

## **A FOUND-FAITHFUL SERVANT**

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There are certain topics we do well to review regularly for our groundedness and well-being and us and Christmas is one, us and Easter is another, us and Bible study, us and prayer, ... others. And so is us and money.

Our umbrella verse is I Cor. 4:2, "It is required of a steward that he be found faithful." You can't call yourself a steward if you aren't faithful. And faithful means that you manage to the best of your abilities the resources of the one you serve. A steward is a trustee and a trustee a steward.

I was thinking about Joseph the other day, the OT one. He rose to be just under Pharaoh. He had a lot of resources to manage and that had to be meaningful for him. But what got him there and what kept him there was doing the best he could for God, and with God's help, the best he could for the Pharaoh and the Egyptian people. In a sense God's aim is for us all to be like a Joseph, under God himself managing the interests and resources given to us. God says to us, "I give you trust and responsibility and you then go and forward my interests and values and my people."

And we couldn't be considered faithful in that role if we served our own interests selfishly or ignored God's agenda rather regularly.

I looked up some reviews of orthodontists recently. They would list them by stars, one to five stars. They had some categories people marked for the orthodontist and then they came up with an overall score or star rating. The categories were, for example: how long did you wait in the office before being seen? Did he or she explain things well? And so on. For a steward you'd ask, "Is he or she careful with the resources of the one being served?" For a steward you'd ask, "Is he or she careful about the goals and values of the one being served?" In other words, "Is he or she faithful to the one being served?" Faithful.

God makes all of us stewards. If you are alive, you are a steward – of life, of the planet, of your family, of your spirit, your community. And here's some news, when you die, in terms of this current situation, in the next you are going to be a steward.<sup>1</sup> Will we be faithful?

And why should we be found faithful? What motivates someone to be a found-faithful steward? What might motivate you or me? I would offer three good motivations to us today.

One, you love the role. Being entrusted gives you a sense of meaning, of being respected, of being believed in ... and what you love about being a steward found faithful is all that.

I used to work for a guy who had a lot of sayings, a German guy name Harvey Chrouser. Others, I have come to find out, have said the same sayings. He had,

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. 6:3, "Don't you know you will 'govern' the angels?"

“Time to lean, you have time to clean.” He had, “You don’t get what you expect but what you inspect.” He had, “Kissing don’t last but cooking do.” But he also had, and lived by this with those of us around him, “Responsibility is the great developer of men.” We were all guys with Harvey Chrouser but he’d say it about women too. Responsibility is a developer. Being a steward is being giving responsibility. God wants us to have that enlargement. A steward loves that.

I have a few friends who have been a part of fairly wealthy families. The parent, and in a sense the whole family, in all the cases, has had a secretary who has been with them for decades. She knew where everything was and why what was done and when it was done. When the parents passed and the children needed clarification about how something was set up and why, she knew. These secretaries loved being a trusted, wanted, needed part of the family and helping all the family do well. A found-faithful steward compares to that, liking that role.

With the family secretaries, when they proved faithful with the first bit of trust they were given, they got more. And then with the second, more. Then the third, more. Being found faithful brings on more chances to be trusted and, consequently, more joy...especially if you like the role.

Two, you want to be a steward found faithful because you love the mission. At the men’s breakfast we talked about the feeding of the 5000. It’s a pretty basic observation in that passage that what is given to

Jesus he uses to help people. I like that. I like people being helped. I like that that is Jesus' mission. I'll be a found-faithful steward because that mission of his has me. I agree with it. I like it.

A long time ago I got settled about five things. One, kids are the future and we need to practice a stitch in time saves nine with them. If I can help a kid be healthy and know Jesus, like through Compassion International, and be consistent in that, in just a short ten to fifteen years, they'll be men and women influencing their own families and whole communities. Two, if you can support the people who train pastors, you multiply the people who reach people. A pastor trains, say a hundred in his church, and they go out and reach others. Strategic multiplication. Three, which I, of course, should have said first, is that Jesus is the answer and that the Bible is key in meeting him ... so Jesus and Bible, Jesus and Bible, Jesus and Bible. Four, reaching international students for Christ here, so that when they, crème of the crop, go back home they can reach their own countries which they know better than I ever will, makes absolute sense. Five, helping a church get and manage well in its community so they have clean water helps everyone be healthy and helps the church serve its community. I will step up and steward those causes every time because I believe in those missions. They're all part of Jesus' mission. I give and serve myself to keep those going. I want you to give to keep those going. I believe in Jesus' mission and would be a found-faithful steward so I can keep *that* mission, his mission

going. I want to be a found-faithful steward because of the mission.

A third motivation for being a steward is your love of the one you serve. In our case, we're talking Jesus.

Years ago I received a phone call and the voice on the other end of the line said, "Mr. Wood, this is Jonathan, Peter Ingram's son." I hadn't seen that boy since he was two years old and living with his parents in England and now he was telling me he was in Washington DC in an internship and wondering if he could use me as a local reference. But I want to tell you something, when he said, 'Peter Ingram's son,' he had me. I love Peter Ingrams. I hadn't seen him in fifteen years but I love him. He was the first guy I met in college. I can remember plunking down next to him on the Vanguard's bus. I can remember being in his wedding. I can remember tromping through his grandfather's farm in Devon, England. I can show you a calendar in my kitchen right now, and one comes every single year for the last thirty years, from him. I would steward his son, do what I could for his son, faithfully ... because of my love for Peter. "Jonathan, I will loyally and carefully and immediately serve you any way I can ... because of your father." See? I entered stewardship ... of Peter's son ... because I loved Peter. Isn't it so that we take on certain things for Jesus' sake? Because we love Jesus? If Jesus loves this or that, him or her, I will take care of them because I love him.

Don't we admire and love Jesus and for his sake, want to advance him, express love for him ... don't you want to be a found-faithful servant?

So I want you to know the joy of a found-faithful servant with your money today, to make a money plan for you and yours with God and his church ... because you love being trusted by God, you love what God is doing and want to further it, and you love who and how God is.

I want you to fill out a pledge card. Write on it same as last year or same as last year plus \$5 or do quick math in your head about your monthly income and pick a percentage 5% or 10%. And I want you to put in the offering plate because you want to be a found-faithful steward. You don't even have to be a member to do this.

But what I want you to know with joy even more than being a found-faithful steward is that you will always find, always find, always find that Jesus is a found-faithful servant to you. That's what this table says. I am the one who has been found forever faithful and I invite you to benefit and rest and be encouraged by my faithfulness.

*If you'd like to talk with someone about this message or your spiritual life, or to have someone pray with you, the pastors & elders of the church would welcome your call. [revjeffwood@gmail.com](mailto:revjeffwood@gmail.com)*

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