

CHAPTER TWO

Maturity Comes by Stewarding Property

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body...” 2 Cor. 5:10

MASTER PRINCIPLE #2

**We grow by caring
for people and things.**

To any of us who are familiar with the terrible plight of much of Eastern Europe after decades of communism, one fact is self-evident: Without the responsible stewardship of private property and personal

initiative, the ability for self-rule and productivity is lost. This is the practical message of socialism. It destroys man’s rulership capacities. And since God has called us to be kings¹ (rulers) and priests (intercessors), anything that destroys or blunts either possibility is not from God.

God makes us grow up by giving us responsibility, and responsibility begins with exercising authority over some one, some talent, or some task. Without responsibility, I would put very little truth into practice. The measure of my maturity is how I care for what God has entrusted to me.

As we have already seen, God has placed us in His earthly workshop to both make us grow up and to extend His Kingdom here in the process. The obstacles that are within us and outside of us form the “barbells” we must pump in life in order to grow spiritual muscles. All of us have heard the saying, “no pain, no gain.” It’s true. Pumping responsibility and personal growth is the training routine of both the Lord Jesus,² and all the franchise’s junior partners who follow Him. Personal gifts, private property, and human relationships form the heart of what God expects us to use in exercising our spiritual muscles.

¹ 1 Peter 2:9

² Heb. 5:8

In this chapter we will deal with four major muscle-making concepts: (1) the nature of property and increase, (2) joint labor—the secret of true fellowship, (3) the nature of power and our ability to handle it, and (4) the cardinal rule of biblical management—good leaders produce proprietors.

Responsibility and Producing Increase Makes Us Grow Up

In Luke 19:12-27, Jesus taught another one of His many parables dealing with business and stewardship, but this one is especially pointed: If we neglect to give Him back increase on those things He has entrusted to us, we are in big trouble. Let's read some of the parable together:

He said therefore, "A certain nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself and then return. And he called ten of his slaves and gave them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business with this until I come back.'

"But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.'

"And it came about that when he returned after receiving the kingdom, he ordered that these slaves, to whom he had given the money, be called to him in order that he might know what business they had done.

"And the first appeared, saying 'Master, your mina has made ten minas more.'

"And he said to him, 'Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, be in authority over ten cities.'

"And the second came saying, 'Your mina, master, has made five minas.'

"And he said to him also, 'And you are to be over five cities.'

“And another came, saying, ‘Master, behold your mina, which I kept put away in a handkerchief; for I was afraid of you, because you are an exacting man; you take up what you did not lay down, and reap what you did not sow.’

“He said to him, ‘By your own words I will judge you, you worthless slave. Did you know that I am an exacting man, taking up what I did not lay down, and reaping what I did not sow? Then why did you not put the money in the bank, and having come, I would have collected it with interest?’ And he said to the bystanders, ‘Take the mina away from him and give it to the one who has the ten minas.’

“And they said to him, ‘Master, he has ten minas already.’

“He replied, ‘I tell you, that to everyone who has shall *more* be given, but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away.’”

Remember, He owns all things. Verses 22 and 23, where he addresses the “worthless slave,” are especially tough verses; God demands increase on what He loans to us!

The Five Things for Which All People Must Give an Account

What are some of the things God has given to all of us, regardless of how our personal balance sheet reads? He has given all of us at least five assets for which we will have to answer to Christ regarding their stewardship:

1. Our physical bodies
2. Our conscience
3. Our relationships with others
4. Our talents
5. Our possessions

All of these items are on loan from God, and we are to deal with them under the stewardship of God's Word and bring them back to Him with increase.

Again, if you have nothing under your care, you will never grow up. Growth is directly related to responsibility. The first judgment we will all face is for what we do in our bodies.³ Our bodies are our first assigned stewardship, and we progress from there. Every human has one. The question will be, did we steward our body morally and according to God's Word? The second thing we must give an account for is our conscience. The Puritans and other historically reformed groups considered the conscience to be God's most important gift. To build one's conscience up in God's Word and keep it pure was the highest of stewardship issues.

Thirdly, our God-ordained relationships and their care, development, and stewardship is so very important that Jesus made it a major issue as He reported back to the Father during His earthly stewardship report in John 17, just prior to His death. Look at these verses:

John 17:6

I manifested Thy name to the men whom
Thou gavest Me out of the world; Thine they
were, and Thou gavest them to Me, and they
have kept Thy word.

John 17:8

For the words which Thou gavest Me I have
given to them; and they received them, and
truly understood that I came forth from Thee,
and they believed that Thou didst send me.

John 17:9

I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf
of the world, but of those whom Thou hast
given Me; for they are Thine.

³ 2 Cor. 5:10

John 17:11

And I am no more in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, the name which Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, even as We are.

John 17:12

While I was with them, I was keeping them in Thy name which Thou hast given Me; and I guarded them, and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

John 17:15-20

I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth. As Thou didst send Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word.

Indeed, virtually the whole of the “prayer report” is about Christ’s relationships and His stewardship of them. All successful lives and organizations ultimately end up focusing on relational stewardship. Father’s franchise is built relationally, and so are well-run business enterprises.

Fourthly, we are similarly to steward and bring increase to our God-given talents. Whatever we have we are to build upon and develop. What skills have you been given? How about your family members? How about your business colleagues? What are you doing to serve these people by drawing out and developing their skills and wisdom? A Christian business isn’t simply an honest business or one that properly pays its taxes: even many non-Christians do that. No,

a Christian business is one that is primarily committed to developing human beings because that is the business our Father is in—developing human beings. Proverbs 20:5 clearly makes this statement about the commitment to personal development found in a godly enterprise: “A plan in the heart of a man is like deep water, but a man of understanding draws it out.” Good leaders, especially in business, help their colleagues discover the plans and visions God has put into their hearts.

Fifthly, maturation in stewardship of possessions is a major part of all our training in our spiritual lives. Good leaders help their people become better stewards. Jesus revealed three principles about growing in maturity as stewards when He said these words:

He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

Luke 16:10-12 (KJV)

You grow: (1) from small to large, (2) from natural to spiritual, and (3) from managing someone else's things to managing your own.

Since the ownership of property is so vital to spiritual maturity, it's critical that we do the following for our children: get them picking up their rooms by the time they're three or so, give them allowances, get them buying their own clothes, and get them into a personal stewardship program as early as we can. That is far more important than teaching them to memorize ideas or concepts they don't know how to use. Our whole lives are a long study in how responsible we are, and what we do with what we have. Obviously, the sooner we can get this into our children, the better off they are. Indeed, aren't morals nothing more than the good stewardship of entrusted gifts?

All of these concepts have profound implications in terms of building families, businesses, and nations. Suffice it to say that these God-ordained laws of stewardship and increase are to have profound

effects on a nation's welfare and public care policies. These laws of stewardship should also shape business decisions relative to both personal promotions and capital outlay for department or project spending.

The Secret of Deepening Fellowship Is Building Things Together

God, as a wise Employer/Father, brings His servants into mature fellowship with Himself by making them His work partners. The old adage, "It takes one to know one," is not only true, but it's also biblical.⁴ In the same way that it takes an architect to read an architect's plans, it takes someone fully engaged in Father's business to really begin to know Him. Unity comes from sharing goals, responsibility, and time together.

God's original intent for man has never changed. He wants us to build together in the extension of His will and His ways throughout the created order He has entrusted man to steward.⁵ Indeed, it is truly awe-inspiring that He has tuned the created order to respond to man's care for it. The created order will not be free from sin's bondage until man begins to steward it properly. Listen to Paul saying exactly this in Romans 8, verses 19 through 21:

For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

God's fellowship with man began in the garden as He discussed Adam's work in the cool of the day; it may well extend to distant galaxies in the future for all we know. One thing is for sure: We'll be

⁴ Psa. 18:26

⁵ Gen. 1:26-28

together working with Him because common work and building things together is the heart of sharing true life and biblical covenant.

When Jesus first invited us into fellowship with Him, it was through working together, not sitting and chatting. Listen carefully to what He says: "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me; for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My load is light" (Matt. 11:28-30).

Please take note of the admonition to stick your head in "His yoke," for it's there you particularly "learn of Him." It is in the yoke of God's business that we learn to see His goals, learn His ways of operation, discern reality, sweat out our sins and impurities, recruit others, and fellowship with Him in our victories and defeats. The rocking chair just inside the north gate of Heaven may make for tears and emotional singing, but it's the work assignment in God's Kingdom that makes good disciples! God is into work, and in chapter four we'll see more of why this is so.

The scripture says, "The heavens are the heavens of the Lord, but the Earth He has given to the sons of men."⁶ It is here on Earth that man has been given the opportunity both now and in the future to work out his divine partnership with God, both in this age and in the age to come.⁷ When we buy into ALMIGHTY & SONS, we are buying into God's business and God's destiny. This is the inheritance in us that Paul begged us to see and consider in Ephesians 1:18-22. God's inheritance in us is a shared life and a shared rulership over His projects. What a God, what a Creator, and what an Entrepreneur we have! Yes, deep biblical fellowship comes from shared dreams, plans, methods, and investments. And God the Businessman and Entrepreneur knows it well.

⁶ Psa. 115:16

⁷ Rev. 21:10

God's Co-Workers Are Learning to Share Power Gradually So That It Doesn't Destroy Them

Man's problem is that God put a high-powered Corvette engine in a Model A frame: God's power plant far exceeds our puny capacities to contain and utilize it. Our character, until forged and purified through trials and problems, is too weak and self-serving to handle much power without being corrupted. God must therefore train us to incrementally handle His power, lest we be destroyed by the very thing we most need to work with Him. Little by little we learn to handle in Christ what Satan and those who follow him have only been corrupted by, that is, more power than their character could handle.

Power Is Guarded by Problems

Power sharing comes through problem solving. Our problems qualify us for more and more spiritual responsibility, and with responsibility comes God's power. "Power" can be defined as sharing knowledge, ability, and authority with God over some portion of His creation. Problems have a wonderful way of cleansing us from selfish ambition, presumption, and ignorance. Problems often "beat the hell out of us," and properly so.

It would require a book in itself to do this subject justice. Suffice to say, in this introductory study of biblical management principles, God, as the Master Leader, promotes "problem solvers" rather than people who merely have potential. All the heroes of the Bible are problem solvers. Analyzing those heroes, their problems, and how they solved them, is an unbelievably useful way to study God's Word. Try it sometime as the point of departure for a leadership class or business team discussion group. Wise leaders promote and produce problem solvers, because they are skilled problem solvers themselves. The so-called "Peter Principle," promoting people up to their level of incompetency, is a perfect illustration of my point. Our leadership stops at the point where we can no longer solve the problems.

The parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) illustrates the tragedy of giving someone power before he has the character to handle

it. Reread this parable and run it through this gridwork of understanding; it will come to life! If you're like most businessmen, you've had times when you've promoted somebody and then wished you'd never done it. You gave power or responsibility based on *potential*, rather than faithfulness. God doesn't do that. In God's family business, power comes only on the basis of faithfulness. That's why problems are the doorway to power and authority. They stimulate courage, creativity, dependence on God, knowledge, patience, tenacity, and teamwork in us. They build and reveal character. How an employee handles a problem will tell you more about his character than scores of instant successes. Someone who handles problems faithfully will be good for your business in the long-run. God releases resources to people qualified to handle them. Those whose power or "anointing" exceed their character often end up disgraced or in jail. Problem solving forces upon us the issue of self-government along with personal and relational discipline. It reveals the ability to solve relational as well as conceptual blockages.

Put another way, God only trusts those He has processed through problems. And problems are in fact a form of "property," that is, something we own. Irresponsibility means not properly stewarding what truly belongs to you, including your problems. We need to remember that God is far more interested in getting His heavenly perspective into us than in getting us into Heaven.

Good Leaders Produce Proprietors

Poor leadership or poor government produces welfarism, dependency, confusion, apathy, carelessness, and debt. Good government or able leadership produces the exact opposite in every case. Godly leadership has one primary serving goal: to draw others into their full potential in God.⁸

Everything God has created or birthed has an inherent design or pattern. "Success" is found in drawing that design out, and then revealing and developing it. God's design for individuals, families,

⁸ Luke 22:24-26

churches, businesses, and even nations must determine how wise leaders govern. Good leaders help those they lead to discover their God-given talents and destiny (property from God) and to fulfill them.⁹ Nothing that is out of order or missing God's design and purposes can prosper in the long-run. Good leaders produce the proprietorial spirit in others that encourages in them a sense of personal stake, property, and ownership in their life and activities. And this truth comes from God, not the Harvard M.B.A. program or anyone else. Leading people into ownership is the key to their growth and success.

God Wants All His Kids to Own a Piece of the Action

What distinguishes being a partner from being merely an employee is authority. In an employer/employee relationship, the employer has all the authority, or power. In a partnership, the members share power. God wants us to be *partners* in ALMIGHTY & SONS, not mere employees.

Nonetheless, many Christians lack the power God wants them to have, whether in their families, in their businesses, or in any other part of their lives. They lack it largely because they hope to gain it by the wrong means. They pray, "Oh, God, give me power!" But they get problems, and so they give up. They don't understand that God is answering their prayer. The Holy Spirit uses problems to teach us how to properly apply God's Word and how to appropriate true faith. This principle is similarly evident in the same way that a senior partner in a business grooms junior partners by giving them increasingly difficult responsibilities. Many businessmen want profitable businesses without problems. That is not a Christian approach to business. God sends problems to strengthen His junior partners so He can give them more power.

If you want Father's guaranteed blessing on what you're doing, you will make it a top priority to discover the gifts of those who work with you, saved or unsaved, and draw them into what God created

⁹ Phil. 3:12; Acts 17:26

them to be—not mere employees, but members of the divine partnership of ALMIGHTY & SONS. You are about Father's business. As you begin to reach into people's lives and discern their gifts, by the power of the Spirit, and help them to discover and fulfill their calling, the unsaved will get saved, and the saved will grow in maturity. That is what economic evangelism and discipleship is all about. It is building according to Father's pattern, and it is what businessmen and parents are called to do.

God hasn't called us primarily to make money. He has called us to work with Him in building character skills and relationships with people. These things will pass on into the next age. Paul tells us in 1 Cor. 3:9-15 that our work is going to be tested by fire. The fire will evaluate whether what we've built is wood, hay and stubble, or gold, silver, and precious stones. Hear us, brothers and sisters! Hear us, business people! Hear us, lawyers and C.P.A.'s! Father is not after your accumulating houses and boats and stock portfolios. These are all fine; there's nothing wrong with them. But they will not get into the casket with you and pass through the fire. What will pass through the fire are your character skills and your capacity for obedience in faith.

People say, "Joe Smith died last week. He had a tremendous Christian testimony. He left \$5 billion in trust." Great! But what did he take with him? Did he take eternal work skills that Father can use in the next phase of his life, or was he simply a "Christian businessman" who made a lot of money?

Now, I pray that you'll make a lot of money and spend it wisely, but that isn't my goal in this book. My goal is to get Christian business and professional people to see that we must build eternal things in our character and skills and impart them into our business associates, partners, and employees alike, because only those things will pass through the fire. I'll talk about this principle in detail in chapter four when I discuss "work."

Your business may or may not survive your death. What will go on after you die is the combination of character skills (the stewardship) that you've first developed in yourself and then stimulated in others.

That will pass on in the extension of ALMIGHTY & SONS. While God values profitable increase, He values character development far more. Possessions do not pass with us through death. Only character skills go with us into eternity: godly motives, godly ethics, service orientation, leadership skill, and stewardship skills. These pass through the fire.

Character Generates Profit

No doubt, when you grapple with all the problems in your business, you'll be tempted just to look to the bottom line. But God wants your continual prayer to be, "Father, teach me to handle these problems by the Book. Give me faithfulness and understanding, because when this business is gone, and with it all that I've given to charity, what will last is the character and skills I have developed and imparted to those with whom I work."

Imagine the impact five or ten thousand Christian business people with that ethic could have on your nation. They would radically transform whatever they touched.

Along the way, they'd generate a lot of profit, because people never work harder than when they work for themselves, and your goal is to get as many people in your business working for *themselves* as you can. That's where profit is generated. We are trying to mobilize people in their businesses and professions to see that as their primary call.

The master principle of this chapter centers around the text that God fellowships with man by giving us stewardship over His possessions, making them "our" property. May God anoint you to clearly hear this truth, to study it, to read over and over the scriptures I've cited, and then to go into your Kiwanis Club, your Lions Club, or your Chamber of Commerce and start recruiting for your private little spiritual revolution in your community, to begin imparting these principles into the community. The unsaved have no future apart from building the way God builds. Our Christian responsibility is to instruct them in how to do this by modeling these truths in our personal lives, our professional lives, and in the witness of our churches.

Good leaders produce co-workers, and co-workers come to maturity because they have a sense of personally owning and improving what has been entrusted to them.

“For we are God’s fellow workers...” 1 Cor. 3:9