

Stewardship: God's Word

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 February 2012

Preacher: Joshua Hammond

[0 : 00] Well, good morning, Watermark. Good morning. Well, before I begin, let me start by saying that today's a very special day. It's my beautiful wife, Patricia's birthday. Thank you.

She is not in the room. So when you see her later, please run up to her, give her a hug. That'll scare her and tell her happy birthday. Because the bigger deal you make out of her birthday, the more money I save. So please make it a big deal. My birthday, however, was two weeks ago.

I turned 33. I also shaved, so it looked like I turned 12. But it's funny, at 33, I didn't expect to be as far along in life as I've gotten. I always said when I was single and when I was younger that I would follow in the footsteps of Jesus and not get married until I was 33. Some of you look confused. I said that to someone and they said, well, Jesus didn't get married. And I said, no, but he gave up his life at 33. Okay. My wife just walked in the room, so forget what I just said.

But it's amazing, though. We found out that we have two children and we have another one on the way. And most likely, 80%, the doctor says, it's a girl. I don't know what 80% it's a girl means, but with a high likelihood, it's a girl, which I was scared when I found out that we had another child in the way. But now that I found out that it's a girl, I'm terrified. But it's amazing, as I think about my life, as I think about how much responsibility I now have in my hands, it really makes me consider what God has given me. That God has made me a steward of so many things. He's made me a steward of my home. He's made me a steward of my marriage. He's made me a steward of my family, of my children. That he has entrusted me with something that's not mine, but it belongs to him.

He's entrusted me with a life that one day he'll take back. What we do in the short time that we have, matters. We're starting a new series called Stewardship, Stewardship Making This One Life Count.

[2 : 44] And I'm excited as we look through the things that matter, the things that help us know that what we do in our short years matters, not just in this life, but matters for eternity.

And today I have the privilege and the great responsibility, the pressure even, to take us through the topic this morning, stewardship in God's Word, which is something that's very dear to my heart. And I say that it scares me because the weight of this is so heavy on my heart. Because if we don't get this right, then everything that we talk about after this won't matter. If we don't get this right, we won't get anything else right. Because everything else hinges on this. Let's pray. Father God, we come to you this morning. And God, I pray that you would speak to us through your Word, that you would teach us. Open our eyes to see your majesty.

that our lives would be changed, that we wouldn't just have a head knowledge this morning, but that you would change our hearts, that we would walk out of here differently because we've experienced you. In Jesus' name, pray. Amen. In Deuteronomy 6, 6 through 9, it says, this is also in your notes, in your bulletin, and these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

You shall teach them diligently to your children. You shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise, you shall bind them as a sign on your head. They shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorpost of your house, and on your gates. Here, God is telling his children. He's telling a people that he's gathered to himself. He's just given them his Word, and he says, listen, what I have given you is serious.

What I have given you should not just be some flippant thing that you hear today, and you throw it out tomorrow. This needs to get into your heart, that you need to meditate on this, that you need to talk about it, not just on Sundays, and listen to a good message, but you need to talk about this all the time. You need to digest this. You need to talk about it when you're standing, when you're sitting, when you're in your house, when you're on the way. And then he says something strange.

He says, you're going to tie it on your forehead, tie it on your hand as a reminder. Put it on your doorpost.

[5 : 38] Put it on your gate so that you will look different. You're going to look weird, I tell you. Please don't be so literal as to put this up here this week, or tie it here, but it will change how you look. It will change you. God is telling us that we need to be passionate for his Word.

There's a name that I believe that every believer needs to know. Every Christian should know this name. It's the name William Tyndale. Have you ever heard this name? Most of us have never heard of William Tyndale. But William Tyndale lived in the 1400s and the 1500s in England. He was a very smart man. He graduated from Oxford and from Cambridge. He spoke seven languages. I struggle with English.

Okay, seven languages. He was fluent. He studied Greek, the ancient Greek and the ancient Hebrew. William Tyndale had a passion. He had a passion to take God's Word, which at that time was only allowed to be written in Latin and only read in Latin. And he desired that every person would have the ability to read it in English. Every person in England would be able to read it in their own language.

It was against the law. But William Tyndale was convinced of the power of God's Word. So what he did is he went and he translated the New Testament from Greek into English. And from far away he published it and it was smuggled into England and people started reading it. And it was so infuriated the king that anyone found with the Bible would be killed. They would be tried for treason. William Tyndale writes this, and forgive me, it's in old English. Let it not make thee despair, neither yet discourage thee, O reader, that it is forbidden thee in pain of life and goods, or that it is made breaking of the king's peace or treason unto his highness to read the word of thy soul's health. For if God be on our side, what matter make it who be against us, be they bishops, cardinals, popes. You hear what he said? He's writing to a people who are so hungry for God's Word and he says, don't despair. Don't be afraid, even though this could cost you your life. There is something greater that can't be taken away from you. Imagine that in our world today where we have Bibles all over the place, where you can have a Bible on your phone, where you can have a Bible on your iPad, you can have a Bible on your Android, when you can have a Bible on your shelf, a Bible in your car, you can have Bibles anywhere, 24 hours a day, anytime you want them in any language, that you can dream of almost any language that you can imagine. But he said, don't worry, it may cost you life, but it's worth it. William Tyndale lived that out. He was caught and tried. [9 : 18] And on October 6, 1536, he was tied to a stake. And they wrapped a rope and a chain around his neck and they choked him. And then they set him on fire. Before they did that, a historian recorded that his prayer was, Lord, open the King of England's eyes. You see, this was a crazy idea. This was a dangerous idea that if people could just read the Word of God in their own language, it would change their lives. I once visited a village in northern China. And this village, it was a village of 1,000 people, very small village. And there were 600 believers in this village. They had weathered through some tremendous things during the Cultural Revolution in China. And I went to meet with some of the brothers and sisters in the church and they met in a one-room mud hut that had one light bulb in the middle. Imagine this morning if we were all huddled into a one-room mud hut with a light bulb.

And they shared with me that during the Cultural Revolution, the whole village had one Bible. And they treasured that Bible. What they would do is that they would take pages from that Bible when they would come together and they would pass them around. They would take those pages home and they would memorize them. They would talk to their children about them. They would, in their homes, they would devour the Word of God. And then when they would come back together, they would talk about what the Scripture taught them. Can you imagine if we didn't have one Bible amongst all of us?

And all we could do is take a page home and memorize it. You see, they valued the Word of God because they knew what the Word of God was. They knew that the Word of God was precious. They knew it was powerful.

It had the power to change people's lives, to transform people. They knew it was useful. They knew that the Bible, though written thousands of years ago, was relevant and current to today.

And more important, they knew that the Word of God was a treasure. And the Word of God is a trust. The Bible, if you want to put it in a very simple acronym, Bible, B-I-B-L-E, basic instructions before leaving earth. Isn't that cool?

[12:16] Well, but it is. This is our field manual. We are in a war. We're in a battle every day.

You would not go to battle without knowing what's in the field manual. You would not go into battle without your weapon. This is the sword of truth.

Psalms 119, 105 says, Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. A lamp to my feet shows that this is where I am.

This is where I'm standing. It shows that if I'm on the path or I'm off the path, and it is a light to my path, that means it shows me where I'm going.

I know where I am, and I know where I'm going because of God's Word. Why is it that many Christians don't read the Bible?

[13:26] You know, if I'm honest, and here this morning, I live in Hong Kong. How many of you live in Hong Kong? Okay, yeah, some of you still aren't with me.

Okay. This has been called one of the busiest cities in the world. How many of you are busy? Raise your hand if you're busy. Okay, so not as many as I had hoped.

But we are busy. And one of the biggest, one of the top reasons that if you ask someone, why aren't you reading the Word? They'll say, I'm too busy. I just don't, I don't have enough time.

I'm, I'm, I've got all these things to do. All these important things. I, I don't, I don't have time for it.

Wow. Now wait a minute. You've got time to play word, words with friends.

You've got time to find out all of your, all of your friends' Facebook posts. But you don't have time to spend even just five minutes in God's Word.

[14:35] It's what I call a value call. You see no value in it. And there have been times where I've lost the value of God's Word that, that I, I think that in, in that moment, something else is more important.

But the reality is, it's not. Maybe it's because if we're honest, we're too lazy.

I've been guilty of that. Been too lazy to even read God's Word. And then there's another one.

Maybe it's because we're afraid.

Afraid that what we read will cause us to have to examine our lives. That what we read will cause us to say, I know that I'm not living the way God created me to live.

It might make us feel this strange feeling called guilt. It might lead us to live differently. What's the danger of not knowing God's Word?

[15:42] The first thing is we misuse, we can be led into misusing God's Word. There's a, Philippians 4.13 is a verse that I love.

It says, I can do all things through Him who gives me strength. Or I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. When I was growing up, I was in a crowd of people that would use this verse for whatever they wanted it to, whatever they wanted in their lives at that time they would use this verse.

I'm having a hard time paying my bills, but I believe God wants me to have this brand new car. I can't afford, but I'm going to sign my name on the line because I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.

There's this, there's this other thing that I want and I probably shouldn't have it, but I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength. You want that house, you want all this nice stuff, you can do all things through Christ who gives you strength.

And many people use it as a means of getting all the riches of the world that they want, of saying that I'm going to look pretty, I'm going to be healthy. But you know, Paul is writing this and you know what he says right before this?

[17:00] When you don't know all of God's word, when you're not a good steward of God's word, you don't know that before this he's saying, I know what it is to be in plenty and I know what it is to be in want, but I've learned the secret of being content in all circumstances.

If you're not a good steward of God's word, you can be led to misuse it. Jeremiah 29 11, again, one of my favorite verses. We talked about this verse in your community groups this week.

Do you all remember that? This past week, Jeremiah 29 11, for I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, to give you a hope and a future.

To those that misuse God's word, to those that are not good stewards of his word, that means whatever you want, whatever you think your life should be like, it's going to be happy because God knows the plans he has for me, plans to prosper me and not to harm me, to give me a hope and a future.

And it becomes twisted in all of these things that it's never intended to be. And if you're in your community group this week, you learned that God is speaking through the prophet Jeremiah to the people that he says, I have carried you into exile.

[18 : 22] This is an uncomfortable place for the children of Israel, for the Israelites. This is a very uncomfortable place. It's not what they had expected. This is a terrible thing that's happened to them, but God says, hey, this is uncomfortable.

Your false prophet said that you're going to be out of this in a few years. This is going to be a long time. It's going to be 70 years. But listen to this. Even though it's uncomfortable, I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord.

Plans to prosper you, not to harm you, to give you a hope and a future. To those that misuse it, they say nothing will ever happen that you don't want to happen. But the full counsel of God's word says that he's going to take us through even the storms of our lives for a reason.

False teaching. Ephesians 4, 14 says that, so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness and deceitful schemes.

When you hear things like there are many ways to God, then you can automatically say, no, wait a minute. God's word, Jesus says himself, I am the way, the truth, and the life that no one comes to the Father but by me.

[19 : 50] When you hear things like as long as you're a good person, you'll go to heaven. And then, again, a good steward of God's word, it comes to your mind that, wait a minute, in Isaiah 64, it says, all of us have become like one who's unclean, that all of our righteous deeds are as filthy rags before the Lord.

Or you'll say, wait a minute, for by grace you've been saved through faith and this not of your own doing. It is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Another danger of not being a good steward of God's word is that you stop growing and you forget the things that you once knew.

It's hard to believe if you look at me now, but I used to be in great shape. And I don't mean round as a shape, I'm a great shape now, it's just different.

But at one point in my life, I was quite athletic. That's not the joke, you're not supposed to laugh at that part. But something happened where I stopped going to the gym as often.

[21 : 18] It happened about December 10th, 2005. I lost my motivation for working out. But something happened.

I noticed within just months, if I would go back into the gym after months of not being in the gym, I could not lift the weight that I once could.

And there's something that happens in our muscles, that when we are not building up our muscles, when we stop using them, there's a word that happens, it's called atrophy. It's where you not only start to become weaker, but the muscles even start to be eaten away.

That happens in our lives when we are not good stewards of God's word. Here's what happens. The writers of Hebrews writes in 5.11 through 14.

About this, we have much to say. And it is hard to explain since you have become dull of hearing.

[22 : 26] For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness since he is a child.

But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

Do you hear what he's saying to the Hebrews? He's saying, you know, I have all this great stuff to tell you, but it's hard because you're stupid. It's hard because you're dumb.

And you're dumb because you, you should be at the point where you're teaching, but instead you have to be taught those, those basic elemental things again. I was in school, I was in middle school, which is about eighth grade, with a guy who was 19 years old.

Eighth grade. That means most of us are 12 and 13. He was 19 years old because he didn't pass the tests. He didn't study.

[23 : 45] He didn't even sometimes show up at school. And it was embarrassing to be the only kid in middle school with a beard. But spiritually, that's what happens to us.

And he's saying, hey, wait a minute, you should be teaching, but instead you're being unproductive because you don't even know the basic things. You have not continued. You haven't been working out. Second Timothy, this is in your notes, 3, 14.

What does it look like? How do we become good stewards of God's word? But as for you, continue in what you've learned. Paul is writing to Timothy.

Timothy's been taught the word by his grandmother. He's been taught the word by Paul. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

[25 : 03] Now, I know that's a long passage of scripture, so let's break that down for just a moment. First, but as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed.

Continuity, when we are a steward of God's word, it does not mean that one time we read the Bible all the way through in a year, and then we stopped, because we know it all.

It doesn't mean that if you've studied every one of the 66 books, the 39 books of the Old Testament or the 27 books in the New Testament that you've studied them, that it's finished. It's not a once-off thing that he's telling Timothy, continue in what you've learned.

This keeps going throughout your whole life. And I've learned that I came to Christ when I was 13 years old, and I remember the passages that were so powerful for me when I was 13.

And when I read them when I was in university, when I read them again, those same passages would teach me something completely different, something new that I didn't know before.

[26 : 15] When I was in my 20s, again, it spoke to me in a much different way. When I became a husband, very different. When you're a good steward of God's word, no matter what stage of life you're in, God's word will continue to speak to you and differently than what it did before.

It will never contradict itself, but you will see something new about God. Your experience. You know, there are great ways to learn.

As a believer, there are three great ways to learn. One is through your own experience. The second is through the experience of others. But these first two ways of learning as a believer are flawed.

And they're flawed because there's a way that seems right into men, but in the end, is death. The third way is through the scripture because it is the lens that we see all of our experience, that we see the world around us.

It changes how we see everything, how we respond to everything. Next, he says, the sacred writings which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

[27 : 32] The word wise, to make you wise. Wisdom. Throughout the Bible, wisdom doesn't mean teaching you how to do something or how to do one particular thing.

It's not how to build a house, not how to do math, but wisdom is always about how to live a life that's pleasing to God. That's what we were created for.

So we're learning how to fulfill our purpose and our destiny as humans. How are you guys doing? The next thing is very important.

He's saying that all of the scripture here will give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

That all of the Bible is not separate stories that are put together, but all of the Bible is one consistent story from the beginning to the end.

[28 : 40] It is the story of God creating people for a reason. It's the story of how we've fallen away that we've rebelled against God and God bringing us back to himself.

We see that from Genesis to the culmination in Revelation where he has his church gathered from every nation, tribe, people, and language. One continuous story and it all points to one central person.

Who is it? That's the church answer, right? It's Jesus. It all points back to Jesus. The next thing, all scripture is breathed out by God.

That these are not a group of ignorant people writing about the things that were happening in their day not knowing how to explain it so they write it the best they could. That's not what the Bible is. It says that it is breathed out of the mouth of God. That this is God's word. And it's profitable for teaching.

[30 : 00] It profits us not by evoking emotions but by teaching us, instructing us. And it instructs us in the things of God.

It's valuable because God places a value on it. Imagine if the God of the universe who created everything, who holds all things together, the God who made you and me says, hey, I want you to know why I made you.

And I want you to know how to have relationship. I want you to not have to suffer the wrath of your sin. That's pretty important, right? That's pretty valuable for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness.

It tells us what sin is. It tells us how to live a righteous life, a life that pleases God. What's amazing, if you go into any bookstore in Hong Kong, most of the books that you see in the front have something to do with management or how to invest your money.

All the practical things that you need for a life in Hong Kong. How to control people and how to gain wealth. It all seems very practical and some people say the Bible's just not practical.

[31 : 20] Wait a minute. Jesus had a very different take when he says, what will it profit a man to gain the whole world yet lose his own soul?

How practical is that? That all of these things that one day are going to pass away but the Bible talks about the one thing that's going to last for eternity. God and the souls of people.

That's very practical. That the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

Do you know that God calls us to his mission? That we are to be about his work. That the Bible equips us. It makes us competent for every good work.

If we are not doing good work then we know that we are not good stewards of his word and it's called incompetency. To summarize, I want to do this.

[32 : 34] There are four areas of our lives that if we are stewards, good stewards of God's word that it will radically change us. I call it the head, heart, hands, and feet.

The first is the head. That we will know his ways. Psalm 25 you heard read earlier, make me to know your ways, O Lord.

Teach me your paths. That we will know God's voice. My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.

You know, sometimes when we pray and we don't get answers to our prayers or we hear all of these things. How do we distinguish what's God's voice and what's not God's voice?

We know it by his word because we've heard his voice. We've seen his voice. We are intimately familiar. When I shout in a crowd of people, my son knows my voice because he has spent time with me and when he's behaving he runs right toward me.

[33 : 56] He's two. That doesn't happen a lot these days. You'll know God's voice and you will know his heart.

You'll know his gospel. What's the gospel? For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Romans 5.8 But God shows his love for us and that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. we will know Romans 10.9 and 10 because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved for with the heart one believes and is justified and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

We're talking about a head knowledge first. If you're a steward of God's word you will know you will recognize God but it must not stop there because the next when we understand his gospel when we understand that we didn't do anything to deserve his love and forgiveness it will sink from here to our hearts and it will begin to change our hearts.

Hebrews 4.12 For the word of God is living and active sharper than any two-edged sword piercing to the division of the soul and of the spirit and of joints and marrows and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

[35 : 34] That means God's word is the blade that does the cutting in our hearts to remove the junk from our hearts. He starts to change us that we begin to want the things of God.

John 17.17 Sanctify them in your truth your word is truth sanctify means purified set apart made clean made right that happens through his word the Holy Spirit at work through God's word changes our hearts and then it begins to manifest itself in other ways when Jesus says something like but love your enemies do good it starts to go from our heart to our hands starts with a head knowledge sinks into our hearts and changes us but it can't just stay there it's not meant to just stay

in our hearts and we have our own little personal faith that no one knows about but it will become evident because it will become evident in what we do our hands Luke 6 46 says why this is Jesus speaking why do you call me Lord Lord and do not do what I tell you 1 John 2 5 but whoever keeps his word in him truly the love of God is perfected by this we may know that we are in him whoever says he abides in me ought to walk in the same way in which he walked what does that mean why do we do what Jesus told us to do is it because we can earn salvation that way no way is it so we can earn the favor of God no it's because we've heard his word we know it in our minds it's gone into our heart it's changed us we have salvation already and because of that we want to do and to live the way God wants us to live and lastly it will radically change our feet what do I mean by that that's weird if you're a good steward of God's word you have a knowledge of God your heart is changed it's evident in the things that you do and how you live but it will also change where you go let me explain what I mean Matthew 28 19 go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you and behold I'm with you always to the very end of the age God's passion is not for just you alone to know him to be made right by him and for you to walk alone and never tell anyone but God's passion Jesus said I've come to seek and save the lost if he if you have a head knowledge of God and a heart knowledge of God if you're doing what Jesus has told you out of love for him then you must be about his mission the Bible tells us oh how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news if you're in here this morning and you'd say I'm not a Christian I still have questions I was dragged here I was promised lunch afterwards we are glad that you are here because we believe it's not by accident that any of you are here this morning I want to plead with you and beg you to consider the word of God and to investigate the claims that we make here this morning that God's word is all about how he created you for a reason and he wants to glorify himself by pursuing you through the generations and bringing you back home a loving father that's searching for you will you join with us in being good stewards of his word investigate these claims if you're a believer in here this morning if you say [40 : 16] I'm a Christian let me ask you are you a good steward of God's word do you know him through his word is he constantly changing your heart through his word are you doing are you living it out and are you passionate about taking the gospel to those who need it that's how you recognize a good steward of God's word we have up here on the board behind us and also in your notes this morning it's an app if you don't have a Bible you can use your smartphone you can it's a QR code you scan that code and you will download for free a Bible I want to be very practical for a moment in that app there are many different translations in several languages

I highly recommend the ESV in that or the NASB there's also in simplified and traditional Chinese there's a reading plan you can choose there are a number of reading plans in that app please take some time start a reading plan you don't have to start off reading for hours every day just like if I'm preparing to go back into the gym I don't start off with 200 pounds or 500 pounds of weights start small take at least five minutes out of your day and dedicate yourself to I'm going to read God's word we're not even talking about studying God's word I'm just talking about if you are not reading God's word every day read his word every day that you can have a knowledge of his word that he can change your heart that you can know how to live your life that you would be passionate about the things that he's passionate about would you commit to that would you commit to knowing his word to reading his word there's nothing more important this is the foundation that we build our lives on if his word is not our foundation then it won't last what will it profit a man to gain the whole world yet lose his own soul let's pray father again we thank you and we praise you that throughout the generations you have given us your word that you have passionately pursued us and that you have instructed us of how to come back home we thank you that the Bible is your map of returning back to you God I pray that this morning we would take your word seriously that we would be good stewards of your word for those of us that don't know you this morning may your word that you promised would not return void God we pray that you would convince us this morning that you are the God that created all things that you're the God that loves us that you know the plan that you have for us that we would come back home Father I pray that as we leave from here that our head our hearts our hands and our feet would never be the same in Jesus name Amen Amen