

What has God promised to those who test Him by tithing? _____

Calculate the tithe on an income of \$50.00 (or whatever currency): _____

What would be the tithe of 20 eggs? _____

What would be the tithe of 35 sacks of potatoes? _____

How much time each week do you think you could give to serving God?

Can you think of some abilities you have that God might be able to use? _____

What "things" do you possess that God might be able to use for His purposes? _____

This would be a good time to make a firm decision to be a good steward, and to make some promises to God.

God helping me, I will sincerely try to be a good steward by _____

Signed: _____

Lesson Two Christian Stewardship

The Basic Concept: The foundation of Christian stewardship is the concept that God is the owner of everything. He is the Creator and Sustainer of all that exists. That includes you and me. The Scriptures declare, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it ..." (Psa. 24:1).

We Are Stewards: If God owns everything, then all we have belongs to Him too. We only have things because He has given them to us. We do not really "own" anything. If we are not the owner of things in our possession, it means that we are only stewards of them. (A steward is a person who administers or manages finance, property, or interests that belong to another person.)

King David had it right when he said, "But who am I, and who are my people that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from You, and we have given You only what comes from Your hand." (1 Chr. 29:14)

Stewardship Implies Accountability: Whenever one person puts another in charge of his/her property it means that someday an account must be given of how it was handled or managed. Someday God will expect us to give account of what we have done with what He has given us. Jesus gave two parables (stories used to illustrate truth) to teach this principle in Mt. 25:14-30 and Lk. 19:11-27. St. Paul declared in Rom. 14:12, "So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God."

Accountability Requires Faithfulness: "Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2). It means that we must take our responsibility seriously, and work continually and faithfully to administer God's property.

Stewardship Includes Many Things: The first thing many people think of when they hear the word "stewardship" is money. However, stewardship is much broader in its scope. It includes the following aspects of our lives:

Time: Time represents life. A reasonable amount of our time (life) should be dedicated to serving God. What we do with our time is an indicator of our true priorities.

Gifts: God has given everybody certain talents or abilities. "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms" (1 Pet. 4:10). Gifts are given by the Holy Spirit to enable the church to fulfill its function and mission in the world. There are many different gifts. It is important that the Christian discover what he/she has to offer in service to God. It does not necessarily need to be an important gift if it is all you have to offer. Some people render an important service by using their broom to keep the church building clean.

The Gospel: The Gospel itself (God's plan of salvation) is one of the most important things God has given us. As good stewards we will want to share this treasure with others.

Material Things: For example, our homes should be available to God to use for His purposes. If you own a means of transportation, you can use it for God. Even tools, machines, or office equipment can be used to advance God's kingdom. A good steward makes everything he/she has available to God for His use.

Energy: Even our physical strength comes from God. He provides the food, sunshine, and oxygen that make energy possible. We use that energy for work and recreation. Shouldn't a portion of it also be used for God?

Supporting God's Work: Like most any other activity, it takes money to support the operation of the church. This support obviously must come from God's people. God designed a wonderful plan to meet this need many centuries ago. It is called the tithe. "A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD" (Lev. 27:30). Basically it means that we keep 90% of our "increase" for our personal needs, but give 10% of it back to God for His use.

The Tithe Belongs to God: In a sense we do not "give" the tithe to God. He has reserved it as His. We only give back what already belongs to Him. An Old Testament prophet said that withholding what belongs to God constitutes robbing Him of what is His (Mal. 3:8-10).

The Tithe Is a Source of Blessing: The Scriptural promise is: "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it" (Mal. 3:10). Numberless Christians across the centuries have proven this promise to be true.

Calculating the Tithe: We all must have some source of income in order to sustain life. For some it comes in the form of wages for work done. For others it may be in the form of crops harvested or products manufactured. Our "increase" is found by taking our entire income and deducting any cost of producing the product. Of the increase we set aside one part out of every ten for the tithe. If it deals with apples, it means that of every ten, I keep nine and give one to God. The same principle applies to money, chickens, potatoes, baskets, eggs, or anything else.

What about offerings? Voluntary offerings may be given above the tithe whenever a person feels the impulse to do so. "Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7).

Proper Priorities: It pleases God when we learn to trust Him, and demonstrate our trust by putting Him first in all we do. He has promised that when we do it, He will take charge of providing for our needs. "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Mt. 6:33).

CHECK ON WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED TODAY

Using the above paragraphs for reference, fill in the blanks below.

What is the basic concept of Christian stewardship? _____

Give your definition of a steward: _____

What must a steward do some day? _____

What is required of a steward (one word)? _____

Name at least three things that are included in stewardship: _____

How could your home be used for the glory of God? _____

What do we call God's system for supporting His church? _____