

All In – Making our Passion Practical (Part 1 of 4)

Stewardship: Putting Away an Owner Mindset

Genesis 1:26-31; 2:7-9, 15

Mark Vroegop

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." ²⁹ And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. ³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Genesis 1:26–31 (ESV)

Parents work to teach their children many things. From their first words, to saying "please" and "thank you," to looking both ways before they cross the street, to not running with scissors, there are thousands of concepts, ideas, and words that must be pressed into their little minds. There are many things that children have to learn as they grow up.

And then there are things that come so naturally to children that we don't have to teach them. In fact, we have to work to correct them, and quickly. Can you think of words that you don't have to teach your kids? There are a number of them, but somehow, and from somewhere, children seem to automatically learn the word "mine."

The relentless declaration of "mine" is built into the brokenness of our humanity, and so much so that one person developed The Toddler Creed:

1. If I like it, it's MINE
2. If it's in my hand, it's MINE
3. If I can take it from you, it's MINE
4. If I had it a while ago, it's MINE
5. If it's MINE, it must never appear to be yours in any way
6. If I'm doing or building something, all the pieces are MINE
7. If it looks like mine, it's MINE
8. If I saw it first, it's MINE
9. If you are playing with something, and you put it down, it automatically becomes MINE
10. If it's broken, it's yours¹

¹ <http://www.famlii.com/toddler-rules-of-possession-toddlers-creed/>

But do you know what the problem is with what I just read? It doesn't fundamentally go away when you grow from a child to a teenager and into an adult. The issue of "MINE" is still embedded in all of our hearts. In fact, whether you are a Christian or not, we are all dealing with some degree of "MINE."

Today we are starting a four-week sermon series called "All In – Making our Passion Practical," which is an attempt to discover what the Bible says about topics like stewardship, generosity, time, and money. We have a great study guide for you, and our Small Groups are primed to have some great conversations about this topic. Additionally, we'll have some follow-up opportunities and tangible steps that you can take.

Why This Series?

This particular series has been brewing in my heart for some time, and you might wonder why we are taking a break from 1 Peter to talk about this. Let me tell you:

1. We will be talking about foundational biblical principles related to stewardship which apply to everyone and in many more ways that you probably imagine. This series is not just about money, and I think that topic could be very, very helpful.
2. Understanding and applying these basic biblical concepts could be a great blessing to your life. I'm teaching this series, not because of what I want from you, but because of what I want for you.² This series could bring you great joy!
3. There are some of you who are stuck in a bad cycle when it comes to how you think about your career, your possessions, your time, and really anything that you "own." I want to see how the gospel and the rule of Jesus in your life can set you on a new path. This series could start you on the path to freedom.
4. Sometimes Christianity can seem rather theoretical, but this series is intensely practical. And with that comes the possibility of a large group of people who could look back on 2017 and say, "Wow, what a real change in my life!" This series has the possibility of really making a difference in how you live.

So as we begin, I'd like to issue you a challenge. I'd like for you to invite the Holy Spirit to put the spotlight on some area of your life. Instead of taking the posture of "If God shows me something, I'm going to respond" (which is not a bad posture at all), I'd like you take a more active approach.

Let's just assume that there are certain parts of our lives, ways of thinking, or categories that are not "All In." And I want to encourage you to come to the next four weeks with an attitude of anticipation and expectation. Let's each be a good steward of these next four weeks by leaning into the subject and actively looking for ways that the Lord will speak to us.

The Four Foundations of Stewardship

The biblical idea and philosophy of stewardship has its roots and beginning in the very first book of the Bible, Genesis. It surfaces in the very first instructions that God gives, in the first place that God creates,

² I am indebted to Andy Stanley for this statement

with the first people to bear His image. We are going to look at two passages in the Bible: Genesis 1:26-31 and Genesis 2:7-9.

As I've studied these texts and this idea of stewardship, it has been a good reminder that these concepts and principles are not only foundational to stewardship, they are also foundational for humanity and especially Christianity. In other words, if you get this right, it has sweeping implications. But the reverse is also true: get what follows wrong, and it is amazing how quickly off-track our lives can become. Add to the mix the pressure of a culture that is pulling the other direction, and we have a recipe for a challenging topic.

What does the Bible say about the foundation of stewardship?

1. God is the creator of everything

Our primary text begins with the words, "And God said, let us make man . . ." Now we will unpack what follows in Genesis 1:26, but you need to know that this is seventh time that the formula of "And God said . . ." appears in Genesis 1. It is the basic wording for how the world came into being. God created it by speaking it into existence.

Now I know that this is very, very basic. But it is a crucial starting point, not only in this discussion, but also as we consider the message of the entire Bible and even the gospel itself. The book of Genesis begins with the statement: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). From there the first chapter walks us through each of the seven days of creation.

The pattern is easy to see. God speaks and on day one there was light, on day two there was land and sea, on day three there was vegetation, on day four there was the sun and the moon, on day five there was fish in sea and birds in the air, and on the six day there was the creation of animals and the first humans. The first two chapters of Genesis lay down the foundational truth that everything in the world as we know it, see it, and experience it comes from God and was created by God.

What's more, Genesis 1:31 tells us that when God was finished with creation, He "saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good." So there is something powerful in Genesis 1, but there is also something beautiful about what God does.

Now there are sweeping implications for the fact that God is the creator both for the issue of stewardship as well as for morality and even the gospel. Let me give you a few examples:

- Since God is creator, then everything owes its existence to God and is owned by God.
- Nothing exists apart from His decree or His sustaining power; everything is dependent upon God.
- As creator, God has the right to establish the boundaries, limitations, and morality of life.
- God has embedded creation – even after the presence of sin – with a goodness that says something about Him.

This is where the Bible starts: God is the creator and owner of everything. And even after sin enters the world, the gospel does not change this reality; it heightens it. God is not only the creator, but He is also the redeemer through the death of Jesus. The cross becomes the means by which people are rescued from their sins. Jesus buys their freedom.

That is why the apostle Paul says that we were dead in our sins but that Jesus “made us alive together with Christ” (Eph. 2:5). And he applies this to our bodies, saying, “You are not your own, for you were bought with a price” (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Therefore, to be Christian is to be created twice, once physically and once spiritually. We belong to our creator by virtue of His creative power and by virtue of His redemptive power.

This means that everything we are, everything we have, everything that exists owes its life, its sustenance and its purpose to our creator God. In Romans 11:36, the apostle Paul summarized this concept very well when he said: “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”

C.S. Lewis, in his excellent book *Mere Christianity*, says this: “Every faculty you have, your power of thinking or of moving your limbs from moment to moment, is given you by God. If you devoted every moment of your whole life exclusively to His service, you could not give Him anything that was not in a sense His own already.”³ Is that the way that you think about your money, your time, your career, your home, your business, your education, your gifts? Do you see everything as being fundamentally connected to God’s ownership?

Stewardship, and not thinking like an owner, is foundational to humanity, the gospel, and what it means to be a Christian. Stewardship malfunctions, and sin creeps in when we start thinking or acting as if we are the center of the universe, as if we are self-made people, and as if we are the ones who are sustaining our lives. Biblical stewardship begins by recognizing, reaffirming, responding to, and rejoicing in God as creator. Stewardship begins by confessing “You are God, and I am not.”

2. We bear the image of God

The second foundational truth that is found in verse 26 is captured in the statement “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness . . .” This is so important that it is repeated in verse 27, with the emphasis that both men and women bear the image of God and that reality is connected to God’s act of creation.

Now we don’t have time to unpack this in its entirety, but to be made in the image of God means that there is something unique about humans in respect to the rest of creation. Men and women, as human beings, have an intrinsic and God-given value, ability, morality, and decision-making capacity that is different from the rest of creation. In terms of the created order, human beings are more like God than anything else. Men and women, in how they live, in how they act, in how they decide, in how they create, and in other ways, mirror the activity of God.

Human activity in the world has a God-like quality to it. What humans do – more than anything else in creation – communicates something about God. That is also dangerous because what humans do can have God-like qualities to it.

Stewardship begins by understanding that everything you have, including your gifts, are from God, not you. That also means that when you maximize your gifts, your talents, and your resources, it has the potential to glorify God. But it also means that you can idolize your gifts, because in using them, it makes you feel like God. Money can be maximized for God’s glory or it can be idolized for yours. Your

³ <https://tifwe.org/four-principles-of-biblical-stewardship/>

exceptional talent or intelligence can be maximized to display something amazing about God, or it can be idolized in order for people to think amazing things about you. If you build a business, you could maximize it as a gift from God and for His glory, or you could idolize it because your name is on the front of the building.

To be a good steward involves developing your gifts while not being addicted to your gifts. You can be a bad steward by neglecting what God has given you, and you can be a bad steward by worshiping what God has given.

3. Stewardship requires action

The third principle identifies for us that stewardship is responsive or acts upon particular commands given by God. Immediately after creating man and woman, God gives them a charge. In verse 26, that command follows the statement about bearing God's image, so the charge and the issue of being an image-bearer are linked together.

Now what are the commands or the actions in Genesis 1-2? The first word, and probably the most important word, is found in verse 26: *dominion*. The NIV renders this as "rule," and the idea is that men and women are to exercise authority over the created order, to use what God has created and make it even more useful. Connected to that word is the idea of representation. Human beings are to represent God in the world by doing what God did in His world. In our limited way, we are to image Him by how we create, manage, and live in the created world.

Genesis 1:28 issues the same command by saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over . . . everything." Those words describe some of the expressions of what it means to have dominion. If you look over in Genesis 2:15, you will find that the command sounds like God putting Adam in the garden "to work it and keep it." And you see one of the first tasks recorded in the Bible is Adam naming the animals.

If you skip ahead to Genesis 4, you will find that Adam and Eve's first children were involved in occupations related to the animals and the ground. Abel was a keeper of the sheep, and Cain was a farmer. And in Genesis 4 we find that descendants of Adam and Eve are already making musical instruments and learning how to forge metal (Genesis 4:21-22).

Protestant theologians have often called this the cultural or creation mandate. This means that we take what belongs to God and we use it to image and glorify Him. In the Protestant Reformation, this was a revolutionary concept because it meant that normal tasks and occupations were now embedded with meaning. Instead of thinking that priests were the only ones who did spiritual work, Luther identified that every Christian worker offers his or her work as a steward to God.

A cobbler, a smith, a peasant – each has the work and office of his trade, and yet they are all alike consecrated priests and bishops . . . Everyone must benefit and serve every other by means of his own work or office so that in this way many kinds of work may be done for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the community, just as all members of the body serve one another.⁴

⁴ Trueman, Carl. *Luther on the Christian Life*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Publishers, 2015), 178.

The creation mandate means that human beings are placed on earth for the purpose of making good use of their work so that it says something about God. In Colossians 3:23, Paul connects this to the gospel when he says “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men . . . You are serving the Lord Christ.”

It is sinful to be lazy, and it is sinful to be a perfectionist. The lazy person is a bad steward because he or she fails to make use of what God has given. But the perfectionist is a bad steward because he or she makes what God has given a mirror of self-affirmation. The lazy person lives out of love for self and the pleasure of doing something other than what is needed. He enjoys the escape of video games, incessant TV watching, the satisfaction of gluttony, or spending hours at the mall rather than what he should be doing. But the perfectionist over-plans, over-thinks, and over-works because he loves the feeling of success. That is one of the reasons why God established limitations on Adam and Eve in the garden, and I think it is one of the reasons God built sleep into the fabric of our humanity. We must work hard but must also remember God-ordained limitations.

Biblical stewardship means that we work and we work for the right reason and in the right way. Whether you have a lot of money or a little money, you steward it well. Whether you have a high-profile job or a behind-the-scenes role, you work hard. Whether you have a high IQ or an average IQ, you find ways to be a good steward of what God has entrusted to you.

Being “All In” means that you are living with a biblical understanding of who God is, what your role in life is all about, and why you work.

4. Stewardship involves the practical use of God’s gifts

The command from God in the first chapter of Genesis is striking in its specificity and its universality. In 1:28 mankind is to exercise dominion over “every living creature.” In 1:29 Adam and Eve are given “every plant . . . every tree.” God places Adam in a garden that God created and calls him to “work it and keep it” (2:15). In 2:19 every animal is to be brought to Adam “to see what he would call them.” God made the gifts and brought the gifts to Adam.

And when Adam gave the animals names, that’s what the name was. In 2:19 we see the first evidence of his authority on earth. God brings the animals, but Adam gives them the names.

This is the first way in which a human being honored and obeyed God. The garden was worked and kept. The animals were given names. There were real trees, real plants, real dirt, real fruit, and real animals. And Adam’s engagement with these gifts became the means by which he expressed his stewardship, his obedience, and his bearing of God’s image.

That is why I chose the subtitle – “making our passion practical.” Stewardship is the principled connection between Biblical truth and where we practically live. In other words, if you believe that God is the creator and the owner of everything that should affect what you do with your time, your money, your career, your gifts, and your calling. If you believe that you are an image bearer, then how does that change your study habits, your care of your body, your development of your mind, and how heartily you work? If you believe that stewardship requires actions, then there should be a connection between this message and

how you think about giving, how you use your home, what you make time for, and how you deal with anything that you “have.” Next week we’ll explore how stewardship leads to generosity.

But today I simply want to ask you some questions about what it means to be All In:

- Where are you at in your relationship with your creator today? The first step may be coming to terms with the fact that you know God is real, and you probably know that you’ve done things that are wrong. What do you do about that? We’d love to show you how the cross of Jesus solves that problem.
- What areas of your life need to be figuratively slid into the “All In” circle? What are the things over which you say “mine”? Why are you working so hard? Why are you so filled with anxiety? Why does losing that “thing” make you so angry? Could it be because you made it an idol?
- Is there a particular area of your life that needs some attention and help? By neglect or by negligence, is something subduing you? Some of you are so far over your heads in debt that you feel like a slave. At some point during this series, I’m hoping that you’ll draw a line in the sand, conquer your shame, and say, “I need some help.”
- Have you considered why God gifted you in the way that He has? Have you considered why you are in the role that God has placed you in? Do you know why God gave you that business? Do you know why He’s made you a director at your company? Do you see what has happened to you as a gift – something that needs to be stewarded – not something you own?

I love this quotation from Charles Spurgeon: *“Our wisdom is not to desire another place, nor to judge those who are in another position, but each one being redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus, should consecrate himself fully to the Lord, and say ‘Lord, what would you have me to do, for here I am and by thy grace I am ready to do it.’”*

About what are you saying “mine” today? Where are you acting like an owner? And what would it look like if instead you said, “I’m All In, Lord!” My career, my future, my body, my mind, my gifts, my money, my retirement – it’s no longer mine. It’s yours.

Biblical stewardship starts by saying “It’s All In.”

© College Park Church

Permissions: You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce this material in any format provided that you do not alter the content in any way and do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: by Mark Vroegop. © College Park Church - Indianapolis, Indiana. www.yourchurch.com

Next Steps:

Attend the “God Owns it All” class (North Indy)

Sunday, Mar. 19 - Apr. 9, Apr. 23 & Apr. 30 // 11:30 // Chapel C

Book cost: \$10

This six-week study will give you the opportunity to wrestle with and answer heart-related questions about the Bible and money. You will be confronted with foundational questions about money like: Who owns it? How much is enough? Will it continue to be enough?

Space is limited. Register at yourchurch.com/godownsitall

For info on Fishers Campus future class offerings, contact Dustin Crowe:
dcrowe@yourchurch.com

Schedule a Financial Discussion with our Counseling team (All Campus)

Financial Counselors are available at College Park to discuss your concerns with budgeting, savings, retirement and debt management. *Find out more at yourchurch.com/counseling*