**The Character and Role of Steward Leaders**

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Steward leadership, one of four biblical leadership models identified by Robert Clinton (1989), is the most comprehensive yet least developed model for Christian leaders today.

**The Classical Steward**

* A steward is one who faithfully and efficiently manages the property or resources belonging to another in order to achieve the owner’s objectives.
* Stewards existed as far back as ancient Chinese, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and Jewish history.
* Stewards were slaves that were trained from an early age to oversee the rural farm, large households, businesses, financial affairs, and even civic duties.
* Stewards were expected to practice management techniques that were a precursor of modern management practice (from manuals written on the steward’s duties by Xenophon, Oeconomicus, and Columella, On Agriculture)
  + - Always learning
    - Trained for management
    - Knows what the master/owner knows
    - Manages resources for maximum efficiency and growth
    - Does not expect subordinates to serve him
    - Demonstrates by example how a job is to be done
    - Rewards good workers

**The Bible Provides Additional Understanding of the Steward’s Role**

* God is affirmed as the ultimate owner of all things (Ps. 24:1, Deut. 8:10-18)
* People are God’s representatives (imago dei) who manage His creation and spiritual resources (Genesis 1:28-30, 1 Peter 4:10)
* Faithfulness in stewardship will be rewarded with greater responsibilities and resources
* Stewards exhibited a new kind of leadership that serves (modeled by Jesus, Matthew 20:25-28)
* The relationship between the owner and steward is critical to effective stewardship
* Joseph, the Apostle Paul, and ultimately Jesus are our models of steward-leadership
* The Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14-30)

**Important Passages Concerning Steward Leadership**

Genesis 39, 41 (Joseph)

Luke 12:42-48 (Faithful steward)

Luke 13:6-9 (Unfruitful fig tree)

Luke 16:1-13 (Shrewd steward)

Ephesians 3:2-9 (Stewardship of God’s grace)

**Important Definitions**

**Stewardship**: *The faithful and efficient management of the property or resources belonging to another in order to achieve the owner’s objectives*.

**Steward Leadership**: *To manage the efficient use and growth of organizational resources, and to lead the staff and activities of the organization as a steward, in order to achieve the mission according to the objectives of the owners and stakeholders.*

**Who Are The “Owners” of the Resources We Steward?**

* God
* Stockholders (publicly traded companies)
* Business owners
* Stakeholders, or society (nonprofits)

Therefore, anyone who is leading a publicly-traded company, a nonprofit organization, or is a non-owner manager in a privately-held company is a steward.

*Who are the explicit and implicit owners of the resources you are stewarding in your company or organization?*

**The Differences Between Servant Leadership & Steward Leadership**

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Servant**  **Leadership** | **Steward**  **Leadership** |
| **Core identity** | Servant | Steward |
| **Motivation for leadership** | Altruism (selfless pursuit of the interests of others) | Responsibility to the stakeholders, altruism, personal fulfillment |
| **Characteristics** | Service, selflessness, empowering others | The same plus accountability, faithfulness, knows the master (relationship), mission-focused, non-ownership, and acts with delegated authority |
| **Primary Action** | Serve people's highest priority needs  “Servant first, leader second” | Lead the organization to accomplish the desires and objectives of stakeholders.  Leverage and grow the resources |
| **Goal of leadership** | Empowered followers | Fulfilled mission  Sustainable organization |

The steward leadership model uniquely addresses: impact of non-ownership on leadership, resource management, relationship with owner, owner/stakeholder accountability, fiduciary accountability

**The Principles of Steward Leadership**

Steward leaders…

1. Recognize that they are not owners, but only trustees of the resources belonging to another
2. Know *who* they are accountable to and *what* they are accountable for
3. Maintain close relationships with the owner(s) of the resources in order to know the owner’s goals and intentions
4. Manage resources for maximum efficiency and growth
5. Ensure that the practical needs of employees are met
6. Develop employees who view themselves as stewards too (“under-stewards”)
7. Live as servants themselves
8. Are comfortable with the risks associated with growing and investing resources
9. Manage a wide range of resources (things, skills, people, money, environment, etc.)
10. Lead with delegated authority along with a latitude of freedom in decision-making
11. Expect greater responsibilities and resources as they faithfully carry out their stewardship
12. Redirect resources when necessary to maximize return-on-investment
13. Are allowed to maintain a reasonable personal standard of living from the resources
14. Lead out of character, not competence
15. Experience joy and fulfillment in their work as stewards

**Questions for Today’s Steward Leaders**

How well do you understand your role as a steward leader?

What kind of ongoing relationship are you developing with the owner(s) of the resources you manage? (With God? Stockholders? Stakeholders?)

What would God say to you about how you have managed His resources?

How are you helping others to be stewards as well? (Peers? Employees? Those you disciple?)