

## **Tools for Wise Leadership**

*A programme of TWR-Africa, produced by TWR-Zimbabwe, presented by Rev Dr Roy Musasiwa*

**Series 13: Leadership Stewardship**

**Talk 03: Stewardship of Operating Within Boundaries**

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Welcome to the programme Tools for Wise Leadership.

We are focusing on the issue of stewardship in Christian leaders. We defined stewardship as management of someone else's affairs or property and we are exploring the implications of this definition.

In previous programmes we said the first principle of stewardship is that the God who owns all things has made us stewards or managers of what belongs to him. The second principle is that it is the owner, and not the steward, who determines the purpose and usage of the property. If we are not in tune with the owner and his will we are bound to abuse what has been entrusted to us. The third principle is that the main purpose of a steward is to add value to what has been entrusted to him.

Today we proceed to stewardship principle number 4. A steward must always act within boundaries. This is part of the overall principle of accountability that runs through all other principles. Stewardship always implies accountability to the owner. All of us will be called upon to give an account of how we used God's resources entrusted to us. That is what happened in the parable of talents that we looked at.

Accountability means that we will all be answerable. But we are not only answerable for the extent to which we have added value to what has been entrusted to us. We are also answerable for the extent to which we operate within the boundaries defined by the owner of the property or the affairs.

From the very first time Adam and Eve were created God defined boundaries for them. God did not give them carte blanche to act as they liked. Yes they were given a lot of freedom, but it was not license to do as they pleased. God defined boundaries for them. In Genesis 2:15-17 we read, "And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'"

You see, here God not only defined the boundaries; he also defined consequences for going outside those boundaries. We can well define sin as acting outside God-given boundaries. And it is not possible for us to operate outside boundaries and get away with it. There is a spiritual law that the Bible calls the law of sin and death. That means for every sin there must be a corresponding death. And that is why God said when you eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil it you will surely die. The death is not necessarily physical death, although it often includes that. Death includes the death of good health, death of innocence, the death of trust and fellowship, the death of joy, of opportunities, hope and many other things that make our lives worthwhile.

Now because the Devil's agenda is that of bringing about death, he influences us through deception, fear and other devices to operate outside God's boundaries so that we can die. That is what he did with Adam and Eve. He pretended to increase their freedom while in fact he was leading them to their death. And when they ate of the forbidden fruit so many things died. Their innocence, fellowship with God and fellowship with one another all died.

Let us illustrate this steward principle of operating within boundaries by taking two contrasting Old Testament characters. Joseph was a good steward because he operated within God's boundaries when he refused to sleep with Potiphar's wife. Potiphar's wife had tried to assure Joseph that they

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could sin safely. After all Potiphar was to be gone for a long time. She herself was no doubt very attractive. Many men would have jumped into bed when presented with such an opportunity. But not Joseph. He knew his boundaries. And God rewarded him well.

But now here is a contrasting model. Saul operated outside God's boundaries when he made an unauthorized sacrifice according to the story we read in 1 Samuel 13. Only priests were authorized to do this and Saul was not from a priestly family. But he was facing a critical situation with the Philistines threatening to overwhelm his army. Logically it seemed he had compelling reasons to operate outside God's boundaries. He explained these reasons to Samuel in verse 11-12:

*When I saw **that** the men were scattering, and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Micmash, I thought, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the Lord's favor.' So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering.*

Yet despite the reasons sounding compelling Samuel responded:

*You acted foolishly. You have not kept the command the Lord your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. But now your kingdom will not endure; the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the Lord's command.*

Samuel was in fact telling Saul: You operated outside God's boundaries and your kingdom will die. There is the law of sin and death applying again!

Now leader, this issue of operating within God's boundaries is a serious one as these biblical examples show. If you are a steward of the work that belongs to God will you operate within God's given boundaries? Unfortunately ever since the days of Adam and Eve, so many people, including leaders, have fallen because of operating outside God's boundaries. And the reasons remain the same. Satan makes it seem more fun or more rewarding to operate outside boundaries.

The modern world has made operating outside boundaries seem even more rewarding by introducing the concept of human rights taking precedence over the concept of human responsibility. Removing boundaries is made to seem like a way of obtaining the freedom otherwise denied to us. So we have an emphasis on children's rights, meaning their freedom to act pretty much as they like without being spanked. There is women's rights, making so many wives feel that submitting to their husbands is old fashioned nonsense. Boundaries are being more and more destroyed as prostitution is now dignified as legitimate work. Boundaries are being destroyed even more when men marry men and women marry women. Indeed human rights has become a new form of religion that is bringing disaster on our societies.

Now if you want to be a successful leader you need to be a good steward who operates within boundaries. That is a very important implication of the definition of stewardship that says stewardship is management of someone else's affairs or property. We have to operate within the boundaries defined by the owner.

Well, we shall explore more principles of stewardship in the next programmes. Meanwhile I urge you to operate within God's boundaries by not abusing the time, the money or the people entrusted to you as a steward. And now that you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

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