



## **Stewardship: Release from Servitude**

### **Lesson # 4**

*“See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of this world, rather than according to Christ” (Col. 2:8)*

In our last stewardship lesson we discussed the ease with which we become susceptible to falling into servitude with relation to our time, our talents and our resources, especially those of a financial nature. If you feel as though you might be in that situation or coming dangerously close to being in servitude you will be pleased to know God’s Word, the Bible, has answers on how to pull yourself out of that quagmire or to avoid falling into Satan’s trap of servitude in the first place.

The misuse of time, talent or money causes frustration and worry, but God’s plan provides peace and freedom. These qualities show themselves in every aspect of a Christian’s life: the release from tension and anxiety about a too crowded schedule, underutilized talents or overdue bills, a clear conscience, and the sure knowledge that God is in control again. There’s no guarantee that a Christian’s life will be trouble-free; after all, we are human and we make mistakes. But once God is in charge, His divine correction will bring these areas of our life back under control.

There are basic steps to achieving God’s plan. For every promise He makes, He has a prerequisite. In each case, some action is required to bring His power into focus in our lives. That might be prayer, fasting or simply believing, but it will always require a free act of our will.

Christians who are seeking God’s best in their lives must be willing to submit to His will and direction. There are many Christians who say they trust God, but there is a big difference between saying and doing. Some trust only when it’s convenient to do so. Others trust only as a last resort. No matter when or why it all starts with a first step.

### **STEPS TO FREEDOM**

**Transfer Ownership To God.** There is no substitute for this step. If we believe we are owners of our time, talent and possessions, then the ups and downs affecting those things will be reflected in our attitudes. However, if we have transferred all ownership to God,

then God can move providentially to accomplish His will in our lives. Notice, it is His will not ours that He accomplishes. Read **Prov. 3:19** and then answer this question; who is the owner of everything? <sup>19</sup> *By wisdom the LORD laid the earth's foundations, by understanding he set the heavens in place;*

In **Prov. 8:18** what are the four blessings that come from trusting God? <sup>18</sup> *With me are riches and honor, enduring wealth and prosperity*

**Get Out Of Debt.** Scripture tells us that debt is a condition that exists when any of the following circumstances are true.

- a. Past due money, goods, or services are owed to other people.
- b. The total of unsecured liabilities exceeds total assets.
- c. Pressures from this debt cause anxiety.

There are ways to get out of debt.

1. Stop overspending or over committing.
2. Start repaying what you owe.
3. Don't borrow more.

Remember, if you didn't get in debt in one month you won't get out of debt in one month. There is great truth in **Prov. 15:16**, especially in this immediate gratification society in which we live. <sup>16</sup> *Better a little with the fear of the LORD than great wealth with turmoil.*

Staying out of debt requires the accumulation over time of savings. Again great wisdom is seen in **Prov. 21:20** <sup>20</sup> *In the house of the wise are stores of choice food and oil, but a foolish man devours all he has.*

**Accept God's Provision.** Anxiety about investments and profits will disappear when Christians accept God's provision. We must believe that His wisdom is superior to ours and that He does care about all our needs. See **Matt. 6:31.** <sup>31</sup> *So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' Remember, peace comes from accepting God's plan for your life and making the best of it. But don't be fooled. Accepting a bad situation that can be changed through diligence is called laziness.*

**Refuse Quick Decisions.** One of the identifying characteristics of a "get rich quick scheme" is pressure to make quick decisions based on incomplete information. Any solid business plan will stand up to examination. As God's stewards, we must take time to learn and understand. See **Prov. 21:5** <sup>5</sup> *The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty.*

**Excel In Work.** It is impossible to be slothful if excellence is the minimum acceptable standard for work. Too often Christians feel they should be second best or purposefully fail; and they label that humility. That is not God's plan. His standard is for excellence, period. See **1 Peter 4:11** <sup>11</sup> *If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in*

*all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.”*

**Confession-Restitution.** God tells us to put the things of the past in the past. Often that requires first making restitution to those who have been wronged. The lessons learned and the blessings received will be worth the sacrifice or discomfort that comes from setting things right. Deceitfulness and dishonesty are abominations before God, and effort is required to escape those habit traps. Two key scriptures on this subject are; **Luke. 19:8** “<sup>8</sup> But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.” **Matt. 5:23-24.**”<sup>23</sup> “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you,<sup>24</sup> leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.”

**Contentment.** Greediness and covetousness are results of being discontented. To overcome those attitudes, we must seek contentment in a moderate life style. That may be difficult at first, because we tend to look at the circumstances instead of looking to God; but there never will be peace in finances otherwise. The secret of a happy (contented) life is learning how to deal with both the good times and the bad and like the apostle Paul, knowing how to be content with either. Contentment will come as a product of a deeper personal relationship with God. See **Phil. 4:11-12** “<sup>11</sup> I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.<sup>12</sup> I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.” and **1 Tim. 6:7-8** “<sup>7</sup> For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.<sup>8</sup> But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.”

**Sacrifice Desires.** God expects us to live less extravagantly and not be swayed by the foolish sensuality promoted by the mass media. We must establish a value system that doesn't include the “**I deserve it!**” mentality. Solomon is considered the richest man who ever lived, as well as the wisest. Often wisdom is a result of learning what not to do. He says this is how he acquired wisdom. See **Ecc. 2:10-11.**”<sup>10</sup> *I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor.* <sup>11</sup> *Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.”*

## **TWO GENERAL POINTS NEED TO BE MADE AS WE CLOSE THIS STUDY ON DEFEATING SERVITUDE.**

**PUT OTHERS FIRST.** There is no better way to suppress feelings of superiority than to put others first. Those who are blessed with abundance must recognize that it is a gift. Read **Rom. 12:16** “<sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.” And.....

**Phil. 2:3-5** “<sup>3</sup> Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.<sup>5</sup> Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:”

**TRUST GOD.** God never promised equality in provision. But He does promise our needs will be met (sometimes through the abundance of others); therefore, Christians have roles in God’s plan and must be willing to accept God’s provision without resentment. Read **2 Cor. 8:14** “<sup>14</sup> At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality,”

Please, if you are burdened by servitude, relinquish it to God. Ask Him to give you the courage and conviction that His way is the right way and through His word, as we have seen in this lesson, you can and will break free from what ever hinders you from fully realizing His blessings for you. After all you are His child and He wants only the very best for you.

May God richly bless us all,

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