

# Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc. www.dtminc.org Today's Date: September 16, 2018

## What Is The Focal Point Of God's Message To Us?

by Dan Trygg

“Just as I, journeying to Macedonia, encouraged you to remain on at Ephesus in order that you might instruct certain people not to teach strange doctrine, nor to hold fast to alleged stories and endless genealogies, which bring about speculative controversies rather than the stewardship of God in faith. Instead, the focal point of the instruction is love out from a clean heart, and a good conscience, and 'unphony' faith, ...concerning which some people, having lost this aim, have turned off toward empty talk, wishing to be teachers of the Law, not perceiving either what things they speak of, nor concerning what things they constantly assert.”

I Timothy 1:3-7

God intended the Church to be intensely practical, ...to be beneficial, efficient and profitable for real life. He came among us with a very definite purpose in His mind and heart. He willingly paid a horrendously expensive price to His own heart in order to buy us out of our lost, damaged, and enslaved condition. He did so with an end in mind. It was not just some minor transaction, like some “Sugardaddy” peeling off a few bills from His cosmic money wad to purchase a plaything. It was self-sacrifice. It was, as Jesus said, a laying down of His life for His friends (Jn. 15:13). Why? **So we could be set free to live the life He created us to live.** God sees this as an investment. He invested Himself completely in order to bring about a desired result.

He came to set things straight. Those of us who have clearly understood and responded to the Good News realize that **although God's offer of grace is freely extended to us, amnesty and freedom come at a price to us.** We must be willing to unconditionally surrender our allegiance to Him. What He has come to set straight is the erroneous notion that we can be wise enough to live life on our own. Our self-management was inadequate and destructive to our own lives and to others. **To become a Christian means that we choose to yield to God as our King. We will serve Him.** He will wisely guide us. We will eagerly respond to His direction, because we know it is better than our own perspective. He calls. We will come. He sends. We will go. He has initiated with us a relationship of interchange. He has reached out to us, and, in faith, we respond. We call on Him and, in love, He listens. **Out from a true relationship of love, trust, and hope comes the freedom to serve without reserve.**

The message from I Timothy 1 is that **God has given us a job to do.** In verse 4, Paul says He **has extended to us a stewardship**, a sacred trust and responsibility. **What is this stewardship?** The word, in verse 5, translated as “instruction” in the NASB, and as “commandment” in the KJV, is a word that signifies a charge being given. It is the word parangellō, from para, meaning “alongside”, and angellō, meaning “I give a message to”. The idea of “to give a message alongside” someone is that they keep the message there. It is like a charge, or instructions given, to which they are to refer for direction and assessment. It is the charge, assignment, or set of instructions given to a steward. Paul says that **the goal of this instruction, this stewardship, is to direct ourselves, and others, into discovering and implementing the agapē-love of God.** Seeing this as a stewardship, brings up some key points:

(1.) **A stewardship is a responsibility of oversight given to you by someone else**, who is the actual owner of what you are to care for. A steward is like a manager, developer, or a custodian. The owner hands over the responsibility to the steward, who then attempts to fulfill the owner's desires for what was entrusted to him.

(2.) **There is an expressed outline of direction given to the steward.** It may not be broken down into specific details, but it is definitely understood what the steward is to do, in the big picture. This idea is inherent in the title itself, in the Greek language. The word for “steward” is oikonomos, “stewardship” is oikonomia. These are derived from the word for “house, home, or household”, oikos, and the word for “law, or principle”, nomos. **A steward was to carry out "the law of the house",** meaning the prescriptions and wishes of the master.

(3.) **The effectiveness of one's stewardship is evaluated by how well he or she carries out his or her assigned tasks.** In the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30), each slave was entrusted with a certain amount, according to his ability. Upon the master's return, he asked for an accounting of what they had done with their assignments. The first two had worked to double the money they had received. They were commended, and promised promotions, i.e., “...you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.” The third slave, however, was rebuked, labeled as wicked, lazy, and worthless (vss. 26,30). He did not do even the simplest thing of bringing his master's money to the bank. Out of fear, he buried it in the ground to keep it safe, but *did not do as the master had intended for him to do.* He was stripped of his job and thrown out. These slaves were stewards, given responsibilities that they were to fulfill, and they were judged according to how they carried out those responsibilities.

(4.) **Common pitfalls to effective stewardship** are delineated for us in the Scriptures. In Matt. 24:45-51, Jesus warns against **losing perspective**, and **forgetting what one is called to do.** In the parable, the slave begins to

abuse his authority. He mistreats his fellow servants, and begins to live for sensual pleasures, partying and carousing. Consequently, not only does he not fulfill his stewardship, but he is caught off guard by the unexpected return of his master, and is severely judged and thrown out “with the hypocrites”, i.e., the phony ones who proclaim their godliness, but actually are only concerned about impressing others. From this parable, we learn other pitfalls are the **abuse of authority**, which is the wrongful use of the power, ability and resources given by the master, either by **wastefulness** (here and also in Lk. 16:1), **injustice**, **misappropriation** or **misdirection of resources**.

**(5.) There will be an accounting of the steward’s performance.** Virtually every mention of a stewardship in Jesus’ parables mentions the idea that they will be suddenly visited by the master, and will be called to give an account (e.g., Matt. 24:45-51; 25:14-30; Lk. 16:1,2). Similar to an audit in the modern day business world, the records would be examined to check for improper accounting or misappropriation of funds. If abuse is suspected, witnesses might even be called, and testimony gathered to discern if the steward had, in fact, been unfaithful to the master's charge. If he was caught in lies, abuse or mismanagement, there could be serious consequences, ranging from the loss of his position, to repayment of what was squandered, to imprisonment and severe punishment.

**(6.) The role of a steward was crucial, and affected many people.** Since a steward was in a place of oversight on behalf of his master, his lack of faithfulness not only threatened his own job security and reward, it also potentially affected many others. Obviously, **the master of the house was robbed of the proper use of what belonged to him**. His resources were pilfered for the sake of the personal pleasure, or laziness, of the unfaithful steward. Beyond that, however, since the steward was given responsibilities that included the lives and duties of others, his **abuse and mismanagement could affect everyone else in the master's house**.

The point of bringing up these examples is to illustrate the nature of what a stewardship is, and to emphasize that, **no matter what our motives or excuses may be, we will be evaluated based upon what we do in regard to carrying out the expressed wishes of our Master**. The point is not to motivate us by fear, ...that would go against the spirit of the entire thrust of what it is that God is seeking from us. He wants “love out from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and an unhypocritical faith.” In I Cor. 3:10-15, Paul describes how people will build upon the foundation of Jesus Christ (i.e., the basic Gospel message), with different materials, some lasting and some only temporal. In the end, the quality of every person's work will become evident, as it is tested by fire. Some things will endure through the fire, others (e.g., wood, hay, stubble) will be consumed. The apostle states that “if any man’s work is burned up, he shall suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” If we are genuine children of God, even if we are irresponsible and wasteful during the time of our earthly sojourn, we will not be eternally damned for our foolishness. The consequences are real, however, and **if we do not carry out the stewardship given to us, we miss out on the benefits of what “following the law of the house” will produce, both here and now, and in eternity**. This reaches way beyond an immediate self-centered way of looking at the consequences of our actions. It affects God’s purposes, since it robs His resources and directs them into pursuits that are not in accord with His intent. It also affects everyone else in the Body of Christ, because we are not fulfilling our job, which is intertwined with their lives. Furthermore, our lack of performance of our stewardship from God dilutes, weakens and stultifies the ability of the Body of Christ to present the true witness of Jesus to this world. Consequently, our lack of faithfulness robs unbelievers from seeing the real Jesus, the Jesus who said, “By this shall all men know you are My disciples, if you have love (*agapē*) for one another.” Thus, we begin to see the importance and seriousness of our job as steward. It is not to be taken lightly. In addition, **we cannot just “opt out” of being a steward, since God is the One who assigns us our duties**.

Stewardship is not a job we apply for. Attempting to disown the responsibility simply turns into a dereliction of duty. I Cor. 4:1-4 restates the important truth, that we are stewards entrusted with a task, and God will evaluate us on how well we responsibly adhere to His charge and His direction. “It is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.”

**What is the focal point of God’s message, or charge, to us?** The word translated here as “focal point” is the Greek word, *telos*, which means “goal, end point, focus, aim, purpose or final-outcome”. **What God has appointed us to bring about is *agapē-love*!** THAT is our task, and our goal. THAT is the Master’s instructions to us, as His stewards. **THIS is how we will be evaluated: DID WE PRODUCE AGAPĒ-LOVE?** Apparently, in spite of the appalling lack of this quality as the outcome of most churches in America, **THIS IS AN ATTAINABLE GOAL**. Certainly, Jesus expected that this would be a common, prevalent characteristic of His followers. It is the first characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit which Paul listed (Gal. 5:22,23). If it is what the Spirit produces, why do we not see more of this radical, very conspicuous love? **In spite of the fact that so many have forgotten that THIS IS THE PRIMARY DIRECTIVE, and so many are misdirecting their focus, efforts and resources on other, lesser things, THIS IS THE “LAW OF THE HOUSE” that we will be held accountable to as stewards of the mysteries of God.** THIS is the “more excellent way” that has been being ignored or overlooked by most of the Western church. **THIS is what Jesus said we are to be known by. Are you willing to pursue *agapē-love*? Will you make love your goal?**