



Managing GOD's Money

Theme for the Month: Biblical Stewardship

Many pastors reserve a Sunday in January to preach on stewardship; some devote the entire month to this topic. Mostly, their messages remind us to present 'our tithes and offerings' to the Lord. They ignore the stewardship of time, talents, and the environment, and they don't stress stewardship as a lifestyle.

Each week this month, we will look at what it means to be God's stewards under these headings:

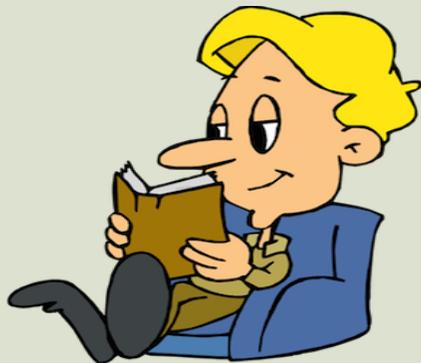
- April 1-7 - Stewardship: In the beginning!
- April 8-14 - Time: Busy but standing still!
- April 15- 21 - Money: What are you doing wit God's 90%?
- April 22- 28 - Talents: How am I using my gifts?
- April 29-30 - Accountability: In the end!



Topic for the Week - Accountability: In the end!

April 29-30

The Word



1 Corinthians 4:1-4

So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.

I believe accountability starts when nobody is around; it has everything to do with the person we are when nobody's watching.

You're late for church so you push the speed limit, just a bit — praying all the way the cops won't get you. Then again, you see a pornographic magazine; you look left, then right, then left again, and skim it quickly. Nobody saw you in both instances. Well, at least no human did!

I like Apostle Paul's comments on accountability. First and most significant, we should realize our accountability as believers in Jesus Christ is to Christ, not to men. So it doesn't matter who is around when we do a job; Jesus is always watching. Paul reminds us in Colossians 3:23 to work unto the Lord always.

Our accountability is wide-ranging, extending to the words we use, to time, talents, spiritual gifts, the environment, money, wealth, and possessions God has made available

to us. We are His stewards all the time, and must act this way always.

In the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30, Jesus directly reprimanded the servant who buried the one coin His master gave him. This parable shows each individual's gifts and abilities will decide his or her accountability. For instance, in the parable, each person got a different amount: one person got five talents, another two, and the other one (Matthew 25:15). Each had to account for what he got.

We must use Jesus' wealth and possessions we manage fully for His glory; always aware one day Jesus will ask for an accounting.

Besides, Jesus will hold Bible teachers and preachers to a higher accountability standard than others. Listen to Apostle James' caution for teachers and would-be teachers of the Word:

"Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, be-

cause you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly" (James 3:1).

Many TV evangelists and other preachers have slighted this admonition as they continue to tickle their followers' ears with heretic but popular Bible interpretations.

Earlier this month we introduced "keeping", which aims to minimize money, wealth, and possessions we

tion, a poor, sick beggar, didn't move the rich man. He didn't think he would be accountable to God. So, he lived according to his rules, died, and went to hell.

Lazarus, on the other hand, sat at the rich man's gate begging while in need of medical attention. He died and went to heaven.

In hell, the rich man pleaded to return to earth to warn others they will be accountable for their actions and belongings they use; but it was too late.

The message: we have limited time on earth. How we use time, talents, gifts, and other belongings matter to Jesus. With His help, we can become good stewards. Choose today to follow Jesus and become good stewards of time, talents, and His material assets.

The Bible shows many examples of the effects of living apart from God. It shows also many assurances from Jesus of eternal life with Him. Respond to Jesus' call today and invite Him to take control of every area of your life so you can secure eternal life.

account for his or her life on earth. Will you be like the rich man with regrets or Lazarus in the arms of our Savior?

Meditate on John 3:1-21 this week, and remember Jesus is waiting for your invitation. He will accept you as you are and the Holy Spirit will come to live in you to change your life; you can become more like Christ each day.

Memory Verse

Matthew 25:21

"His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

use, and maximize amounts used (kept) in God's Kingdom, under Jesus' direction. This is a continuing goal that needs a major mind-set change away from tithing; it is what the Word says (Psalm 24:1-2). If tithing (giving one tenth) has gripped you, answer these two questions:

- First, which one of the tithes am I offering?
- Second, how does Jesus control the remaining 90% of His money that I spend?

If you practice 'keeping' you'll ask for Jesus' approval as you prepare your "money map" (planned spending listing) and as you follow it; in other words, you will spend with an accountability emphasis!

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) shows the need to adopt the "keeping" lifestyle. The rich man saw no need to live with an eternal focus. Lazarus' condi-

Application



Jeremiah 32:17

Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.

One day each of us will have to

Luke 16:19-31

"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

"The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried.

In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.' " But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us. "He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' " "No, father Abraham," he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

