

The Soul OF A Steward

SPRING 2005

A quarterly tool for pastors and stewardship leaders in the local church



Stewardship: A Transformational Journey of the Head, Hands, and Heart

As you plan stewardship emphasis throughout this year we offer for your consideration a theme that the Covenant Commission on Stewardship has designed as a verbal and visual description of stewardship in the life of the believer and in the life of the congregation. That theme is: “Stewardship: A Transformational Journey of the *Head*, *Hands*, and *Heart*.”

We offer you the possibility of following this theme for a consistent quarterly focus on stewardship throughout the year. In the fall quarter we presented an introduction to understanding stewardship as a transformational journey of the head, hands, and heart. In the winter issue we focused on that part of the journey which begins in the head, our intellect and our mind. In this issue we will focus on the continuation of the journey that takes place through the work of our *hands*, that is our actions, the disciplines and obedience of our lives.

When I was playing basketball in high school my coach and I had different ideas about what my basketball priorities should be. For me it was simple—what mattered was playing the game. I disliked the practice and drills and endless hours of shooting and dribbling. My interest was completely focused on the excitement of being in the game. I couldn’t wait to get the drills and practice over and start the scrimmage or play in the big game. I just wanted to play.

My coach had different ideas. He knew that my success, once I got in the game, would be absolutely dependent on the transformative effect of the practice and the drills and standing at that line shooting free throws for what felt like forever. You see, the coach wanted something more than just another kid who played basketball. My coach wanted me to practice and grow and develop so that I could “be” a basketball player. My coach had it right. There is a world of differ-

Spring 2005 Stewardship Emphasis

Theme: A Transformational Journey of the Head, Hands, and Heart

Verse: “...train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come” (1 Timothy 4:7-8, NIV).

Key Concept: The obedience and disciplines through which we live out stewardship are the means by which we “are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18, NIV).

ence between someone who plays basketball and a person who is in their very essence as a basketball player. Discipline and practice is the only road to that goal. Jesus calls us to the same journey. Jesus cares more about what we are becoming than simply what we do. Jesus honors every step of obedience in our lives, but he also calls us to the disciplines that allow us to become people who live out obedience from the very essence of who we are. Jesus's priority is our transformation into his likeness with ever increasing glory. And, Jesus cares about our transformation for it is through our transformation that we become more fully agents of God's reconciliation and love and justice in the world.

This is the transformational journey of stewardship. A journey that begins with a whole new understand-

ing of God's presence and power in the world and in our lives but continues with our intentional participation in God's transformative work in our lives. That process of the "hands" is the process of obedience and training. We obey every opportunity we have, but we also train so that we can become people with greater and greater freedom to live in obedience, to live out God's rule in our lives and in our world. Paul called this process training. He wrote, "... train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come."

Paul tells us we are to train ourselves. I don't just need to do what is right. I need to become a person who is changed from the inside out so that I

have the power, the capacity to do what is right. Training, the practice of spiritual disciplines, is where I do the things that I can do so that the Holy Spirit will transform me to do things that on my own I can't do. John Ortberg writes that, "this kind of training is any activity I can do by direct effort that will help me do what I can not do now by direct effort."

So I read the Bible, I spend time in prayer, I fast, I get alone and spend time where it is just God and me. I celebrate; I intentionally let it all out when I experience God's blessings. I do these things not because God will give me brownie points for doing them, but because they are actions through which God works the Holy Spirit's gracious transformation in my life.

This is the transformational journey

How to incorporate *The Soul of a Steward* into worship...

- 1) Each week, include a stewardship quote and a Bible verse pertaining to whole-life stewardship in the worship folder or bulletin. Quotes and verses are provided in each issue of *The Soul of the Steward*.
- 2) Once a month during the Sunday worship, have a layperson read the quote and verse for that day, and then briefly share how he or she has practiced that aspect of stewardship, and how it has helped him or her to grow spiritually. Generally, this takes about 3-5 minutes. (See Sample Questions at right.)
- 3) Once a month, include a bulletin insert in the worship folder or bulletin to reinforce the quarterly stewardship theme.
- 4) Include at least one message each quarter that specifically focuses the attention of the congregation on whole-life stewardship. The recommendation for this quarter is to focus on the theme, *Stewardship: A Transformational Journey of the Head, Hands, and Heart*

Sample Interview Questions: Very few things are more powerful for teachers in the life of the local church than the witness of ordinary people about how God has moved in their lives. Once a month have a layperson read one of the quotes and then share how they have been blessed by that aspect of stewardship in their life. If you have the capability, it can be helpful to videotape and edit these interviews for play during worship.

Here are some sample lead questions:

- 1) What are some different ways you have enjoyed serving? What is one of your most memorable service opportunities? How has your service changed the lives of those you served? How has serving changed your life?
- 2) Of the different spiritual disciplines, which ones come naturally to you? Which one(s) have you found more difficult to practice? What has been your experience in practicing these disciplines that does not come as naturally for you? How have they changed you? What words of encouragement do you have to share with others? Reflect on an instance when:
 - You knew what was the right thing to do, but you didn't want to do it.
 - You chose to do something someone else suggested out of your respect for them, even though you didn't know if it would be enjoyable or really make any difference.
 - You had to buckle down and be disciplined about something, even though it wasn't any fun, but you realized the fruit of your discipline later when the opportunity came to act on what you had been practicing.

What did you choose to do? What happened? What were the implications of your choice? How did it make you feel? What insights did you gain from that experience? What lessons did you learn? In hindsight, would you make the same choice? Why or why not?

of stewardship. Stewardship is not simply obedience to God's command. Stewardship is a primary spiritual discipline through which the Holy Spirit works his transformation in my life. I practice the multiple disciplines of stewardship so that I will become a steward. So we ask people to serve, not only because there is work that needs to be done, but so that by serving they might allow the Holy Spirit to make them into people who are by their very nature servants. And so we give, not only because there are ministry needs, but so that by giving, regular, proportional, biblical giving, we might become people who reflect the heart of our God who is himself a giver. We give, with open hands, so that God might change us more and more into people who are givers. Our hands follow our minds, that is what we are learning about the upside down priorities and power of God's kingdom, and through the work of our hands, our regular spiritual disciplines, the Holy Spirit changes us. What we do changes what and who we become. By our hands we are conformed into Christ's likeness.

What is extremely important in this equation is that these spiritual disciplines of stewardship are not a matter of moral merit. We do not give, or serve, or care

for the planet in order to get brownie points from God. This is not a matter of external obedience. Rather this is preparation and participation so that God can transform us from the inside out. This is not about external righteousness; it is about allowing God to create in us, as Oswald Chamber's writes, a stronger and stronger family resemblance to Jesus Christ.

Stewardship is a transformational journey. It is a transformational journey of the head, hands, and heart. What we do with our hands, what we do with our daily and life long disciplines is the raw material our God uses to grow us more fully into his children. One of the greatest gifts we can ever give to our people is to call them into the spiritual disciplines of stewardship. One of the greatest gifts we can give to people is to help them enter into the spiritual discipline of giving. Our God is faithful. Through God's Holy Spirit he will use the work of our hands to craft us day by day more profoundly into people who reflect and mirror his image and participate with God in answering Jesus prayer, that God's will "be done on earth as it is in heaven." Stewardship, a transformational journey of the head, hands, and heart is an exciting, energizing, and hope-filled

journey.

This year, *The Soul of a Steward* is focused on the transformational journey of stewardship in the life of the believer and in the life of the church.

- In the *Fall* we looked at the whole journey—head, hands, and heart
- In the *Winter* we looked at the journey with our *head*
- In the *Spring* we begin the journey with our *hands*
- In the *Summer* the journey culminates with the transformation of our *hearts*

Each quarterly issue will provide you with a plan to encourage people to share how their practice of stewardship has moved them forward in the journey of head, hands, and heart.

If you have missed an issue or simply would like another copy of any past issue, we encourage you to look on the Stewardship webpage of the Covenant website or contact the Covenant Resource Center whose number and email address can be found on the back page of this issue.

Quotes and verses for Winter 2005 *The Soul of a Steward*

All verses are NIV unless otherwise indicated.

V: "train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come." 1 Tim. 4:7-8

V: The obedience and disciplines through which we live out stewardship are the means by which we "are being transformed into (God's) likeness with ever-increasing glory." 2Cor. 3:18

V: Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. James 1:22

Q: Obedience to God is always for our good and his glory. Unknown

Q: You can never go wrong when you choose to obey Christ. Unknown

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