

PART ONE
**CREATIVITY
& SCIENCE**



STEWARDSHIP

MAXIMIZING GOD'S BLESSINGS FOR HIS GLORY

As I shared my car sob story with you last week I left out one piece of good news. I did receive a \$100 check from Sheldon's Salvage as payment for the car they hauled away. However, the bad news was that \$100 was a little less than the cost of the front brakes we put on less than two weeks before it died. It's only money, right?!

When we consider the topic of stewardship we usually think about money and giving. In fact, when I started last Sunday's message my intention was to preach a message about giving. But for several years I have been thinking about the topic of dominion and stewardship. I realized that this topic is so much broader than we realize. Stewardship is most certainly about money and generosity but it's also so much more than that. Here are the topics I plan to cover in the series.

- Creativity
- Science
- Work
- Parenting
- Evangelism
- Building a church
- Giving/Generosity
- Environment
- Politics
- Suffering
- Time
- The Gospel

This morning we will be covering two topics together-Creativity and Science-since they are closely related to one another. First though let me remind you what we covered last week.

Stewardship and dominion are the same thing and the teaching on dominion comes from Genesis 1.

26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

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

28 And 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 heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

It's hard to believe that this is the first command in the Bible yet we know almost nothing about it. Dominion means to rule over something or someone. Kings have dominion over their kingdom. Parents have dominion over their children and families. But we learned last week that Biblical dominion must be a benevolent dominion. It's not that you rule but how you rule. This is why I prefer the word stewardship. Stewardship has the built in meaning of caring for something, in this case, you are caring for that which you are ruling over.

And the absolutely remarkable truth is that God created the earth with the express purpose of



handing it over to us. Giving us dominion over his earth was not an afterthought. It was intentional from eternity past. Even more incredible, not only was this a planned dominion from eternity past but he knew that we would ruin his creation in a few short years. By human standards, God did not care for his creation very well. It almost seems irresponsible for God to have given us domain over HIS perfect creation.

If you were talented enough to create this gorgeous glass sculpture, would you immediately hand it over to a two year old boy? Just look at the intricacy. See how delicate and fragile it is. That doesn't look like a toy for a two year old, does it? In comparison, the beauty

and perfection of God's creation is infinitely greater than this sculpture and we ruined it worse than any two year old could. Despite the presence and infection of sin everywhere, the stewardship remains ours to enjoy and fulfill.

This morning we are going to apply this stewardship privilege to Creativity and Science. You can see our definition of Biblical stewardship-"Maximizing God's blessings for His glory." Allow me to add another phrase to the end of this definition. "Maximizing God's blessings for His glory and for our benefit."

1. Whatever brings glory to God will always be good for us.

This is similar to John Piper's statement: "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him." Besides the eternal gift of salvation, having dominion and stewardship over God's creation is the greatest blessing we have. This is why I want to spend several weeks looking at the multitude of applications to our daily lives. We are missing out on opportunities to glorify God but also to benefit from his blessings. Whatever brings glory to God will always be good for us.

2. Our dominion and stewardship will continue for all eternity.

In Jesus' parable of the ten minas, the servants are rewarded this way. *The first came before him, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made ten minas more.' And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.'* (Luke 19:16-17) This parable is part of the Bible's overall teaching on heavenly rewards. Matthew 6 states: *lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also* (Matthew 6:20-21). We are commanded to hoard heavenly treasure.

Some people struggle with this idea of rewards in heaven but they are unmistakably taught. The Bible. There are actually five crowns that believers will receive.

1. The Imperishable Crown (1 Corinthians 9:24-25).
2. The Crown of Rejoicing (1 Thessalonians 2:19)
3. The Crown of Righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8)
4. The Crown of Glory (1 Peter 5:4)
5. The Crown of Life (Revelation 2:10)

Many Christians say that earning a crown doesn't mean anything because we are going to lay them all at the feet of Jesus in worship.

10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying,
11 "Worthy are you, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they existed and were created." (Revelation 4:10-11)

We may indeed do what the 24 elders did and lay our crowns before the Lord Jesus. That will be amazing. However, even if we do give our crowns back to Jesus, we still have this issue of having authority in eternity. Some believers will have hoarded huge sums of heavenly treasure and some will have very little. Some believers will have dominion over ten cities, some will have dominion over five cities. So my point is that at least some heavenly treasures will remain in our possession. And the really crazy thing is that dominion will be an eternal dominion. Now please don't ask me any particulars about what it means to rule over ten cities in heaven. I don't need to know that details. All I need to know is that Jesus has promised that it will be true for those who exercise faithful dominion and stewardship in this life. We better know what we are doing, don't you think?

3. Stewardship flows from the nearly infinite potential of God's creation.

You may have heard my cell phone in the garden of Eden illustration. I need to update it to a smartphone in the garden of Eden illustration. I'll give it to you quickly. Unlike some UFO whackos, we don't believe that our technology was given to us by aliens. Everything that goes into the creation of a smartphone existed by the sixth day of creation. The metals needed to be mined from the earth and smelted. The plastics needed to be refined from crude oil and manipulated in the laboratory. The glass has to be made with a combination of sand, calcium and sodium carbonate. The sophisticated circuitry and software required endless hours of research and development. Everything that goes into making a smartphone existed in raw form on the sixth day of creation. All that remained was for man to have dominion over the earth. It just so happened that it took 6,000 years to develop it, but the fact that it exists at all is directly due to man's having dominion and stewardship over the earth and the nearly infinite potential inherent in creation.

Speaking of smartphones, did you know that the inventor of cell phone attends our church? You're probably thinking this is another one of Rich's jokes or misleading statements, but it's true. Larry Puhl invented the cell phone. Not everyone knows Larry and Cheryl because they are snow birds and don't get to spend but a few months of the year with us. I knew the basic story but so as not to goof up the details, I asked Larry to explain it to me in his own words.

My background is as an electronic engineer developing electronic calculators and cellular phones. From 1970 to 1974, I designed integrated circuits (ICs) for the first electronic calculators. These ICs were the precursor to the microprocessor and personal computer. From 1974 to 2006, I worked for Motorola developing the cellular phone. I managed the research lab that developed the first cellular phone. I have 41 US patents; mostly related to cellular phones and security.

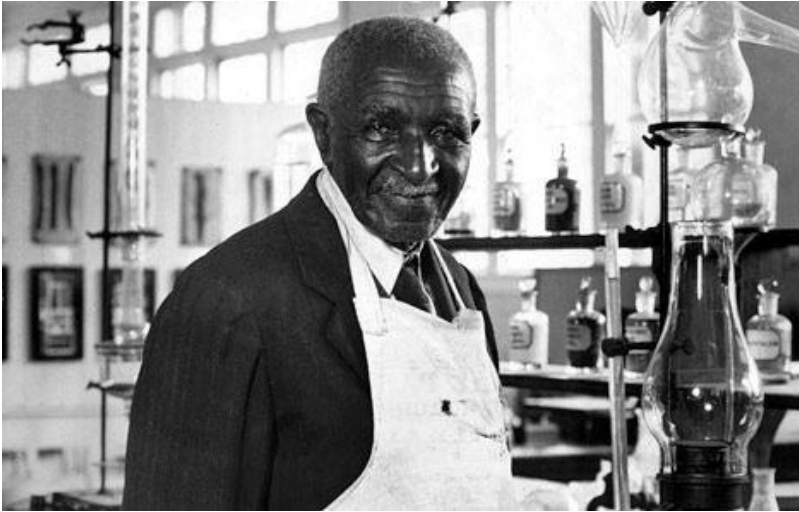
So actually he invented the calculator and the cell phone! Isn't that crazy?! That's dominion and stewardship.

Another favorite example of mine is George Washington Carver. He was born during the Civil War and died during World War 2. He was born as a slave and his former owners raised him as one of their own children following the ratification of the fourteenth amendment. He attended Iowa State University and was the very first African American to earn a Bachelor's of Science degree from that school. He singlehandedly revolutionized agriculture in the South by creating over 300 uses for the peanut and promoting crop rotation.

Amazingly, he only patented three of his inventions. He wasn't worried about fame or fortune. "It is not the style of clothes one wears, neither the kind of automobile one drives, nor the amount of money one has in the bank that counts. These mean nothing. It is simply service that measures success."¹ Carver truly understood stewardship in all of its facets. But he also was committed to true Biblical stewardship.

"As I worked on projects which fulfilled a real human need, forces were working through me which amazed me. I would often go to sleep with an apparently insoluble problem. When I woke

the answer was there. Why should we who believe in Christ be so surprised at what God can do with a willing man in a laboratory?"²



In 1921 he was invited to Washington D.C. to speak to the House Ways and Means Committee as an expert on the peanut. They had planned to give him just ten minutes, but his presentation was so fascinating that they decided to give him unlimited time. "At the end of his address, the committee chairman asked, 'Dr. Carver, how

did you learn all these things?' Carver answered, "From an old book." "What book?" asked the chairman. Carver replied, "The Bible." "Does the Bible tell about peanuts" was the follow up question. "No sir" Dr. Carver replied, but it tells about the God who made the peanut. I asked him to show me what to do with the peanut, and he did."³

Carver epitomized our definition of stewardship: Maximizing God's blessings for His glory and for our benefit. In God's providence, Carver was born as a slave but that did not slow him down one bit. Wouldn't you say that saving the agriculture of the entire South was an example of maximizing blessings? He also lived by our third principle: Stewardship flows from the nearly infinite potential of God's creation. Every day of his life, every hour in the laboratory and every hour in prayer he had this conviction constantly in mind. One writer offered this comment. "Carver had a lifelong conviction that God did not make anything useless. It was up to man to discover the purpose."⁴ And through it all he was committed to God's glory and man's benefit. His true aim was to bring economic benefits to poor Southern farmers, black and white. I do not know of any other person who so thoroughly embodies our definition of stewardship.

Creativity and science are the vehicles which drives this stewardship forward. Not only did God endow his creation with nearly infinite potential, he also endowed us with the creativity to maximize this potential. What is science after all? It's just a process of discovering how God put his creation together. It's simply a matter of asking God to show us what to do with the peanut.

4. God is Creator and as His image bearers, we are creative.

All creativity flows from God's role as Creator. That's just another aspect of being given dominion. We are made in the image and likeness of God. We share certain capacities that God has. We can love and have deep, lasting relationships. We'll get to that in the message on parenting and relationships. We can use this thing we call science to create amazing things. And if the Lord tarries long enough, mankind will continue to create new things. The earth does not have infinite potential. God is infinite but his creation is not. However, his creation is so vast and amazing that it possesses *nearly* infinite potential. If the Lord allows, we will continue to create

more and more things. Cures for cancer are within our reach. An endless supply of cheap energy could be a reality. All of this and more is true because he allows us to maximize the nearly infinite creative potential of his creation. And in so doing, we bear His image.

This is why all illustrations fall short. Last week I used the illustration of a \$60,000 BMW to talk about stewardship. If a teenager can't be responsible for a luxury car, then he or she should never be given the keys. But God's creation is not like a car. A car just is. It's just something that we have to take care of, but you can't maximize a car. You can't make a car into something entirely different or into thousands of different things. We must not miss the first word in our definition-maximize. It's what Carver did and it's what we are commanded to do. Our dominion and stewardship role is to draw out the potential that God put within his creation. But one huge problem with dominion is that not all dominion is a good thing.

5. Dominion can be good or evil, but we are called to Biblical stewardship.

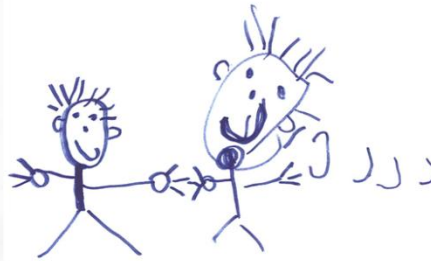
Carver exemplified Biblical stewardship but I don't want to give you the impression that all examples of dominion are good. Due to our sinful nature, humans are continually creating new ways to do evil. That's still exercising dominion. Adam and Eve exercised dominion by removing God's commands from the equation. God allowed them so much dominion that they essentially told God that he no longer had dominion over them! Because God allows so much freedom to exercise dominion, men and women use his creation, his blessings, his nearly infinite potential to create evil.

So just because someone is creating and maximizing God's blessings means nothing. As believers, our dominion must be exercised as Biblical stewardship. It must be done for his glory. And what was our first principle? Whatever brings glory to God will always be good for us. Creativity for the sake of creativity can be worse than no creativity at all. By itself, dominion can be good or evil but we are called to Biblical stewardship.

6. Children are born to create.

What do you do when your four year old draws you a picture? That sucker goes straight to the refrigerator where all of the world's greatest art ends up. Your four year olds artwork may not end up the Louvre in Paris but it will always be proudly displayed on the frig. This is just what parents do but you are also celebrating their God given creativity that they were born with.

I saw this study which showed how something as simple as a stick figure⁵ drawing can show proper development in children. Very young children have disproportioned drawings where usually the face is most of the drawing.



As children get older, their drawings of people become more accurate and complete. This progression is a combination of natural development and growth in creativity.

But we should not think of art as the only form of creativity. I've already talked at length about how science and creativity overlap but creativity itself knows no bounds. For example, if you are a writer, each time you write a paragraph, you have just created something that did not exist before. Even if it won't win you a Pulitzer Prize, it is still creativity. Do you see--creativity is a type of creation. We are not God or little gods and we certainly don't create ex nihilo--out of nothing--but we create nonetheless. It's a gift of grace, an unimaginable blessing that we can waste, use for evil or for God's glory.

This past Thursday I shared this topic at the chapel service at Cornerstone. My application of dominion and stewardship was to their school work. I asked them all their favorite subject hoping that at least one would have said science or math but no such luck. They all said that reading was their favorite subject. One of the girls also likes to write her own stories. I told them that when you write a story, you are creating something that never existed before. I explained that this is one way that we bear the image of God. When I explained this, I could see her eyes light up and her mind churning away. I think she liked this new idea.

So how does all of this apply to you personally? Have I got your mind churning as well? Next week I will apply this to our work lives, whether that's in the home or out of the home. Have you even begun to consider your role of dominion over the earth? It's amazing. It's humbling. It's so vast and all-consuming, but it's all ours as God's gift to maximize his blessings for his glory and our benefit.

Rich Maurer
March 8, 2015

¹ Character for Life: An American Heritage: Profiles of Great Men and Women of Faith Who Shaped Western Civilization, New Leaf Publishing Group, 2005, p. 286.

² Toby Mac and Michael Tait, Under God, Bethany House, Minneapolis, MN, 2004, pp. 326-327.

³ Ibid, p. 326.

⁴ Ibid, p. 327.

⁵ <http://www.nucleuslearning.com/content/draw-person-test-dap-great-way-tell-kids-intelligence>