

STEWARDSHIP

An

Orthodox

Christian

Understanding



Presented by the
**Orthodox Church in America
Fellowship of Orthodox Stewards**

From the moment man was created by God, stewardship has been with us! It is not a new subject nor is it just about money. Stewardship is Orthodox because it is part of God's plan! Stewardship and being a good steward are core teachings of Holy Scripture and the Church. These teachings form the basis for the Orthodox Church in America's Stewardship Orientation Workshop (SOW.) An overview of the SOW program is presented in this pamphlet.

For more information on how your parish or parish organization can host a SOW program, call Fr. Joseph Fester at (516) 922-0550 ext 124

WHAT IS STEWARDSHIP?

The word stewardship means "caring for or managing the affairs of another." In Holy Scripture, this is understood very clearly:

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein; for he has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the rivers. Psalm 24:1-2

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our own likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth....and God said, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over it .Genesis 1:26 ff

For it will be as when a man going on a journey called his servants and entrusted to them his property; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to an-other one, to each according to his ability. Matthew 25:14-15

This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. 1 Corinthians 4:1

These four quotes from the Bible, and many more like them, frame the Orthodox Christian understanding of stewardship. These points are:

1. The earth belongs to the Lord
2. God gives us life.
3. God loves and trusts us, to be
4. Stewards of His creation.

The starting point for the Orthodox Christian understanding of stewardship is the clear teaching of the Bible and the Church that *the earth belongs to the Lord and the fullness thereof.*

Holy Scripture and the Church also clearly teaches that God alone is the one who gives us life. This is another proof that the earth and everything in it (including us) belongs to God.

Therefore, in giving us life, God forged a personal relationship with mankind based on love and trust so that man could steward God's creation. Our personal relationship with God as His stewards is confirmed by the Lord Jesus when he said:

Well done good and faithful servant, you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord. Matthew 25:21

WHAT ARE WE STEWARDS OF?

Life

If God gives us life, then it is understandable that we are called to wisely steward the life God gives us. Each day we make choices - some good and some bad. These choices are a measure of our stewardship of life and our relationship with God and others.

Time

As part of our stewardship of God's creation and the life He gives us, we are also called to wisely steward our time. How much time we spend on things shows what we think is important. Good stewards offer the first and best part of their time to remember God.

You may be thinking at this point, "but most of my time each day is spent at work. Does that mean that I am a bad steward?" Not necessarily because a good steward will transform even the most mundane daily activities into "small offerings" of prayer and worship to God. Remember, if we believe that "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" then every part of our life and time can be offered back to God in thanksgiving!

Caring for our Health

Today we hear a lot about the evils of drugs, drinking, and smoking. This is good because all of these things are physically harmful. But when we consider that our bodies are a gift from God - and we must steward and care

for them - then living unhealthy lives is really against God - it's bad stewardship!

Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own.

1 Corinthians 6:19

By caring for our bodies, we give glory to God. By caring for our bodies we can more effectively care for others.

We are good stewards of our bodies (and souls) when we use them to:

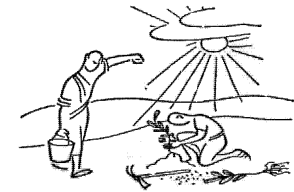
- 1. Regularly receive the Holy Mysteries**
- 2. Regularly pray and**
- 3. Regularly worship God**
- 4. Have Godly fellowship and help one another and thus**
- 5. Be living witnesses of the Kingdom of God.**

LIFE AS STEWARDSHIP

Because *God is love* (1 John 4:8) He created us in His image and likeness. God did not have to create the world and us, but He freely chose to because He desired that we experience the Divine Love of the Holy Trinity as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

It is God's Plan that we understand and joyfully accept that all we have, all we are asked to steward, our whole life, is a free gift from God.

Knowing this and in grateful thanksgiving for the free gift of life, we can live each day as wise and faithful stewards of God, offering back to Him the first and best part of our life in a personal relationship of love and trust.



The point is this, he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 2 Corinthians 9:6