another era. One Sunday he preached on Jonah and the big fish. On the way home, his 5 year old daughter asked, "Daddy, do you really believe that a man could be swallowed by a big fish and come out alive three days later?" "Well, honey, God can do anything." And she said, "Oh, well if you're going to bring God into it, then that's different."

Prayer brings God into it. Prayer is a two-way conversation. We talk with God and God talks with us. For example:

- Moses talked to God and God talked to Moses about building the tabernacle.
- David talked to God and God talked to David about building the temple.
- Nehemiah talked to God and God talked to Nehemiah about re-building the walls around Jerusalem.
- Ezra talked to God and God talked to Ezra about his house of worship.
- Paul talked to God and God talked to Paul about a world mission.
- You talk to God and God talks to you about your part of His will and purpose for your church.

Through prayer we discover God's purpose and plans for heaven and earth. The purpose of prayer is to bring everything in harmony with His will. The end result is that we do what God wants to do through us.

We may discover that His will is so demanding and we feel so inadequate. God at this point speaks again, saying as He did to Paul, "My grace is sufficient." Through prayer He provides the power to do His will.

We learn through prayer that God never makes a request or a demand without making promises to accomplish it through us. Even Jesus said, "I can do nothing of myself." Neither can we. God's plan provides a power. With God's will He provides a way!

*Lord, reveal to me what you want to accomplish through me.
My heart is willing and I am listening! In Jesus' name, Amen.*

The Anatomy of a Christian Steward

Knees That Kneel - Part II

Day 17, Tuesday, September 25

Perhaps now you are thinking, sure I believe that prayer is power and that marvelous things happen as a result of prayer. I have heard of miraculous things happening in other churches and lives. I believe that God is able to answer any prayer.

Our church prays. We have Dial a Prayer, Prayer Partners, Prayer Groups, Prayer Warriors. Yes, but do you pray? “Oh, I’m too busy to pray” – then you are too busy! Prayer is so important, you need to make time! You don’t have to pray for hours – just pray. Someone said, “Longing in prayer and long prayers are not necessarily the same thing!”

“I don’t know how to pray.” How did you learn to walk or ride a bicycle? You learn to pray by praying. You have little trouble talking to a friend. You can simply talk to your greatest friend – Jesus.

“I don’t know what to pray for.” A young child asked her parents, “Is it OK to pray if you don’t want something?” Yes, and it’s a good time to do so. Another youngster had “said his prayer”, when his sister asked what he asked for. He said, “Nothing, I was just loving Jesus!”

These are pretty good ideas and a great place to start:

- Pray a prayer of thanksgiving and praise. Think of all the wonderful things God has done in your life, your family, your church!

Psalm 100:4 says, “Enter in His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him and bless His name.”

- You can pray for forgiveness.

“If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord will not have listened...” (Psalm 66:18)

“If we confess our sins He is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (I John 1:9)

- You can pray for others. A selfish prayer will not be answered.

For example, the man who prayed:

“God bless me and my wife
Our son, John, and his wife
Us four and no more.
Amen!”

- You can pray for wisdom. James says, “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God...” (James 1:5)
- You can pray for your church. The task before our church is so great that it can only be accomplished with God’s help, and God will help through you.

- You can pray for your fellow members. The other members are seeking to know God's will just as you are. Pray that they, too, may have willing hearts.
- You can pray for our Stewardship Enrichment Capital Campaign and what God would allow you to sacrifice for His glory, your good, and the growth of the Kingdom.

There is no end to what you can pray for. The important thing is that you pray and be receptive to His guidance. Accept His answers. He knows best.

I have one other request. You have prayed that God would give you a willing heart and He has. You prayed to know what God wants to do through you.

Now pray that your willing heart will have the faith in Him and love for His church to do what He has revealed!

You can do more than pray – after you pray. But you cannot do more than pray – until you pray.

Lord, help my unbelief. I have faith that you are my Savior for eternity. Help me to have faith in your provision for now, and for my church through me.

The Anatomy of a Christian Steward

A Spirit That Serves

Day 18, Wednesday, September 26

II Corinthians 5:14

You may not know it, but at Texas A&M the entire student body stands throughout their entire home football games. It is a great tradition and an impressive sight.

It all began in 1922 when the Aggies were headed for the conference championship. They were playing in Dallas and had several players taken from the game with injuries. During half-time the coach wasn't sure that he would have eleven healthy players to put on the field. Looking up in the stands he motioned for King Gill (a basketball player) to come down to the field.

There were no locker rooms, so he put a jersey on him right there. King Gill stood there throughout the second half as the 12th man, so that if they didn't have 11 men to put on the field, he would be ready to play. He stood there, the entire second half, saying, "Coach, if you need me, I'm ready to play." Ever since then the students at Texas A&M have stood and cheered through the entire game. It is their way of saying, "Coach, if you need me, I'm ready to play."

This event is a moving testimony to the spirit of the Aggies and their love for the school's tradition. In our church, however, we need more than having members to stand. We need willingness and involvement. We believe that the Holy Spirit is calling all of us to serve and sacrifice – to be ministers in the New Testament sense.

Remember the Lord's question through David, "...who is willing to consecrate himself today to the Lord?" (I Chronicles 29:5) It is the same question He is asking us today. Our answer must be the same as the children of Israel – they took action, they came forward, they gave, they sacrificed, and they served.

We need more than a handful of players on the field while others stand and cheer. We need for every member to be willing to serve – to be involved personally. We need sacrifice by every one of us!

We need the spirit that says, "Lord, I'm ready to give and to serve when You need me and wherever You need me." And then do it! This is our privilege.

When God places His hand on us, there are two common reactions:

One is that we are unable and unworthy. We do not have the talents and abilities to meet the demands. Our lives do not measure up to the demands. Like Isaiah we feel that we are sinful and not worthy. True – unworthy, but chosen.

The second common reaction is to resist His calling us to be His servants. Yes, servants! The King James translation uses the term "ministry" and "ministers". In today's world, this has become a technical term for the professionals. Actually it means "servant".

- A lot of men react by saying, "Here am I Lord, send my wife."
- Still others say, "I love my Savior. There is nothing I wouldn't do for Him." And that is exactly what they do – nothing.

- On the other hand some paraphrase the hymn:
“I’ll go where you want me to go, dear Lord,
I’ll say what you want me to say,
But, I’m busy right now for myself, dear Lord,
I’ll help you some other day.”

With all of our limitations and excuses, we still hear His call. He counts on you and others like you to fulfill His mission here where you live.

We may not serve Him as Paul did – a missionary and preacher – but we can serve Him as a dedicated lay person.

If you saw the CBS-TV movie, “The Christmas without Snow,” you will remember the scene where a soprano walked out of choir practice because she didn’t get a solo part in the Messiah. As she left, she threw her music at the director and screamed to the choir, “You’re all a bunch of amateurs; I’m a professional.”

The director then said to the choir: “I agree with her. All of you are amateurs. But the word amateur comes from the Latin word amare, meaning “to love.”

He explained that an amateur is one who does something for the love of it, not for pay or prestige or recognition.

This is our motive – love. As the Bible Says: “The love of Christ compels us…” (II Corinthians 5:14) Or as one translation put it, “The love of Christ leaves me no other choice.” His love leaves us no choice but to serve Him with all our heart, because we love Him.

*Lord, please give me a way to give to Stewardship Enrichment for our church,
even if I don't see a way to do it.*

*I welcome you into my life, to change my thinking and give me a new vision,
so that I can experience the power of your love and generosity.*

I trust you.

The Anatomy of a Christian Steward

A Life That Loves

Day 19, Thursday, September 27

Mark 12:30

Toward the end of W.C. Fields' life - in fact, while he lay on his deathbed - a friend stopped by to see him and was rather surprised to find him reading the Bible. As you probably know, W.C. Fields was a lot like the rascally, drunken character he often portrayed. The friend asked, "Why in the world are you reading the Bible?" Are you looking for answers?" W.C. Fields said, "No. I'm looking for loopholes."

When we read the words of Jesus, we sometimes catch ourselves looking for loopholes. He made some hard statements. For example, when asked about the greatest commandment He replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." (Mark 12:30). This leaves no loopholes.

Jesus used one word in Luke 6:38 to describe how we are to live up to the beatitudes. He said, "Give..."

One of the most difficult words for us to follow is His command, "...Love one another, as I have loved you..." (John 13:34). If He had just said, "Love one another," we could try to water it down. But the clause "as I have loved you" makes it absolutely clear what Jesus meant. He then said, "All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another."

How can God ask and expect such love from us? The answer is simple - because He first loved us.

I heard about a young girl whose mother was reading the third chapter of John to her. Pausing after verse 16, the mother exclaimed, "Don't you think that verse is amazing, dear?" The child thought and then said, "No." The mother thought the youngster must have misunderstood, so she repeated the question. But again the girl shook her head, saying, "No. It would be amazing if it were anyone else, Mother. But it really is just like God!"

It is His nature, for God is love. He has demonstrated it in so many ways. He gave His Son! He forgave our sins. He provides for our needs. He gave us His church. He gave us hope for eternity.

In writing to the church at Corinth, the apostle Paul repeatedly said that our giving was proof of our love (II Corinthians 8,9). It was as if he is saying to us today:

- + Do you love God? Let your giving speak it.
- + Do you love your church? Let your giving speak it.
- + Do you love the lost? Let your giving speak it.
- + Do you love the hungry and hurting? Let your giving speak it.

Let me share with you the struggle one Christian went through in coming to the point of complete surrender that love demands. Her name is Mary Crowley, the founder of Home Interiors and Gifts, Inc. She started it as a small door-to-door business and built it into a billion dollar business. In her book, Think Mink, she shares her testimony. At the time of this story, she is a financially strapped single parent struggling with her church commitment.

“There was just no way that I could tithe. Sitting at the kitchen table after the children were asleep, I figured up the stack of bills, my budget for groceries, rent and housekeeper expenses, the bus fare for going to work and to church on Sundays and Wednesdays. If I added 10 percent of my salary to the debit side of my budget, there would be nothing at all left in the miscellaneous column – no money for Christmas presents, books for the kids, or the dentist. Oh, why did children have to have cavities? ‘Lord, You see how it is,’ I prayed. ‘I want to tithe, but I don’t have enough to take care of the kids as it is.’

The answer, as answers to prayer often are, was not what I expected. ‘Well, Mary,’ it seemed God was saying to me, ‘it looks as though you’re not doing such a hot job of providing for the kids by yourself. Why don’t you give me a chance?’ Why not? But I was no dummy in mathematics. I had made good grades in my night accounting class. I knew exactly how much money was in my paycheck from the insurance company where I processed premiums and claims all day. I had memorized fixed expenses. There were always unexpected things such as dentist bills coming along, too.

‘Lord, You know I haven’t enough,’ I argued. ‘Don’t you trust Me, Mary?’ God asked. ‘Well, yes, but ...’ I was literally pacing the floor that night wrestling with an angel. By the time I signed my name on the pledge card for exactly 10 percent of my salary, the clock had already struck midnight and I was exhausted. But somehow it was a great relief. I didn’t know how God was going to do more with nine-tenths of my salary than I could do with ten-tenths, but somehow I felt He was going to do it.”

She proceeds to tell how God “did it”. He continued to bless until her name was known worldwide. Her love for her Lord and her faithful giving to her church and His causes are legendary.

Love always finds a way to give, for love is not love until it gives.

Dear Lord, I will give because I love You.

The Christian's Stewardship

Stewardship Pre-Supposes Sonship

Day 20, Friday, September 28

Frequently I am asked why churches have such a difficult time filling leadership positions, committee personnel, teaching opportunities, etc. Why are there always money issues in the church? (Actually churches do not have money issues. They have spiritual issues). Consider the following.

The scripture has relatively little to say about raising money, but much to say about using money. It is clearly taught and/or basically assumed that one who is a Christian is, by nature, a steward of everything that he is or possesses.

He has been redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. She has received a new life. He is indwelt by the Spirit of God and is empowered by His presence. She is a steward by calling.

My father used to say, "Son, you can't pick up one end of a stick without picking up the other end." He simply meant that every choice has consequences. When one chooses Christ as Savior, he also chooses to be a faithful steward, and to hear the Master say, "Well done, good and faithful steward," or be an unfaithful steward and hear him say, "Depart from me, I never knew you."

I'm convinced that the reason many people have a problem with stewardship is that they are Christians, but are not committed to Christ. They accepted Christ as Savior, but not as Lord. They have never responded to the claim Christ has on their lives – their time, talent, and treasure.

When it comes to giving, they are like the little boy whose mother had given him two nickels. One was for church and the other for candy. When he got out of the car at church, he dropped one of the coins and it rolled in the drain. He looked down the grate and said, "Goodbye church nickel."

In such a life there is no place for Christ and certainly no place for the church. There is no recognition that a Christian's life is to be lived in a stewardship relationship to Christ.

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There is another group. These study the Bible, attend the seminars, and never miss a lecture series. They listen to every tape that comes their way and read all the new books on spiritual living. They lift their hands in prayer and their voices in praise. The problem is that is all they do. They forget that "faith without deeds is useless."

Suppose as a father, I am going to be away for the day, and I leave a note for my son. I tell him to mow the yard, edge the drive, weed the hedges, sweep the driveway and bag the cuttings. When I return at the end of the day I find him reading and re-reading my letter. He is diagramming the sentences, defining the words, and analyzing their meaning. He even sings songs to me and tells me how much he loves me.

What should I say? One phrase should cover it. "Son, prove your love by doing my work!" Sonship demands service. Valid Christianity results in sacrificial living. Paul expressed it this way – "your giving is a proof of your love." (II Corinthians 8:24) It includes time, talent, touch, thought, treasure and testimony. Valid Sonship means valuable stewardship.

Sonship pre-supposes stewardship, and we prove our Christianity and our love for Him by what we give of ourselves. Paul said that our giving of self and substance “proves our love!” (II Corinthians 8:8).

*Lord, my prayer is that I, too, may show my love
by being about my Father's business.*

The Christian's Stewardship

Stewardship Recognizes Ownership

Day 21, Saturday, September 29

I Corinthians 6:19-20

Someone was asked for the simplest definition of stewardship he knew. He immediately replied, "He owns it all!" Once we recognize this, most of our stewardship problems will be solved.

Listen to what the Bible says:

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" ... and "God created man in His own image." (Genesis 1:1, 1:27)

"The earth is the Lord's and everything in it; the world, and all who live in it." (Psalm 24:1)

"For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." (Psalm 50:10)

"Your silver and your gold is mine." (I Kings 20:3)

This is clear. Everything is God's by nature of creation and He has not surrendered the title of ownership to anyone at anytime.

It is also true that ownership is His by our surrender to Him when we met Him. We know as the Bible teaches - "You are not your own. You are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's. (I Corinthians 6:19-20) We are "not redeemed with...silver and gold...but with the precious blood of Christ" (I Peter 1:18-19).

This sacrificial love of Christ for us is the motivating force that causes the Christian to surrender himself completely to the Savior. He becomes like the Macedonians who "first gave themselves to the Lord." (II Corinthians 8:5)

How many times have you seen a business with a large sign that says, "Under New Management"? They are saying that the business is under new ownership. They are implying that things are different. Changes have been made.

This is certainly true in the Christian life. When it comes to obedience, the Christian must obey his Lord's command and follow His leadership. You give up control to Him.

God is in the control tower of our lives. Unquestioned obedience to him is essential if we are to avoid many evils, errors, and even disaster.

"Trust and obey, for there's no other way, to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey."

This life requires faithfulness. The New Testament says, "It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." (I Corinthians 4:2) Jesus taught this in His parables. He concluded His teaching by commending the obedient ones - "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things..." (Matthew 25:21)

Our faithfulness is measured by the use of our time, talent, touch, thoughts, treasure and testimony. This means everything when we realize we shall also give an account of our stewardship.

This is most obvious when seen in the stewardship of our possessions. The Bible is clear. We all know this and yet we look for ways to avoid or evade responsibility.

We forget (or try to forget) that all we have is His. We struggle with how much of “my money” should I give when we should be saying how much of “God’s money” should I keep. Isn’t it all His anyway?

This story from the past has a searching message for today’s Christian.

Many years ago a man had the highly responsible position of caring for a lighthouse on a rugged coast. Each month he received a new supply of oil to keep the beacon shining to warn ships of their danger.

Visitors often called on the keeper. A woman from the nearby village came to him and pleaded for a bottle of oil to use in the stove to keep her children warm. A father asked for a little oil that his son might have fuel for the lamp by which he studied his lessons. Other visitors came and begged oil for various purposes, all of which seemed reasonable enough. The keeper gave a jar here and a bottle there of the precious oil until toward the end of the month he noticed that the supply tank was nearly empty.

One night the light of the beacon went out, because there was no more oil. It was a stormy night and that evening three ships crashed upon the rocky coast.

The Keeper was apologetic, but the reply of the officials was firm, “You were given one task: you were a steward of the light! The tragedy is your fault.”

And Jesus said, “Give an account of your stewardship.”

***Lord, I want to handle my life and everything in it as a steward.
You own all, and all of me. Help me to be a “well done” kind of steward.***