

The Stewardship of Time – Week 1

Opening Prayer

**ALL: Creator of heaven and earth,
You set the sun and the moon in their places,
You marked out morning and evening,
And You shaped the rhythm of days and seasons.
Teach us to receive time not as a burden
But as a gift entrusted to our care.
Help us to live within Your holy rhythm,
Finding rest, work, and joy in their proper places.
Through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all our days. Amen.**

All about “Stewardship” – back in the beginning...

In medieval times, a steward was originally a servant entrusted with overseeing both a lord’s estate and household. As the responsibilities of noble households grew during the 12th and 13th centuries, the role of steward evolved. Stewards were responsible for safeguarding castles during the lord’s absence and ensuring that taxes and rents from the manor’s serfs were properly collected.

- A medieval steward might earn **3–4 pounds per year**, a respectable but not lavish income.
- One pound in England (£1) in the 13th century represented roughly **240 silver pennies**, which could buy a modest amount of goods:
 - A skilled laborer might earn about **2–3 pennies per day**.
 - A cow might cost **5–10 pounds**.

Economists often use **purchasing power comparisons** or relative earnings to convert medieval wages to current worth today. Using such estimates:

- **£3–4 in the year 1250** is roughly equal to **\$3,000–\$5,000 per year today** in basic purchasing power. However, considering relative social status and economic weight, the steward’s income would be equivalent to a **modest middle-class salary today**—a decent standard of living but far below wealthy nobility.
- Stewards were **well-compensated for a servant**, but they were not owners—they lived modestly while managing resources for the wealthy nobles.

The word comes from **Old English stíweard**, attested from the 11th century:

- *stí-* = “house” or “hall”
- *-weard* = “guardian” or “warden”

Essentially, a steward was a **trusted guardian of resources and responsibilities**, not the owner, but the one who managed and protected them faithfully.

Commentary: Stewardship Today

The medieval steward helps illuminate the deeper meaning of stewardship: it is not about ownership but **responsible care and management**. Just as a steward was entrusted with resources, time, and obligations, so too are we entrusted with the gifts God has given us—our lives, possessions, time, and the world around us.

- Stewardship is fundamentally relational: it emphasizes accountability, trustworthiness, and careful oversight, recognizing that what we manage ultimately belongs to someone else.
- In a modern, spiritual sense, stewardship extends beyond material possessions. It includes how we manage our time, our attention, our talents, and even the spaces and relationships entrusted to us. Like the medieval steward, we are called to act wisely, faithfully, and with foresight, honoring the trust placed in us.
- Stewardship is caretaking. The common assumption in our culture is that “stewardship” is about church offerings, but historically and biblically, it is about a person who is put in charge of assets for a duration of time, making them a “caretaker.”

Let’s now explore the **stewardship of time**.

Scripture Reading - Genesis 1:1–2:3 (NRSVue)

¹ In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ² the earth was complete chaos, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. ³ Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. *And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.*

⁶ And God said, “Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” ⁷ So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. ⁸ God called the dome Sky. *And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.*

⁹ And God said, “Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. ¹¹ Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. ¹² The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ *And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.*

¹⁴ And God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, ¹⁵ and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. ¹⁶ God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. ¹⁷ God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, ¹⁸ to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the

darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ *And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.*

²⁰ And God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.” ²¹ So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” ²³ *And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.*

²⁴ And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.” And it was so. ²⁵ God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind and the cattle of every kind and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make humans in our image, according to our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over the cattle and over all the wild animals of the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”

²⁷ So God created humans in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” ²⁹ God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the air and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. ³¹ God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. *And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all their multitude. ² On the sixth day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. ³ So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

Reflection on the Concept of Time

In Genesis 1, time is not an accident but a creation of God. Notice how the story moves forward in a rhythm of “**And there was evening and there was morning...**” showing that time itself is structured and ordered.

Christians have always read this story in light of *creatio ex nihilo*—the teaching that God creates out of nothing. This means time itself is not eternal, but rather a gift brought into being by God.

- **Time as gift:** God creates with a cadence, a pattern of work and rest. Creation is not random, but a carefully paced unfolding. It is given to us, moment by moment, created and sustained by God. Humanity is born into a world where time is already ordered — days, seasons, years. We are given time as a gift.

- **Time as holy:** God blesses the seventh day, hallowing a stretch of time itself. Since time is holy, then how we use it matters deeply.
- **Time as trust:** Our hours and years belong to God. Stewardship of time does not mean filling every moment with activity but aligning our lives with God’s rhythm.

Every moment exists because God willed it into being. Stewardship of time begins in **reverence and awe**; every second is a sacred trust.

- The idea of *creatio ex nihilo* — that God created the universe, including time, out of nothing tells us that every moment is not ours by right but God’s gift. Thus, our caretaking of time underscores stewardship.
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Discussion questions

1. How do we “care for” something as intangible as time?
 2. If God created not only the world but time itself, how does that change the way you think about your daily life?
 3. How might viewing time as a gift shift your priorities?
 4. The Genesis story shows God setting a rhythm of work and rest. How does that rhythm compare to the way you currently structure your time?
 5. What practices might help you honor time as holy?
 6. In what ways might we be called to “steward” time differently than money or possessions?
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Days and Sabbath Rest in Genesis 1

- Each day begins “**evening and morning**”. Ancient Hebrew days started at sunset, reflecting a rhythm from darkness to light, from chaos to order.
- Each day begins incomplete and ends with God’s affirmation: “It is good.”
- The **Sabbath**, the seventh day, models rest. God blesses and hallows it, showing that **time itself is sacred**.

Stewardship implications: managing time wisely includes respecting the rhythms of **work, reflection, and rest** established by God.

1. Time Is Finite and Gifted

- Time is not ours to create or extend — it is **a gift entrusted by God**.
- Every life choice — how we work, rest, invest in relationships, or engage in personal growth — directly affects how we **use this finite gift**.

2. Choices Reflect Priorities

- Stewardship of time means aligning daily decisions with what truly matters.
- Choosing to spend hours in meaningful work, prayer, service, or study demonstrates that we value what God values.

3. Life Rhythm and Balance

- Just as God structured creation with **days, nights, and the Sabbath**, wise life choices involve balancing work, rest, and reflection.
- Decisions about sleep, leisure, study, and service reflect the rhythm of life God has embedded in creation.

4. Consequences of Choices

- Every choice shapes the **quality and impact of the time we've been entrusted with**.
- Good stewardship amplifies the positive effects of our time — on us, on others, and on creation.

5. Spiritual Dimension

- From a biblical perspective, stewardship of time is **a moral and spiritual responsibility**.
- Life choices reflect our understanding of God as Creator and Lord of time.

Summary:

Life choices and the stewardship of time are inseparable: how we **spend, structure, and prioritize our days** determines whether we honor God's gift of time. Stewardship invites intentionality, discernment, and a rhythm of work, rest, and reflection that reflects the sacred nature of time.

Discussion Questions – Life Choices and Time

1. Think about a typical week. How do your daily choices reflect your values and priorities?
 2. How does recognizing time as a gift from God change the way you make decisions about it?
 3. How do your routines reflect—or ignore—the rhythm of work and rest God established?
 4. Identify one small choice this week that would better honor the time entrusted to you.
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Closing Prayer