

The Steward Leader and The Temptation of Control Part Two.

Last week we talked about the temptation (and impossibility) to control time.

The same bondage those who seek to control God's gift of skills and of possessions. When we try to control our skills and abilities, we become pretenders. We pretend we are skilled for certain things when we know we are not. Yet envy and jealousy will push us to depend on our weaknesses and to rely on our deficiencies. What an incredible gift it is to be free in the way you view other people's skills in relationship to your own. Yet it does not come cheaply. It is a constant battle against our desires for control.

Leaders who have not won this battle will destroy the people with whom they work. I wrote earlier that the most terrifying boss you can have, is someone who really *needs* the job. A close second is the boss who cannot allow anyone else to excel in areas in which the boss is weak. Everyone can spot a pretender. We cannot lead effectively if we are constantly trying to make ourselves look good in the areas of our weaknesses. It may be easy for us as leaders to dismiss this as not our problem. But be careful; this is a deceptive temptation. Envy toward the skills of coworkers and jealousy toward their accomplishments is subtle and insidious. It bubbles up from a desire to control.

Steward leaders have the ability to celebrate the victories of others without envy. They reject the temptation to manipulate their work to steal credit from others who are more skilled for the task. They rest secure in how God has gifted them and rejoice when they see how others excel in areas where they are less skilled. This is real freedom.

Trying to control possessions.

Finally, control of our possessions may bring the greatest heartache. So much is expected of stuff that returns so little. When we stop seeing ourselves as stewards and start acting like owners, we give our stuff more power than it should have—and it ends up controlling us. How ironic that our desire to control stuff results in our bondage to that same stuff. At this point the submission of the godly steward becomes the freedom of the steward leader. We must understand the reciprocal relationship of submission and control, and of freedom and bondage. This relationship applies to all four levels, but it is experienced here more than anywhere.

Simply put, when we submit something to God, we are immediately freed from it. When we wrest control of anything for ourselves, it immediately enslaves us. Think about it.

Are you free in relationship to your finances?

How about to the budget for your business or ministry?

***Do you carry the burden for your fundraising success, or have you
submitted it to God, and been set free?***

Carrying burdens.

We carry burdens only for those things we control. And we control those things that we seek to have as part of our own kingdom, where we are lord. Lordship and ownership, control and burden-they are tied together. In some forms, they look very spiritual. We can carry the burden for our organization, believing that somehow, if we suffer when things go badly, we are bearing the burden for others. Yet this is a gross misunderstanding of what it means to carry the burden for someone else.

Paul speaks of carrying the burdens of others when he writes, "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). The point of this verse is *to fulfill the law of Christ*. What is the law of Christ? It is freedom! "For the law of the Spirit of life set [you] free from the law of sin and of death" (Romans 8:2). "But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it he will be blessed in what he does" (James 1:25).

We carry one another's burdens as a sign of our freedom, not our bondage. In doing so, we fulfill the law of Christ, which is the *law of liberty*. When Christ calls us to this beautiful, sacrificial act of carrying the burdens of others, the enemy slides in alongside us to convince us that they are really *our* burden. When we listen and make it our own burden, we develop both spiritual pride and real bondage.

Are you a champion "burden-bearer," feeling often that you are the only one carrying this whole load for your organization? Have you felt that small sense of spiritual pride that accompanies such a high-minded act? Is the daily load wearing on your body, your heart, your spirit, and your connections with others? Then listen to the words of Jesus, who bore all of our load for us: "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:29-30).

The only burden we are asked to bear is the one we bear in freedom in his name and for his glory. Every other act of burden bearing is a counterfeit. Are you free with regard to your possessions, including your finances and those of your organization? You must continually submit to God whatever would seek to burden you down. As you do, you are continually set free.

A Discipline: Daily Submitting to the Lordship of Christ

Richard Kriegbaum writes the following in his leadership prayer concerning ownership:

This is my one incessant prayer to you, hour by hour, day upon day: It's yours. I am not fighting this battle for you, God. It's your battle, and you are fighting it for me. It is all yours, and I want whatever you have for me in this situation. It is not my organization, it is yours. So, I depend on your Spirit to show me what to do. These are not my people. I chose them and organized their efforts, but they do not belong to me.... So, this day is yours; I am yours; these people are yours; the resources are yours. The challenges we face are yours, as is anything we hope to accomplish. It's yours, God. It is not mine.

I encourage every leader to pray this prayer every morning. It is a prayer of freedom. It is the level of complete submission that we, must all yearn for if we are to be steward leaders for our people and our organizations at this fourth level.

Watch for the signs of your attitudes slipping into an ownership/control mindset. You will know it by its companions: fear, anxiety, compulsion, envy, mistrust, selfishness and

impatience. These are signs that you have stopped submitting and started grasping, controlling, and seeking to play the owner. They are bondage.

The daily discipline must begin before we leave our bed. It is the awakening prayer that follows our praise to God, our thanks for the day and our placing of loved ones into the care of our loving God. The next prayer we must pray is this one: "It is not mine, it is yours." Don't leave your bed without it! Once we start the routines of our day, our ownership and control tendencies come rushing in. We need to enter each day in freedom, prepared to live in joyful obedience. This fourth level is especially difficult, because slipping back into old habits feels so natural—it's how we think, how we feel, how we live. If we want to break free from the need to own and control, we shouldn't start our day until our hearts are truly surrendered. It is easier to reject a temptation in our freedom than to unburden ourselves of it when it has already climbed aboard.

Set your alarm ten minutes earlier. Leave your phone off and your laptop closed. Guard your mind from intruders. "Take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). "Prepare your minds for action" (1 Peter 1:13). "Put on the full armor of God" (Ephesians 6:11). And pray this prayer of submission to God. Do not leave your bed until you are overwhelmed with the love of Christ and sense the freedom he wants for you.

You may need to keep this prayer close at hand and pray it often throughout your day. Memorize it, along with the Scripture verses above. Discipline yourself to recognize bondage attitudes and attack them in the beginning with the freedom of absolute submission. Claim the promise "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free" (Galatians 5:1).

- [But be careful; this is a deceptive temptation. Envy toward the skills of coworkers and jealousy toward their accomplishments is subtle and insidious. It bubbles up from a desire to control.](#) "love your neighbor as yourself".

- At this point the submission of the godly steward becomes the freedom of the steward leader. Releasing ownership to God.
- We carry burdens only for those things we control. And we control those things that we seek to have as part of our own kingdom, where we are lord. Who is on the throne in our lives?
- You must continually submit to God whatever would seek to burden you, down. As you do, you, are continually set free. The temptation for control never ends.