



## WARM UP

We are in the middle of a series about money. But, in fact, there are many different resources we enjoy and use daily. The same attitudes and ideas that speak to money also speak to the other “blessings” we enjoy. Talk about the following resources and how “having them” impacts your life.

1. Health (What difference does it make that we do not deal with preventable diseases – like malaria – and have access to the best medical care in the world?)
2. Family of Origin (In a world where millions of children grow up on the streets, what difference does it make that you’ve had loving and nurturing parents?)
3. Education (You are literate, know some math,

keep up with the news, avoid superstitions. What difference does that make in your life?)



## GROUP THINK

Read Matthew 25:14-30. Discuss the following:

1. Who is Jesus thinking of when he tells about a “man going on a journey” in this parable?
2. Who are the “servants”?
3. What is the “property”?
4. Do you believe God “entrusts” his servants with different levels of responsibility – “each according to his ability”? Give examples.
5. Do you believe God will hold us accountable for how we have used what he has given us?
6. Whose purposes are served with the “talents” in this story: God’s or the servants?
7. This parable points to a “cardinal sin” of un-

faithful servants. What is it?

8. What do you feel reading and talking about this parable? Aloof? Threatened? Convicted?



## APPLY IT

Spend some time this week thinking, talking, and praying about the following:

1. Are you a “blessed” person? What resources has God given you? Make a list.
2. Are you a 1, 5, or 10 talent person?
3. How are you using your gifts for God’s purposes? Or have you “buried” your gifts so far as the Kingdom goes?

Pray that God would help you be a “faithful servant” with the resources he has entrusted to you.



## MY MONEY/GOD’S BUSINESS

Where you start often determines where you end up. That’s true of geography, relationships, and attitudes. Start poorly, and it’s very difficult to get where you need to be. Start well, and you’re half way to the right place already.

Our attitudes about money/health/time/privileges – every resource we enjoy so abundantly – have at least two starting points. One plays into all our American prejudices about independence, competence, hard work, pulling your own weight, fairness, ownership, and freedom. If you begin with the assumption that “I earned this” ... “I deserve this” ... “I worked hard for this,” it doesn’t take long to get to “This is mine” ... “I own this” ... “It belongs to me.” From there, it’s only a short step to “I can do as I think best with this” ... “I have a right to use these resources as I see fit.”

But there is another starting point that leads to a very different place. It’s a beginning rooted in God as Creator. Everything is *his*: the earth and everything in it. These are *his* resources. These are *his* gifts. If we start with the assumption “God gave this to me” ... “This is a blessing from his hand” ... “I have been trusted with his resources,” we come to feel a sense of responsibility, accountability, and stewardship. We are haunted by Jesus’ words: “To whom much has been given, much is required” (Lk 12:48). The result is calling and mission. “I need to do what God wants with these blessings” ... “I can enjoy, but I also must bless” ... “This is not just for me – it is for others and for the Kingdom.”

Where you start often determines where you end up. If your possessions, education, health, looks, and time were *earned*, then do what you want. But if they were *given* ...

### DEUTERONOMY 10:14

To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it.

### PSALM 24:1

The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.

### PSALM 50:9-10

I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills.

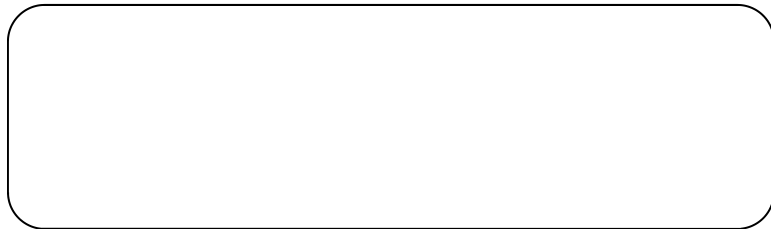
## QUOTATION

Stewardship is personal responsibility for taking care of another person's property or financial affairs. Historically, stewardship was the responsibility given household servants to bring food and drinks to a castle dining hall. The term was then expanded to indicate a household employee's responsibility for managing household or domestic affairs. Stewardship later became the responsibility for taking care of passengers' domestic needs on a ship, train and airplane, or managing the service provided to diners in a restaurant. The term continues to be used in these specific ways, but it is also used in a more general way to refer to a responsibility to take care of something one does not own.

*Wikipedia*

# PERSONAL STUDY

Sometimes, even simple words can yield profound insights. Let's think about the word "belong(s)." The Bible asserts – almost casually, off-handedly – that certain things "belong" to the Lord. They are properly *his*. Read the following passages and list those things that are said to "belong" to God: Ex 13:2, 12; Lev 27:30; Dt 1:17; 10:14; Job 12:13, 16; 25:2; 41:11; Ps 22:28; 47:9; 95:4-5; 111:10; Ez 18:4; Ro 1:6; 7:4; 14:8; Ga 3:29; 5:24; 1Pe 2:9; Rev 7:10.



Think again about the parables of Jesus. In so many of his parables, Jesus assumed that God was owner, master, king, father. List out the following for each of these parables:

Parable:	What was God's role?	What did God own?
Mt 18:23-34		
Mt 20:1-16		
Mt 21:28-32		
Mt 21:33-44		
Mt 22:2-14		
Mt 24:45-51		
Mt 25:14-30		
Lk 7:41-43		
Lk 12:35-40		
Lk 15:11-32		
Lk 16:1-8		

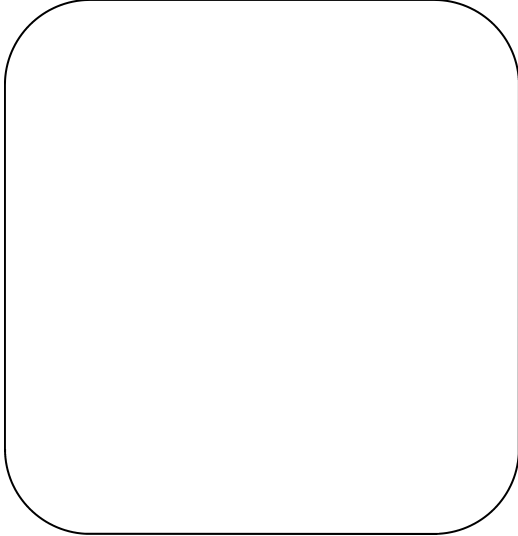
If God owns everything and gives to us, if we are to be judged by the way we use God's resources, then is it possible to "steal" from God? Appropriate his resources in illegitimate and irresponsible ways? Spend them selfishly on things that are trivial in God's eyes? Read the following texts and comment:

Malachi 3:6-12

Matthew 21:38  
(in the context of the wider parable)

Lk 15:13, 30  
(note the word "squandered")

James 5:1-6  
(how does not paying wages, hoarding, and self-indulgence constitute "robbery"?)



Read Luke 17:7-10. This is a difficult, perplexing parable. Think about the following and struggle with how this parable applies to you and me.

1. There is a master and a servant. In the language of parable, to whom is Jesus referring?
2. Notice that the fields and sheep, the house and food, even the servant himself belongs to the master. What does the servant own? What is "his"?
3. Are the master's possessions and the servant's work used for the benefit of the master or the servant?
4. When has the servant "only done his duty"?
5. What does this parable say about us, our use of resources, and the expectations of God?

## RESOURCES

### BOOKS

Neither Poverty Nor Riches, Craig Blomberg (I've ordered but not read this. But I know this writer and one of our members recommends this book)

Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger, Ron Sider (powerful, provocative, perturbing)

### GROUP STUDY

[www.elca.org/stewardship/EarthKeeping/earthkeeping%20300.pdf](http://www.elca.org/stewardship/EarthKeeping/earthkeeping%20300.pdf) (an excellent guide for thinking about Christian stewardship of the environment)

### WEBSITES

[www.sermonsfromseattle.com/stewardship\\_oikonomics.htm](http://www.sermonsfromseattle.com/stewardship_oikonomics.htm) (the text of a sermon on stewardship – note misspelling!)

[www.rbc.org/uploaded/Files/Bible\\_Study/Discovery\\_Series/PDFs/Jesus\\_Parables\\_about\\_Money.pdf](http://www.rbc.org/uploaded/Files/Bible_Study/Discovery_Series/PDFs/Jesus_Parables_about_Money.pdf) (a great synopsis of Jesus' teaching on money)

[Links will be available on our web site.]