

STUDY GUIDE: BEGINNING THE JOURNEY (MODULE 101)

Lesson #3 – What Does the Owner Want: "Getting Directions from the Owner" (Part I)

In this lesson you will be reminded of one of the easiest and most obvious ways you can acquire directions from the Owner regarding what He wants you to do with all the possessions He has entrusted to you.

In the previous lesson we were introduced to the one question that changes everything. "God, what do you want me to do with what you have entrusted to me?" For those of us who have begun asking this profound question, there is also a second question that logically emerges as we seek to get answers to this first question. And this second question is this, "Exactly how do we go about getting 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 get my directions from Him?"

There are three different ways in which God can and does personally deliver His Owner directions to his stewards. Over the next three lessons, we will explore these three ways. 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 wants us to do with all that He has entrusted us to manage for Him, we need to spend time in His book. This should be so obvious that we shouldn't even need to mention it. Yet, research shows that less than 10% of all professing Christians have even read through the entire Bible once in their lifetime. So, is it any wonder why so many believers are living lives that are spiritual contradictions often times without even realizing it? If we have never even read the entire *Instruction Manual for Stewards of the Owner's Property*, should we be surprised that we might not be doing all that great of a job of stewarding all His stuff He has given us to manage?

Here 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 the Word is because they are simply too busy with life to do much of it.

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" – which reports American's viewing of television programs and movies on TV, computers and smart phones has now 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 6 hours a day, seven days a week. The point here is not to bash TV watching or internet use, but to honestly ask ourselves, don't we really have plenty of available time each day to be

reading the Bible *if* we really wanted to? Can we be totally transparent with ourselves and 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?

So, just how much time each day would it take to read all God's *Directions to His Stewards* in one year, *if* we really did want to read it? 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, reading it silently it would take about 7.5 minutes a day for the average reader to completely read God's directions for His stewards once a year.

David expresses his love for being in the Word in Psalm 119:105. He confesses, "*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*" Let me ask you, "Do you like walking around in the dark?" I sure don't. Yet, without being in the Word on a regular basis, we are in effect, walking around in the dark. And it is no surprise that we might not be doing that great of a job stewarding what the Owner has entrusted to us, if we are not regularly reviewing the directions from His *Stewards' Training Manual*.

So, for us, isn't the beginning of getting started in 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 to, "*Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs 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 who "*were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, 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 are shared in The Steward's Way 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 actually a student of the *Owner's Manual*?

We need to be Memorizers of His Word.

We not only need to get the Word of God in our head, we also need to get it in our hearts. David expresses this very idea in Psalm 119:11, "*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.

Here is a perfect illustration of this very point. 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 all three of the Scriptures He quoted were from the same book of the Bible. Do you know what book it was? He quoted three times from the book of Deuteronomy. Now, here is the problem for many stewards

today: The overwhelming majority of them have never even read Deuteronomy. Many may 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 living in this tempting, 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.

So, exactly how do we get directions from the Owner regarding what He wants us to do with all that He has entrusted to us? The first way is to be continuously reading His Word, studying His Word and memorizing His Word and then most importantly, we need to be equally committed to *obeying* it. Are you ready to become an expert in the directions given to us in the *Owner's Manual*?

STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS

1. What is your initial reaction to the message of this lesson?
2. What is your reaction to the two reports on the amount of time Americans spend watching TV, movies and on the Internet?
3. Discuss how important the Bible is to you as an “Owners’ Manual” to get guidance and direction on what He wants you to do with what He has entrusted to you.
4. Share the reasons why you don’t spend more time reading the Word than you do.
5. Share an example of when you were trying to see in the dark and how it was a challenge. Read Psalm 119:105 and discuss ways in which being in the Word can keep us out of the spiritual darkness that we can often find ourselves living.
6. Share your reaction to the idea that our failure to spend consistent time in the Word is more a heart issue than it is a schedule issue.
7. When was the last time you were involved in a serious, in-depth Bible study? Share how impactful that study was for you, if you have been involved in one.
8. Share how many Bible verses you have personally memorized and can quote to the group. Why have you not been more committed to scripture memorization?