Tools for Wise Leadership

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

Series 13: Leadership Stewardship

Talk 02: Stewardship Purpose

Welcome to the programme Tools for Wise Leadership.
We are focusing our attention on the issue of stewardship in Christian leaders. Last time we defined stewardship as management of someone else's affairs or property. From this we derive several leadership principles.

Now just in case you did not listen to the previous programme let me recap the principles articulated in that programme. The first principle of stewardship is that the God who owns all things has made us stewards or managers of what belongs to him. We are only managers of what belongs to God. As Psalm 24:1 says "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it."

The second principle is that it is the owner, and not the steward, who determines the purpose and usage of the property. It is God who determines the purpose of all things and he has given us a manual, the Bible, to let us know the purpose of all those things that belong to him. That is why we need to develop a good relationship with God who made all things. It is only by developing such a relationship that you can understand God's purpose for the leadership position you occupy.

Today we continue with the third principle which says that the main purpose of a steward is to add value to what has been entrusted to him. This is well illustrated in the parable of talents as we read in Matthew 25:14-31. There Jesus told the parable of a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. Both of these stewards did what they were supposed to. They added value to the master's property. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

"After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.' His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' The same happened to the man with the two talents who had gained two more.' To him also his master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'"

But now comes the man with the one talent. "He came and said to his master, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest."

"Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"

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This one talent man was really condemned in the strongest of terms, wasn't he? To be called a worthless servant! To have your talent taken away and given to the one who already has the most talents! To be thrown into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth! Why? What crime had he committed? He did not commit adultery. He did not steal. He did not murder anyone. So what was his crime? Only that he failed to add value to that which had been entrusted to him. When the time of accounting came the talent had not had any value added to it.

But I believe there was something worse than not having any value added to it. The man dug a hole to hide the talent in the soil. Do you bury a talent in the soil and let it remain there for a long time without spoiling it? I am only imagining that by the time the talent was given back to the owner it was probably rusty and probably with less value than it had when it was originally given to the man. Value was subtracted from the talent rather than added to it.

How can you as a leader apply this to your own life? My question for you is: Are you adding value from what has been entrusted to you, or are you in fact subtracting value? It would appear even from the parable we have referred to that you are either adding value or subtracting value. You can hardly maintain things at the same level. So are you adding value to what has been entrusted to you as a leader?

Now let's give an example. God has given you the body that you have. That is the nearest and dearest thing you have. If you cannot add value to your own body you can hardly be expected to add value to other things entrusted to you. And you are either adding value to your body or subtracting from it.

And how do you add value to your body? In many ways. What we eat is either adding value to or subtracting value from our bodies. Refined Western foods have brought many lifestyle diseases to our bodies. Many people now don't have the patience to cook healthy food. They would rather just buy junk foods. What is the result? Heart diseases, ulcers, obesity, high blood pressure and other food related diseases. Worse than junk food is an intake of harmful substances like tobacco and drugs. When something takes away your money and leaves you in a worse condition it surely means bad stewardship of our bodies and our resources, doesn't it?

Then there is the issue of having an active lifestyle. Our bodies are designed to be exercised in order to remain healthy. Unfortunately the modern lifestyle is causing our bodies to be lazy. In offices we are sitting behind desks. We get out of offices into cars to drive home. We drive to the corner store which is only 400 meters away to buy bread. No wonder again lifestyle diseases afflict us.

Then of course poor stewardship of bodies comes through reckless sexual behaviour. So many people in Africa are HIV positive just because of risky and recklessly sexual behaviour. It is the Lord's wish that people abstain from sex until married, and then stay faithful to their marriage partners for the rest of their lives.

Bearing in mind these things, I have recently made it a point to eat healthy food and to exercise at least 30 minutes 3 times a week in order to stay healthy. By God's grace I have also remained faithful to my wife for the 40 years of our marriage. In all these ways I am just trying to be a good steward of the body God has given me, and of the wife, children and ministry God has given me.

Let me end by reminding you of the parable of the talents. It has taught us that good stewardship means adding and not subtracting value. But it also teaches us that what we do not use we lose. The one talent person did not use his talent and he ended up losing it. That is what happens when we do not put our blessings to good use. Well let's meet in the next programme to continue discussing

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principles of leadership stewardship. In the meantime, now that you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

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