

how to design a **Family** Stewardship Philosophy



THE NATIONAL CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION®



A planning tool for your family

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While most Christians would agree that financial stewardship is an important part of the Christian life, what does that really mean? And, how should the concept of stewardship apply to our daily lives?

Take out two sheets of paper. At the top of the first sheet, write “Assets I Own” and then make a list of the assets you own. Go ahead. Take a moment and do this before reading further. Okay. Finished? Now, on the second sheet, write “Assets I Manage” and then make a list of the assets you manage . . . for the Lord. What might these two sheets reveal about your beliefs and behaviors concerning the things you possess? Do you think like an owner or a manager?

Today’s pervasive culture is constantly telling us success is

having more and more. However, biblical teaching is quite the contrary.

The Scriptures have much to say about God’s ownership of all things and man’s role as manager.¹ Jesus, himself, tells us rather pointedly that no one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.² So, either God is the master of all we possess or we are.

Therein lies the difficulty of the above exercise. You cannot list your possessions on both sheets of paper. Either we see God as the owner of all we hold, or all we hold will own us.

Meaningful Scriptures

Truths from the Word of God

“But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.”

– Deuteronomy 8:18

“Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.”

– I Corinthians 4:2

“You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.”

– II Corinthians 9:11



The Family Stewardship Philosophy

Developing a philosophy that can help you discover and carry out God's purposes

Developing a Family Stewardship Philosophy can help you discover and carry out God's purposes for your management of the resources He has entrusted to you. A completed Family Stewardship Philosophy may take on many different forms when finished. However, it essentially consists of a statement (or collection of statements) concerning your core beliefs, objectives and commitments with respect to four phases of wealth management: acquisition, preservation, utilization and transition.

A well developed Family Stewardship Philosophy can help you to:

- Acknowledge and declare God's ownership over all things entrusted to you;
- Identify and strengthen your convictions concerning the appropriate use of wealth;
- Provide an accountability measure for your ongoing financial decision making;

- Educate your professional advisors regarding your eternal investment perspective; and
- Share with your future heirs your beliefs regarding the source and purpose for your family's wealth.

The discovery process for your Family Stewardship Philosophy includes: study, prayer, journaling, discussion and drafting. While each family is unique in its relational dynamics, you may wish for your family members to work through this booklet individually before discussing them together as a couple or as a family.

The remaining sections of this booklet provide you with scripture references and discussion questions to aid you in designing your Family Stewardship Philosophy. Please know that as we have put this booklet together, we have prayed that you will find the joy-filled life of freedom and blessing that comes with placing it all back into His hands and whole-heartedly embracing your steward's role.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the Lord.

– *Jeremiah 29:11-14a*



Phase 4 – Wealth Transition

Preparing and entrusting your wealth to the next steward

Whether during lifetime or at death, every person will eventually transition all of their assets to the next steward. The key question is whether the next steward is ready, able and willing to carry out their God entrusted stewardship role. Have you prayerfully sought God's plan concerning whom the next stewards should be when you pass on to eternal glory some day? Are you confident they are ready to carry out God's plan for their lives and these resources?

1. Given the typical three options for estate distribution – heirs, charity and taxes – what do you believe is the current allocation of your estate in percentages? What would you like for them to be?
2. Do you know the approximate amount the government will require you to pay in estate taxes when you die?
3. Do you feel the government will be an effective steward of the tax dollars you may owe? Why or why not?

4. What type of inheritance do you want to provide your heirs?
5. What do you want an inheritance from you to help your heirs to accomplish?
6. Will the transition of your assets help or hinder the desire you have for your heirs delineated in #6? In what ways?
7. Are your heirs prepared to preserve, grow and utilize wealth responsibly in their role as the Lord's next steward?
8. Imagine your heir receiving a check today for the amount they are likely to inherit from you some day. How would this impact their lives?
9. Do you plan to inform your heirs of your inheritance planning decisions? Why or why not?
10. How much risk is there of family disunity, indignation or lack of cooperation concerning the handling of

estate assets among your heirs?

11. To what extent are you concerned with the ability of your heirs to handle assets or have sufficient interest to manage wealth or a family business?
12. Should all your heirs share equally or are there different capacities that require an unseen distribution? What are these capacities?
13. Have you considered including charitable giving as part of your estate distribution? Why or why not?
14. Have you considered the benefit of involving your family members today in the charitable giving you do to better prepare them for their future role as your successor steward? Why or why not?



Phase 3 – Wealth Utilization

Using our wealth to fulfill our stewardship mandate

How we use our wealth is the outpouring of our steward's heart in fulfilling our stewardship mandate. Reverend Billy Graham once said, "Give me five minutes with a person's checkbook, and I will tell you where their heart is." What do your checkbook, personal financial statement and tax returns say about how you are using your wealth?

1. Prayerfully consider what the following scriptures say about wealth utilization:

- Matthew 25:14-30
- Matthew 25:31-46
- Romans 14:12
- I Corinthians 16:1-2
- Galatians 6:7-10
- Philippians 4:14-17
- I Timothy 5:8

2. Why do you believe God has given you the standard of living you currently maintain?

3. Does your current spending and standard of living help you or hinder you from heeding God's calling in your life?

4. Do you feel spending your wealth brings with it responsibilities?

5. What is your perspective on tithing?
6. Concerning charitable giving, what compels you to give?
7. To what extent is your charitable giving each year driven by your income tax status?
8. Have you developed a list of criteria or a mission statement that guides your charitable giving? If yes, please delineate.
9. Do you evaluate the impact of your gifts and/or hold your specific charities accountable? Why or why not.
10. Where are your passions and priorities when it comes to charitable giving?
11. Ideally, what type of family involvement in the gift making process would seem to be the most fulfilling for your family during your lifetime? How about after your death?

"The world asks, 'What does a man own?' Christ asks, 'How does he use it?'"

– Andrew Murray
(1828-1917) South African
evangelist and writer

"Riches enlarge rather than satisfy appetites."

– Thomas Fuller (1608-61)
English clergyman and writer