

# Stewarding Our Resources Wisely

# 19



**A** PANEL OF CHRISTIAN SENIOR MANAGERS SAT on one side of the podium. A panel of pastors sat on the other. For nearly three hours the two groups had fielded questions from the audience about work/faith issues at a large Christian conference for working Christians in the Midwest. For the most part, the exchanges were marked with courtesy and insightful answers. The pastors, chosen carefully for their own views on the importance of faith in their parishioners careers, had obviously thought through the issues carefully. The senior managers had also been chosen carefully, men and women who not only were leaders in business, but handled Scripture responsibly.

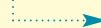
One exchange, however, got testy.

A retired banking professional chided pastors in the audience for their attitudes towards salaries. Talking about a recent spat he'd had with his pastor while serving on the elder board, he looked over to the pastors on the panel and said, "You guys need to settle for less money; you're doing the Lord's work." There was a smattering of applause from the audience as he said this. Warming up, he added, "And another thing, you guys are pushing too hard for endowments. I think churches and Christian organizations shouldn't have endowments. It makes them

fat and happy, and they don't rely on God for their provision." This prompted a slightly louder round of applause from the workers.

An elderly woman in the audience stood up, outraged. Huffing as she headed to the floor mike, she paused to compose herself before she spoke. "Let me read you this statement from the program for today: 'Audience members will have a chance to ask questions of a panel of senior managers who see their jobs as their way of doing the Lord's work.'" Pausing for effect, she glared at the banker and asked, "What makes you worth more money than this pastor, if you're both doing the Lord's work." Before he could respond, she huffed on: "And another thing, I'll give up my church's endowment pleas the day you give up your retirement plan. If the church loses its confidence in God when it has a secure financial future, then surely individuals do, too. Do you have a pension, sir?" The audience, amused by the woman's indignation and the banker's obvious discomfort, murmured their general approval at the questions.

What do you think the banker's response should have been?



## Scripture Passage

Exodus 31:1–36:7

## Study

Exercising prudent stewardship encompasses all the areas of our individual lives, including time, talent, money, possessions, jobs, family, position, influence, to name a few. (As noted in the previous study, God views stewardship of time and resources differently. He only asks for a percentage of our possessions, while expecting all of our lives to be offered in His service.) Recognizing the source of our resources, and the strengths within each of them, goes a long way toward helping us manage them wisely.

That can be said of us as individuals, but it is equally true of groups, be they churches, families or workplace groups. Moses learned this directly from God. We can learn from him.

What does “being a good steward” mean to you?

How often do you assess the state of your stewardship? Can you describe the process you follow?

Read Exodus 31:1-6. What was the source of Bezalel and Oholiab’s skills and talents? What might that mean for us as workers today?

In what area are you a craftsman? (Have you ever looked?)

In those same passages, God not only attributes their workplace skills to Himself, but He highlights special leadership skills that He’s given to Bezalel. What are they? Why do we find those given to Him alone. (We see that by carefully reading the details of what God gives the other craftsmen.)

Are you a workplace leader? Which of Bezalel's gifts do you have?

What other leadership gifts might you have? What might this imply?

Knowing where we're leaders and where we're craftsmen can help us to know how to allocate our efforts efficiently. It can also stave off the frustration that comes when we try to do more than we're equipped to do.

Have someone in the group summarize the events of Exodus 31:12–34:8. (It will be helpful if each group member is familiar with these events ahead of time as well.) Buried in the middle of these verses are two serious consequences of Israel's rebellion: the killing of three thousand men by the Levites at the direction of Moses, and the blotting out of God's Book of the offenders. Where are Bezalel and Oholiab? If they were uniquely gifted by God to carry out His work, what if they had been among those worshiping the idol?

Read verses 36:1-7. Bezalel and Oholiab are still alive! What does that fact tell us about God's relationship with them?

About Bezalel and Oholiab's relationship with God?

What encouragement can you draw from the faithfulness of these two craftsmen for your own life?

In chapter 34, verses 10-28, God renews His covenant with Israel. In it are some truths that might equip us as prudent stewards. Translate these truths from the following verses into guidelines for your own lives:

Verse 12

Verse 17

Verse 21

Verse 26(a)

How might you apply these in your life in the coming week?

Remember Aaron and Hur holding Moses arms up in our earlier study? Remember when Jethro told Moses to get help from others? Remember when God gave Aaron to Moses to help him? Stewardship is as much about cooperation and community as it is about efficiency.

## *Common Sense and Eternal Principles*

- Whom God equips He also sustains.
- God wants all of our time, energy and talents committed to His work.
- God wants our work to be the place where we serve Him.
- God wants our family life to be the place where we serve Him.
- God is the source of our gifts, talents, abilities, money, resources and position. When we forget this, we cease to glorify Him in our life and labors.
- Stewardship means caring for something that belongs to someone else. We are stewards of the gift of life God has given us.