



GETTING DIRECTIONS FROM THE OWNER (Part I)

I have shared with you the one stewardship question that changes everything: “God, what do you want me to do with what you have entrusted to me?” Once we begin to ask this profound question, a second question logically emerges as we seek answers to the first. The second question is, “How exactly do we get directions from the Owner regarding what He wants us to do with all that He has entrusted to us?”

“Okay, I’m convinced,” you say. “I want to follow His directions on how to steward His property. But how do I know what His directions are?” There are three different ways in which God personally delivers His Owner directions to his stewards. We will explore these three ways over the next three articles. We will begin with the most obvious and objective way He directs us, and end with His most subtle and subjective communication to us. The first way God gets His directions to his stewards is through His word.

If we want to really discover what our Owner desires for what He has entrusted us to manage, we need to spend time in His book. This is so obvious that we shouldn’t even need to mention it. Yet research shows that fewer than 10% of all professing Christians have read through the entire Bible even once in their lifetime. Is it any wonder why so many believers are living lives that are spiritual contradictions, oftentimes without even realizing it? If we have never read the entire *Instruction Manual for Stewards of the Owner’s Property*, should we be surprised that we might not be doing a great job of stewarding all His stuff? There are the three ways we ought to be regularly interacting with His written word.

We Need to be Readers of His Word.

Believers often indicate that the reason they don’t spend more time reading God’s word is because they are simply too busy with life. That is an interesting reason in light of two studies that were recently released. The Forrester Group reports that the *average* time Americans spend on the internet is about 48 hours a month, or 12 hours a week. The Nielsen Company’s “Three Screen Report” reveals that Americans’ viewing of television programs and movies on TV, computers, and smart phones has increased to a new high of more than 151 hours a month, or over 35 hours a week. These two reports indicate that the average American is spending about 199 hours a month, or about 47 hours a week, engaged in one of these two recreational activities. That’s over six hours a day, seven days a week.

The point here is not to bash TV watching or internet use, but to honestly ask ourselves, if we really wanted to, don’t we have plenty of time available each day to read the Bible? Can we be totally transparent with

ourselves, and with one another, and admit that spending time reading the *Owner's Manual* is really far more a matter of having the *desire* to read it than it is having the *time* to read it?

Just how much time each day would it take to read all of God's *Directions to His Stewards* in one year? If you were to read the Bible out loud, it would take you 12.5 minutes a day. Since most people read faster than they talk, for the average reader, reading it silently would only take about 7.5 minutes a day. David expresses his love for being in the word in Psalm 119:105 (NASB). He confesses, *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path*. Do you like walking around in the dark? I sure don't. Yet if we are not in the word on a regular basis, we are, in effect, spiritually walking around in the dark. And it is no surprise that we might be doing a less than stellar job of stewarding what the Owner has entrusted to us if we are not regularly reviewing the directions from the *Stewards' Training Manual*. Isn't the beginning of reading the Bible on a daily basis really more about a *heart change* than it is a *schedule change*?

We Need to be Students of His Word.

It is a good thing to read the word on a regular basis, but we also need to dig deeper and become students of the word. Paul encouraged Timothy in II Timothy 2:15 (KJV) to *study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*. I would hope all of us would be like the Bereans in Acts 17:11 (NIV) who *were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true*. They weren't just reading the book, they were studying it.

The insights that I share in these articles have not come from simply reading the word, they have come from studying it deeply and meditating on it for years. Are you willing to become not just a reader, but truly a student of the *Owner's Manual*?

We Need to be Memorizers of His Word.

We need the word of God not only in our heads, but also into our hearts. David expresses this very idea in Psalm 119:11 (NASB): *Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You*. The internalized/memorized word may be the single best deterrent to prevent us from becoming careless, sloppy, and disobedient stewards.

Do you remember when Jesus was in the wilderness being tempted by Satan? On three different occasions, Satan tried to tempt Him to betray His Father and His mission. On all three occasions, Jesus rebuffed Satan's temptation by quoting from the word of God. What you may not know is that the scriptures He quoted were all from the same book of the Bible. Do you know what book it was? He quoted three times from the book of Deuteronomy. Here is the problem for many stewards today: the overwhelming majority of them have never read Deuteronomy. Many have trouble even finding it in their Bible and few, if any, have even one verse of Deuteronomy committed to memory. So when we are tempted, like Christ was tempted, to follow the ways of the world, we, unlike Him, are completely unarmed to resist these temptations because we do not have His word committed to memory.

The point is this: if we want to successfully navigate our way through the countless enticements of this materialistic world, we better have a host of scriptures committed to memory—treasured in our hearts—that

can anchor us to the Owner and His directives, keeping us from wandering away by staying focused on being good and faithful stewards. Exactly how do we get directions from the Owner? First, continuously *reading* His word. Second, *studying* His word. And third, *memorizing* His word. Most importantly, we need to be equally committed to *obeying* His word. Are you ready to become an expert in carrying out the directions given to you in the *Owner's Manual*?

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