

The STEWPOT

A POTPOURRI OF PRACTICAL IDEAS *to help you become a better steward*

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A STEWARD'S BRAND PART 1

BY JOHN MATHEWS

Brands are extremely important to sellers. They promote recognition and motivation that is built up over an extended period of time. Retailers create their brands to distinguish themselves from other products. If their brand is only a symbol (without words), they have achieved a high level of recognition. Others have turned their name into the recognition symbol, thus achieving the same thing.

Do God's stewards have a brand? What makes us distinctive? How are we recognized? In Scripture, God invites us to join His brand. God's brand is love (1 John 4:8,16). "By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35, *NIV*). If we accept God's brand in our lives, it will be revealed to others by how we live. Love, as a brand, is a nuance of the character of Christ and stands out compared to the world's ideals. In this issue of "The Stewpot"—and the next—we will look at God's brand that we as stewards are to have.

Think of a series of books on a shelf. The first book is faithfulness, the foundation from which the volumes of loyalty, a clear conscience, obedience, and accountability spring. All these moral traits culminate in the last book: trustworthiness. All of these show different aspects of God's brand. They demonstrate love. We have the opportunity to reflect these traits as our brand.

**God's brand is love
(1 John 4:8,16).**



STEWARDSHIP is a total lifestyle. It involves our health, time, talents, environment, relationships, spirituality, and finances.

The harder we fight in the spiritual battle of faith, the simpler the decision will be.

FAITHFULNESS

God's brand includes faithfulness. Stewards start by faithfully managing God's possessions. "Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2, *NKJV*). Why? Because "God is faithful" (1 Corinthians 1:9, *NKJV*) and "[His] faithfulness endures to all generations" (Psalm 119:90, *NKJV*; also see Deuteronomy 7:9). Being faithful is the clearest and one of the most challenging characteristics of God's brand to follow. It is a significant, basic component of a steward.

Yet for many, being faithful is short-lived. I have often heard people say, "I forgot to tithe." Too often we start with good intentions but don't follow through. To be faithful or unfaithful stems from the many decisions we make, built over time. The harder we fight in the spiritual battle of faith, the simpler the decision will be. 0

Faithfulness is required and represents the baseline that guides us in serving Christ. Faithfulness is sincere. Even though some of the individuals mentioned in Hebrews 11 went through spiritual failures, they are still known for their faith. The writer singled out Abraham as the "father" of the faithful (Galatians 3:7), pointing to him as the ultimate example of this trait. Through his triumphs and failures, "he was called God's friend" (James 2:23, *NIV*). Being faithful is a virtue and is a step beyond belief that will find public expression. "Bible religion, practiced, will make you kind, thoughtful, faithful."¹ Faithfulness is showing you believe in God through your actions. This is part of the steward's brand. "You can prove yourself elected of Christ by being faithful; you can prove yourself the chosen of Christ by abiding in the vine."²

LOYALTY

Faithfulness looks forward to what is promised. Loyalty remembers an experience. We are faithful to Christ for His promise of eternal life, and while we may be attracted to this world, we remain loyal to Christ because we remember His sacrifice on the cross, demonstrating the power of love. "Without loyalty there can be no love. Without loyalty there can be no family. Without loyalty there can be no friendship. Without loyalty there can be no commitment to community or country. And without those things, there can be no society."³ Loyalty in modern culture is a rare commodity. Trading your loyalty is a divided loyalty that will destroy faithfulness. Remaining loyal will only increase your faithfulness.

While waiting my turn to get on a plane, I saw a lady board while being followed by

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a service dog. He was off leash and walked so close to her, it was as if he were part of her. He was oblivious to anything else. He was totally focused on her. It is not hard to see how loyalty is a natural behavior in dogs. Some stories are legendary. Hachiko, an Akita, has been called Japan's most loyal dog. His story is told in the movie, *Hachi: A Dog's Tale* (2009). Every day he returned to Tokyo's Shibuya train station to wait for his master, who never returned. Loyalty is part of a dog's DNA. We could learn some things about our loyalty to God from the animals He created.

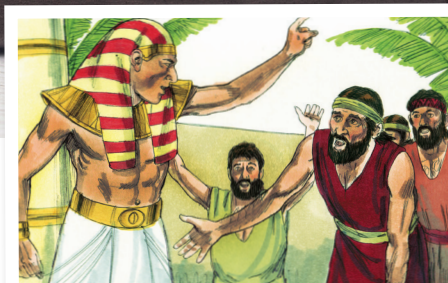
CLEAR CONSCIENCE

Faithfulness is the foundation of a clear conscience. When past failures accusingly remind us of our sins, the faithful steward understands "the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28, *NIV*). A forgiven Peter, though he had sinned by denying Jesus three times, had a clear conscience when he later said to the crippled man, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk" (Acts 3:6, *NKJV*). A clear conscience refines the steward's brand and reveals a mature faith. To have a clear conscience one must have a good conscience (1 Timothy 1:5) or an educated conscience.

It is "without offense toward God" (Acts 24:16, *NKJV*). It lives and acts according to how it has been educated. When educated from Scripture, it does not fear accountability or accusations.

For years Joseph's brothers lived with offended consciences for selling him to the Ishmaelites. I bet the memory of selling him crossed their minds every day. An offended conscience will haunt you. It was not until after Jacob's death when they realized that Joseph forgave them that their consciences fell silent (Genesis 50:19-21).

Faithfulness ensures a clear conscience as it motivates our actions. "We are to remember that we are not pieces of inanimate mechanisms, but intelligent beings, able to choose the right and refuse the wrong, with a clear conscience and a pure purpose."⁴ Our only solution is to allow Christ to cleanse our consciences "from dead works to serve the living God" (Hebrews 9:14, *NKJV*).



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SOURCES

¹White, Ellen G. *Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 6*. Pacific Press, 1901, p. 171.

²White, Ellen G. *Our High Calling*. Review and Herald, 1961, p. 77.

³Felten, Eric. *Loyalty: The Vexing Virtue*. Simon and Schuster, 2011, p. 3.

⁴White, Ellen G. *That I May Know Him*. Review and Herald, 1964, p. 290.

IT ONLY TAKE 37 CENTS!

BY WARREN TOM SAWYER

Can you witness with 37 cents?

The answer is “yes!” My 37-cent ministry is a very cheap, fast, and easy “ice breaker” for witnessing to friends, acquaintances, and strangers! First, prepare by stacking four coins in your hand: two pennies, one quarter, and one dime. Top off the stack with a powerful three-word prayer: “Guide me, Lord.”

Ask someone: “Would you like to learn a new word?” (Almost everyone will say “yes.”)

“The new word is **Samaritanship**. It means caring, sharing, and people helping people. You won’t find it in any dictionary. All I ask is that you pass this new word, **Samaritanship**, on to others.”

Then ask: “Would you like to know what inspired the word **Samaritanship**?” (Again, most people will say “yes.”)

“The word was inspired by the story of the Good Samaritan found in the Bible. It tells all of us how to treat each other. At the end, the Great Teacher commands all of us: ‘Go and do thou likewise!’”

Take out the coins and say: “Here is an easy way to remember where to read the Good Samaritan story found in Luke 10:25-37. Think of 37 cents! The three stands for the third book of the New Testament—Luke.”

Give the person the dime. “This 10 cents I’m putting in your hand stands for the 10th chapter of Luke.”

Then place the quarter to the left of the dime. “This 25 cents stands for the 25th verse of Luke.”

Start reading at Luke 10, verse 25, and read to verse 37.

Place the two pennies to the left of the quarter, making a total of 37 cents. “Please keep this memory reminder until you can get to a Bible. You can quickly find the Book of Luke near page 1,000 in most Bibles.”

Then, tell the person to keep the 37 cents, and ask him or her to pass the money and the new word on to someone else.

Now, find all those dimes, quarters, and pennies in your pockets, purses, couches, piggy banks, etc., and sort them into stacks of 37 cents. Carry some with you so that you can disciple the next friend, relative, or stranger you talk with!



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