

## Tools for Wise Leadership

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

**Series 13: Leadership Stewardship**

**Talk 08: Stewardship of Physical Resources**

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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. In previous programmes we emphasized that the main purpose of a steward is to add value to what has been entrusted to him. We then applied this and other principles to various areas of life including the stewardship of the relationships God has given to us. Today we are looking at the stewardship of money and other physical resources. Since all physical resources were created by, and belong to God, we must use them optimally for God's glory, without selfishness and without waste.

Firstly, this has to do with developing a stewardship attitude. A stewardship attitude seeks to glorify God the giver, rather than the resources God has given. When we glorify what God has created or given to us, we turn those things into idols. There are leaders for whom money, or what money buys, has become an idol. Their lives begin to revolve around those things. They cling to and rely on those things to the extent that God the giver becomes marginalized.

It follows that if money has become a kind of god there is a big temptation to acquire that money by any means, including unethical means. This is where we come to the problem of corruption in leaders. In Exodus 18:21 Moses was advised to look for leaders who are capable, who fear God, who are trustworthy and who hate dishonest gain. You see it does not say people who dislike dishonest gain – it says those who **hate** dishonest gain. That is a strong emotion. Africa would be a much better place if all its leaders were to be people who hate dishonest gain.

Proverbs 19:1 says, "Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity than a man who is perverse in speech, and is a fool." Some people try to get unfair advantages over others by making or receiving all kinds of improper payments which amount to bribes. Leader, stay away from giving or accepting bribes if you want to be a good steward of God's resources. Exodus 23:8 says, "Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds those who see and twists the words of the righteous." In other words, after accepting a bribe you become blind. You can no longer give fair judgement for you will then be forced to favour the person who has bribed you.

Another form of dishonest gain is when a leader fails to give other workers their fair share of resources and channels most of those resources to himself or herself. Luke 12 from verse 42 talks about the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time. It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, says Jesus, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But suppose the steward says to himself, 'My master is taking a long time in coming,' and he then begins to beat the menservants and maidservants and to eat and drink and get drunk. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers.

Here Jesus is talking about an unfair distribution of resources. Do you know of situations where people in the management team are overpaid while workers are on starvation wages? The management team members can manage to take expensive holidays on house boats while the workers can hardly feed their families or pay rent.

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Then stewardship means that you as a leader must follow the financial policies established by your organization. That will in many cases mean that you spend money within approved budgets and use appropriate financial, accounting, purchasing and other approved procedures.

And then a very important aspect of stewardship is allocating resources to promote the work of God. When we are conscious that all we have belongs to God, we will not feel that giving to God is a form of loss. That must have been how some Israelites felt when they returned from exile and selfishly looked after their own interests while the Lord's house remained in ruins. God had to address them through Haggai 1:4-9:

*Is it time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin? Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.*

You see what these people had not realized was that givers are winners and takers are losers. Givers are aligned to God's self-giving nature. That is why they will always win. Takers, on the other hand, have a scarcity mentality that believes the more I keep for myself the richer I will be. But such takers are ultimately losers. They expected much, but it turned out to be little. In other words The Lord did not bless their resources because they used those resources selfishly. They did not realize that what they had belonged to God, and that therefore God's work must not suffer when they had God's resources in their pockets.

When it comes to other physical assets, a good steward will protect, preserve and maintain the physical assets for which he or she is responsible in a manner that assures their continued existence in the best possible condition. Take a car as an example. You need to give to your car so that it can give back to you. You give the car attention in maintenance costs and the time to clean it, check tyre pressure, change oil and light bulbs etc. When you do that the car in turn gives you long and joyful rides. But if you just seek to receive without giving, it will not be long before your car stops running.

On a wider scale still, a good steward will look after the environment by such means as proper waste disposal, looking after trees and preventing unnecessary soil erosion. We have to look after our water sources by ensuring that they are not polluted. What about our wild animals. Surely if we are wise stewards we have to preserve those animals by ensuring food supplies and preventing poachers from making short term gains while risking some animals becoming extinct. We have to look after our roads by filling up potholes and resurfacing them from time to time. I can go on talking about many other environmental factors. But the point must by now be clear. What we look after will in turn look after us. Future generations must thank us for bequeathing to them a safe and clean environment. On the other hand future generations will judge us harshly if they inherit an unsafe and dangerous environment due to our own greed or neglect.

Well today we have concentrated on stewardship of money and physical resources, including our environment. As stewards we have to add value to what has been entrusted to us. We have to use resources and account for them in the way intended by God and by those who have entrusted these resources to us. Since all physical resources were created by, and belong to God, we must use them optimally for God's glory, without selfishness and without waste. So until we meet in the next programme practice these tools of wise leadership.

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