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R. C. SPROUL

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Chapter One

Taking Care of Our House

We all appreciate words of commendation from those we serve—our coaches, bosses, or others in positions of authority. This desire for commendation reaches its apex when it comes to our greatest authority, our Lord and King, Jesus Christ. A word of commendation from Christ is the ultimate commendation for our servanthood. Every Christian longs to hear a certain phrase at the end of his life, words that will come from the mouth of Christ: "Well done, good and faithful servant."

The concept in the New Testament that describes and defines what it means to be a servant before Christ is the word *stewardship*. In these pages, we will explore this idea. There is a link between the biblical concept of stewardship and the academic discipline of economics, which will also be addressed.

Economics and the ethical and emotional issues that surround it are frequent topics of discussion and front-page news items. This is particularly true in an election year, when much of the debate focuses on economic issues. What we don't see initially is that other issues, such as education and abortion, are also questions of economics. Broadly understood, economics has to do not only with money or taxes or business but with the management of resources. That includes all of our resources, such as the resource of our unborn children and educational materials and policies.

In other words, how we use our resources is the subject of economics, and in a biblical sense it is the chief concern of stewardship. Consider the verbal link between stewardship and economics. The English word *economics* and *economy* come from the Greek word *oikonomia,* which is made up of two parts: *oikos,* the word for "house" or

"household," and *nomos,* the word for "law." So, *oikos* and *nomos* together literally mean "house law."

Oikonomia is transliterated into English as "economy." The English word that translates—rather than transliterates—the word *oikonomia* is the English word *stewardship*. So, stewardship and economics are closely related concepts, and in fact, to a New Testament Christian, there was no distinction between them.

A steward in the ancient world was a person who was given the responsibility and authority to rule over the affairs of the household. For example, the patriarch Joseph became a steward over Potiphar's household: he managed everything in the household and was given the authority to rule over the house (Gen. 39:1–6a). In that role, he was responsible to manage the household well; he was not to waste the resources of the family but to make wise decisions.

Yet, the role of the steward was not something that just happened to emerge in the Greek system of management, nor was it something invented by the Egyptians in the time of Joseph. The steward's role derives from the principle of stewardship, which is rooted in the creation of mankind.

Look at the foundations for stewardship found in the early chapters of Genesis. In Genesis 1:26–28, we read:

We want to see men and women around the world connect the deep truths of the Christian faith to everyday life.



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