

THE BETTER LIFE OF A STEWARD

Key Truth

There is great freedom and contentment when we acknowledge God owns all things and when we trust His promise to provide.

On the bottom of the Ramona Municipal Water District's new account form is a place for your signature and title with regards to your property. Your choices are "owner" or "renter". This week I wrote "owner", but I should have written "debtor" or, if I was really spiritual I would have written "steward".

The truth of the matter is, we own nothing.

GOD OWNS EVERYTHING – I AM A STEWARD OF HIS POSSESSIONS.

God, the Creator and Sustainer of all things is the Owner of all things. After losing all his worldly wealth including his children, Job declared:

Job 1:21 (ESV)

"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."

Job understood he owned nothing; whatever he possessed had been given him by God. God, the Creator of all things, is the Owner of all things. More specifically, God created the material universe through Jesus. The Apostle John reveals...

John 1:1-5 (ESV)

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

All things were made through Jesus. What is more, Jesus sustains all that He has made.

Colossians 1:15-17 (ESV)

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Jesus holds together the very atoms out of which everything in the material universe is made. We are completely contingent beings dependent upon God. There isn't anything in our experience that isn't created by God and therefore owned by Him.

Reminds me of this story:

One day a group of scientists got together and decided that man had come a long way and no longer needed God. So they picked one scientist to go and tell Him that they were done with Him. The scientist walked up to God and said, "God, we've decided that we no longer need you. We're to the point that we can clone people and do many miraculous things, so why don't you just go on and mind your own business?"

God listened very patiently and kindly to the man. After the scientist was done talking, God said, "Very well, how about this? Let's say we have a man-making contest." To which the scientist replied, "Okay, we can handle that!"

"But," God added, "we're going to do this just like I did back in the old days with Adam." The scientist said, "Sure, no problem" and bent down and grabbed himself a handful of dirt. God looked at him and said, "No. You go get your own dirt."

God literally owns all things.

King David of Israel understood this most basic truth and expressed it in Psalm 24.

Psalm 24:1–2 (ESV)

¹ The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, ² for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.

Later, having lead the nation of Israel to raise funds and materials for the first Temple, King David lead his people in this extraordinary prayer acknowledging God's ownership of all things.

¹ Chronicles 29:10–16 (ESV)

¹⁰ Therefore David blessed the LORD in the presence of all the assembly. And David said: "Blessed are you, O LORD, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever. ¹¹ Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. ¹² Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. ¹³ And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name. ¹⁴ "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you. ¹⁵ For we are strangers before you and sojourners, as all our fathers were. Our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no abiding. ¹⁶ O LORD our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a house for your holy name comes from your hand and is all your own.

We make a huge step forward spiritually when we, like Job and King David, embrace the fact that God owns everything and we own nothing. We make a huge step forward spiritually when we get our perspective aligned with reality that we are *stewards* of God's resources.

A steward is responsible to manage another person's assets. Whatever we have, God owns. Whatever we have we steward for God.

At least two things happen when we transfer ownership of our possessions to the Lord. Howard Dayton explains,

When we acknowledge God's ownership, every spending decision becomes a spiritual decision. No longer do we ask, 'Lord, what do You want me to do with my money? The question is restated, 'Lord, what do You want me to do with Your money?'" When we have this perspective, spending and saving decisions are equally as spiritual as giving decisions.¹

Spending decisions become spiritual decisions. Secondly, we grow in contentment. Again, Dayton explains,

To learn to be content, you must recognize God as the owner of all your possessions. If you believe you own even a single possession, then the circumstances affecting that possession will be reflected in your attitude. If something favorable happens to that possession then you will be happy. But if something bad occurs, you will be discontented.²

A Christian brothers shares his experience:

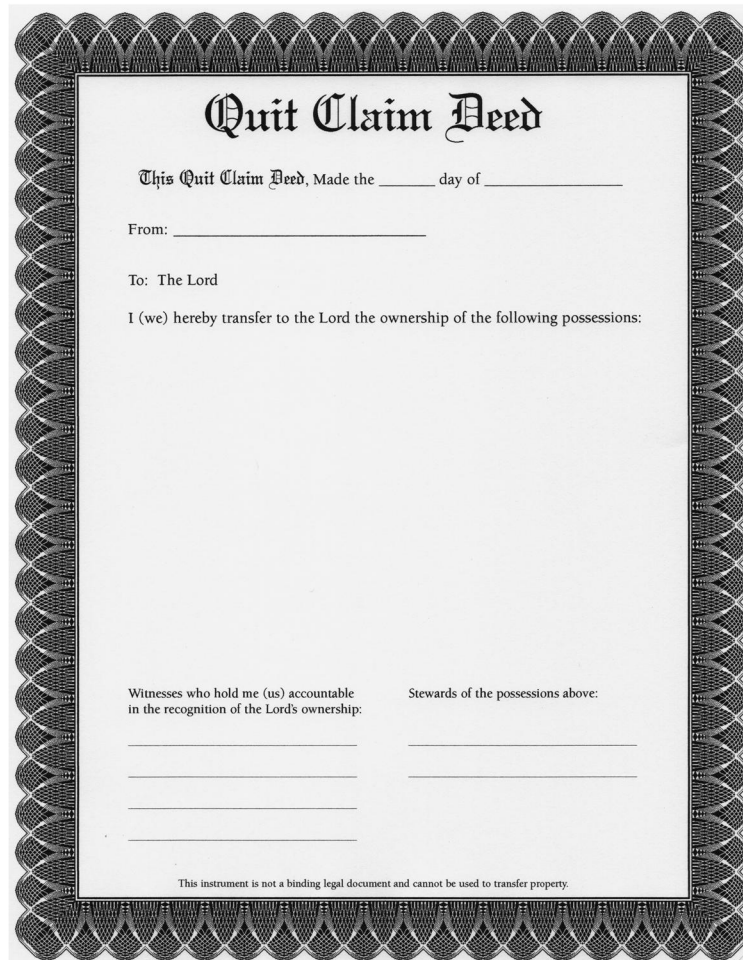
Years ago when I was still active in the family business, I bought this new 4x4. We were going to Baguio and it was brand new and my daughter said, "Daddy I'm about to vomit." I said, "Honey this is a new car. It smells good please don't vomit now. I'm about to stop." But she vomited. Right then and there I was tempted to be angry. But the Lord convicted me, she did not purposely vomit. And then the Lord told me, "Who owns the car?" so I said, "Lord if you want your car to smell like vomit it's ok with me." That's not the end of the story. We were going up hill and there was a landslide. And in that landslide there was a rock that hit the brand new car. The Lord spoke to me again, I said, "Lord, if you want your car to have a dent then its fine with me." I did not have the dent fixed, do you know why? So that I will always remember that it is God's car. God is the owner and we are just the managers. He wants to protect us from the curse of materialism.³

¹ Dayton, Howard. *Your Money Counts*, (Crown Financial Ministries, 2007), p. 17.

² Ibid., p. 17.

³ <https://www.facebook.com/notes/christs-commission-fellowship/god-owns-everything/10150364393299319/>

One way to concretely transfer ownership of your possession to God is to use this Quit Claim Deed provided by Crown Financial Ministries.



Quit Claim Deed

This Quit Claim Deed, Made the ____ day of _____

From: _____

To: The Lord

I (we) hereby transfer to the Lord the ownership of the following possessions:

Witnesses who hold me (us) accountable in the recognition of the Lord's ownership: _____

Stewards of the possessions above: _____

This instrument is not a binding legal document and cannot be used to transfer property.

The opening series focused on treasures message in this Jesus' teaching recorded in Matthew 6:19-24). Jesus warns us our material possessions are dangerous because we are tempted to look to them for our significance and security (Matt. 6:19-24). On both counts they will ultimately fail. Jesus follows this warning with the assurance that God will provide our needs; we are safe and secure with God. God promises to supply our needs to free us to serve His Kingdom.

GOD PROMISES TO PROVIDE MY NEEDS – I CAN SERVE HIS KINGDOM WITHOUT WORRY.

Matthew 6:25-34 (ESV)

²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we

wear?' ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. ³⁴ "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Jesus is telling us to trust our heavenly Father. He will provide our needs for food, drink and clothing. God does not promise to give us our wants which are anything beyond our basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. As the Apostle Paul teaches, when we are not content with just our needs being met we pursue our wants and get ourselves into all kinds of trouble.

¹ Timothy 6:6–10 (ESV)

⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain, ⁷ for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. ⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

God is creative in how He provides for our needs, but He is trustworthy. When Cathy and I were in seminary, we unexpectedly, but gratefully received a generous check from Cathy's brother – a missionary in Africa! In a case closer to home, God used a teenage boy driving his truck into the side of one of our church family's house to meet their needs. The father was out of work and the settlement from that accident enabled them to pay bills and prepare the house for sale.

Through His promise, God intends to set us free from worrying and wasting our lives on lesser things. He provides our needs so we can serve His kingdom through our spiritual gifts. Many of us are wasting our lives pursuing our wants and ignoring our spiritual gifts and the ministry God has for us. Rest in God's promise to provide your needs, be content with what you have and give your energies to serving God's kingdom through your spiritual gifts!

There is great freedom and contentment when we acknowledge God owns all things and when we trust His promise to provide.