

Stewardship of Prayer – Being in the Presence of God

Main Scripture: Colossians 4:2-6 New Living Translation (NLT)

An Encouragement for Prayer: ² Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart. ³ Pray for us, too, that God will give us many opportunities to speak about his mysterious plan concerning Christ. That is why I am here in chains. ⁴ Pray that I will proclaim this message as clearly as I should. ⁵ Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity. ⁶ Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone.

To start off what does “Stewardship” mean to you?

Stewardship is defined as the office, duties, and obligations of a steward; the conducting, supervising, or managing of something; and *especially* the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care.

Then who is a Steward? Here are three descriptions:

- One employed in a large household or estate to manage domestic concerns (such as the supervision of servants, collection of rents, and keeping of accounts).
- One who actively directs affairs : manager

Are you a steward?

What are the resources you have been given to manage?

Now that we are clear as to stewardship and steward, let us turn our attention to the word “Prayer”.

What do you think Prayer is?

- Prayer is an act that seeks to activate a rapport with an object of worship through deliberate communication. Prayer can be a form of religious practice, may be either individual or communal and take place in public or in private.
- When language is used, prayer may take the form of a hymn, formal confessional statement, or a spontaneous utterance in the praying person.
- Different forms of prayer such as petitionary prayer (request to do something – pleading with God to make a way for you when faced with challenges), prayer of supplication (request to provide something – please give me money), thanksgiving, and praise.

If a steward is given resources to manage, how can she be a good steward or meet expectations of the Master? She has to know what the Master / Owner expects of her at all times and in respect of the resources in her care.

What happened to the servant with one talent in Matt. 25: 24-26?

²⁴ “Then the servant with the one bag of silver came and said, ‘Master, I knew you were a harsh man, harvesting crops you didn’t plant and gathering crops you didn’t cultivate. ²⁵ I was afraid I would lose your money, so I hid it in the earth. Look, here is your money back.’

²⁶ “But the master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy servant! If you knew I harvested crops I didn’t plant and gathered crops I didn’t cultivate, ²⁷ why didn’t you deposit my money in the bank? At least I could have gotten some interest on it.’

²⁸ “Then he ordered, ‘Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one with the ten bags of silver. ²⁹ To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away. ³⁰ Now throw this useless servant into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

“Servant with One Talent” knew the mind of the Master but did not do what was right as stated in verse 26 so he was cast away.

This means that the foundation of all other forms of stewardship is prayer—giving back to God in thanksgiving a generous portion of our time through a prayerful relationship with Him.

Many Christians struggle with 1 Corinthians 5:17 - “Pray without ceasing” - as they wonder how this can be done with the hustle and bustle of the work week. Work for this purpose includes paid and unpaid work as a homemaker, volunteer or childminder for grandchildren. Some individuals have looked up to Pastors and other Ministers as “Prayer Contractors” to offer “special prayers” for them as they believe that Ministers are “closer” to God or “more spiritual” than them.

But God hears the prayers of all who trust in Him and diligently seek Him whether they live in seclusion or have an activity-filled life. Christians should not think that they have less of God in their lives if they cannot go on a retreat or to camp.

How can a person use prayer as a method of Stewardship?

- Giving top priority to God through a daily life of prayer.
- Placing oneself in God’s hands so that He can direct one’s hands to serve according to His will.
- Participating in church prayer sessions
- Engaging in personal prayer retreat.

Being in the Presence of God:

Christians can enter God's presence and receive guidance from God wherever they are as God is everywhere as the Psalmist stated in Ps. 139:7-12 (NIV):

⁷ Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? ⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. ⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, ¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. ¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," ¹² even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

Our work can become worship unto God if we are in right standing before him. Ps. 24: 3-5 states "Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false. He will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from God his Savior."

A monk named Brother Lawrence in 1600s found that he could be in God's presence while washing dishes with noise and other activities going on around him just as when he was on a retreat in the stillness of the desert. He stated "For me the time of activity does not differ from the time of prayer, and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are calling together for as many different things, I possess God in as great tranquility as when upon my knees at the blessed Sacrament." (Extracted from "Brother Lawrence: The Practice of the Presence of God the Best Rule of a Holy Life.")

It was said about Brother Lawrence that "The good Brother found God everywhere, as much while he was repairing shoes as while he was praying.... It was God not the task, he had in view. He knew that the more the task was against his natural inclinations, the greater was his love in offering it to God." (Extracted from "Brother Lawrence: The Practice of the Presence of God the Best Rule of a Holy Life.")

"That when he began his business, he said to GOD, with a *loving* trust in Him, "O my GOD, since Thou art with me, and I must now, in obedience to Thy commands, apply my mind to these outward things, I beseech Thee to grant me the grace to continue in Thy Presence; and to this end do Thou prosper me with Thy assistance, receive all my works, and possess all my affections." As he proceeded in his work, he continued his familiar conversation with his Maker,—imploring His grace, and offering to Him all his actions. When he had finished, he examined himself how he had discharged his duty; if he found well, he returned thanks to GOD; if otherwise, he asked pardon; and without being discouraged, he set his mind right again, and continued his exercise of the presence of GOD, as if he had never deviated from it. "Thus," said he, "by rising after my falls, and by frequently renewed acts of faith and love, I am come to a state wherein it would be as difficult for me not to think of GOD as it was at first to accustom myself to it." As brother Lawrence had found such an advantage in walking in the presence of GOD, it was natural for him to recommend it earnestly to others; but his example was a stronger inducement than any arguments he could propose. His very countenance was edifying, such a sweet and calm devotion appearing in it as could not but effect the beholders. And it was observed that in the greatest hurry of business in the kitchen, he still preserved his recollection and heavenly-mindedness. He was never hasty nor loitering, but did each thing in its season," (Extracted from "Brother Lawrence: The Practice of the Presence of God the Best Rule of a Holy Life.")

It is possible for us to be in God's presence as we go about our daily activities by:

1. Committing our commute to and from the office, loved ones and other people that come to mind, the church, missions work into God's hands.
2. Singing or humming songs to God while in traffic (if driving, keep your hands on your steering wheel)
3. Reading while in traffic (as passengers not drivers).
4. Committing our day's work in general, pending decisions and issues to God for guidance and wisdom in the morning.
5. Asking for opportunities to share personal testimonies.
6. Praying for our employers and/or firms, managers or supervisors, other employees, even if they give us hassles and our internal and external clients or customers.
7. Praying in respect of workplace issues and activities asking for God's intervention, guidance or wisdom for everyone involved.
8. Asking for God's grace and favour when confronted with difficult issues and situations.
9. Talking to and consulting God as issues pop up unexpectedly during the day.
10. Thanking God for achievements, mercies shown, protection and support received during the day at the end of business day.
11. Laying tomorrow's work before God.
12. Speaking to God before sleeping and on waking up.

As we offer our tasks, assignments and activities in the workplace to God, our work and daily activities become an act of worship.

In closing, please consider saying this **Stewardship Prayer**:

"Lord God, you alone are the source of every good gift, of the vast array of our universe, and the mystery of each human life.

We praise you and thank you for your great power and tender, faithful love.

Everything we are and everything we have are your gifts, and after having created us you have given us into the keeping of your Son, Jesus Christ.

Fill our minds with His truth and our hearts with His love, and in His spirit may we be bonded together into a community of faith, a parish family, a caring people.

In the name and spirit of Jesus, we commit ourselves to be good stewards of the gifts entrusted to us, to share our time, our talent and our material and spiritual gifts as an outward sign of the treasure we hold in Jesus.

Amen" (taken from *The Catholic Way of Life instruction on Stewardship*)