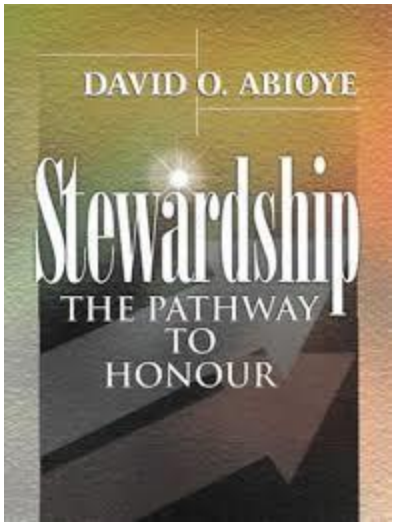
DAVID O. ABIOYE

Stewardship

THE PATHWAY TO HONOUR



STEWARDSHIP

The Pathway to Honor

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By David O. Abioye

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P.M.B. 21688, lkeja, Lagos, Nigeria.

Tel: 01-7747546, 7747547, 7747548, Website: www.davidoyedepoministries.org Living Faith Church,

Km 26, Abuja - Keffi Expressway,

Goshen, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

Tel: 09-2344529, 6700536.

Web: davidabioye.net E-mail: doa@priest.com.

All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version the Bible, except otherwise stated.

CONTENT

Introduction

Chapter 1: Understanding Stewardship

Chapter 2: Offering Acceptable Service

Chapter 3: Milestones to Honor

Chapter 4: Winning Attitudes of Stewardship

Chapter 5: Rewards of Stewardship

Chapter 6: Rewards of Stewardship

Chapter 7: Rewards of Stewardship

Conclusion

Introduction

Honor answers to stewardship. Any attempt to assume greatness or honor by any other scheme will end in futility. In any building, the foundation, even though hidden, remains the major structure. The building may have a beautiful outlook but it does not have a future except the foundation is well in place. It follows that buildings are not just made for beauty but much more for stability and durability.

"If the foundation be destroyed, what can the righteous dot"

Psalm 11:3

The foundation of greatness is service. If you disregard stewardship in your quest for greatness, you will end up with grave disappointments. Understanding the simple principles outlined in this book guarantees your stability against every storm on your way and also serve as rungs on your paths to limitless heights in your endeavors.

This book is specifically written to address the calling of men and women who are chosen and sent by God to serve His servants.

. ..But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that

... Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called

... Let every man wherein he is called, therein abide with God these chosen ones are apportioned the responsibility.. .

1 Corinthians 7:7, 20, 24

In ministry, there are those **called** to serve God and those **chosen** to serve the ones that are called to serve God. It is God's pattern in the execution of His plans and purposes on earth.

There are men chosen by God to minister to the wellbeing of His servants in holding up their hands, pouring water into their hands, and to be in custody of their armors as armor bearers. In this order are such great servants of God like Aaron, Joshua, Elisha and the Disciples of Christ among others.

Their ministry is basically to see to the well being of their "masters" well being and to pursue & see to the fulfillment of their vision. This of course is a calling in its own level and capacity.

It is important for us to appraise issues with God's perspective. In the eye of God it is all about function and assignment and not position or aura. It is those in the category of chosen servants that are being addressed as stewards in this book.

Call to stewardship from this platform should not in any way be considered as inferior as there are no inferior or superior callings of God. In the eyes of God, all callings are high.

I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:14

Stewardship in this context is about serving under a servant of God or ministering to God's ministers. Joshua's initial calling was to minister to Moses,

" ... the Lord spoke unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses ' minister ...." Jos 1:1

Having watched and heard of much deficiency in Christian leadership which results from lopsided understanding and unfounded foundations, I have the urge to put together in this volume some practical lessons that God taught me over the years, with the hope of balancing the truth of Scriptures on the subject of stewardship.

This volume is revised edition of my earlier work, titled, Stewardship: The Pathway to Honor.

If you need proven guidelines on your journey to honor, this is your work book.

This volume will also serve as a helpful resource material for ministers who are saddled with the responsibility of raising other ministers.

Chapter 1

UNDERSTANDING STEWARDSHIP

Generally, a call to ministry is essentially a call to stewardship. You cannot claim to have ministry unless you understand and embrace stewardship. In actual sense, every minister of the gospel is a steward of the mysteries of God. Paul said,

Let a man* so *account of us, as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

1 Corinthians 4:1

A steward is not a designation for some despised, second-class and enslaved individual. God never called any man as "master." God always assigned servants, so in general terms a steward is someone commissioned by God to cater for the affairs of His Kingdom among men.

The Scripture above use the words "ministers" and "stewards" interchangeably.

The word steward is derived from the Greek word, "oikonomos" which implies the manager of household or household affairs.

It also refers to the apostles and other Christian teachers, bishops and overseers.

While the word "ministers" simply mean servants.

Furthermore, a steward is a custodian i.e one who is serving with a sense of accountability. He simply sees himself as charged with certain responsibilities over which he is expected to give account at the end of his journey. In a nut shell stewardship is a platform for rendering service.

However, on a clear/definite note as it has to do with the subject matter, a steward is one specifically chosen by God to be a servant to a man called by God to carry out a divine mandate. For instance when God called Moses, he chose Joshua the son of Num to be his aide hence Joshua was addressed as Moses' servant. "*... the Lord spoke unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses minister ....*

Joshua 1:1. (See also Exodus 24:13).

This is the classification that is most common in definitions of stewardship.

Stewards serve a "master" who is as well a steward of God, towards attainment of a divine mandate. So, the Bible refers to Joshua the son of Nun as Moses' servant.

As a general rule, Jesus admonished His disciples to adopt the virtues of a servant in their followership, if they want to be great and honored.

But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they

that are great exercise authority upon them.

But it shall not be* so *among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:

Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Matthew 20:25-28

Stewardship is the bedrock of true greatness. The force of life in your profession is anchored on the premise of service. Service remains the baseline for honor and lifting.

The extent you go in service determines the height of your lifting in life. The guaranteed ship that will sail you through to your destined glory in life

is stewardship.

This divine procedure runs all the way to the New Testament. Jesus called the twelve primarily to serve as His Personal Assistants.

And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him...

Mark 3:14

They ran errand for Him and organized His meetings for Him.

Joshua's assignment was that of a personal aide to Moses. Scriptures reveals that Joshua was there with his master all of the time.

At no time was Joshua addressed as servant of God until when his mission as a steward under Moses was ended after the death of Moses. That of course, didn't mean that he was not a servant of God as well. But it does clearly show that his primary duty or engagement for that moment was to serve Moses directly. This I believe he clearly understood and even defended openly & unashamedly.

And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his young men, answered and said,* My *lord Moses ...

Numbers 11:28

Whilst Moses was **called** to serve God, Joshua was **chosen** to aid him to serve God effectively. This didn't in any way make the person and service of Joshua any inferior to Moses' nor his assignment. It just simply means that he rendered his service to God as a steward under Moses.

Furthermore, the Levites were classified as servants in Scripture. God said to Moses,

Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him. And they shall keep his charge ...

Numbers 3:6-7

Levites are ministers of God, charged to serve God's servant (Moses) in the discharge of his God-given assignments.

Elisha's call to follow Elijah was first to serve as his personal aide even though he was not a mean man in terms of wealth and position.

And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.

1 Kings 19 :21

He was there to pour water in Elijah's hand "... *But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may inquire of the LORD by him I And one of the king of Israel' s servants answered and said, Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah. II Kings 3:11.*

Can you see the same expression from Elisha's servant in II kings 6:15.

What is your position in the place where you are? What is your involvement to improve on the state of things and the welfare of people? What needs are you meeting? Are you a steward indeed?

Position For More Blessings

Men who think and work service are on line for God's greatest blessings. The blessing and surplus that Abraham enjoyed flowed on the channel of his commitment to see others blessed. When God told him to depart out of Haran, he did not fail to take one of his nephews, Lot with him. Abraham was ever mindful of being a blessing to others by servicing their needs.

Abraham was committed to Lot's domestic and moral support. He set Lot up in business until he became as great as himself. Traditionally, Abraham would sit in front of his house looking out for some wayfarer whose thirst he could quench, until he entertained angels unawares! (Hebrews 13:2). God cannot look away from such attitude.

Men who meet needs cannot be in need. If you don't want what you have to depreciate, circulate it. Prosperous hands are extensions of a generous heart. Customarily, stewards distribute what they receive. They are sharers.

When last did somebody have the pleasure of drinking from your pot? Who have you sheltered from the scourge of the sun? Whose tears have you wiped away? How many downtrodden have you held up or supported?

Who have you served or whose need have you met with the enormous provisions of God's grace?

There is that scattereth, and ye increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.

Proverbs 11:24

Your position and office are no hindrances to service. In fact, the higher your office, the wider your scope of influence as a servant.

Don't let the world cast you into its mold by the deception that those who are "high" and "great" are to be served by the "subjects".

Jesus said,

Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased, and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

Matthew 23:10-12

With the clout and greatness of King David, God introduced him to Prophet Samuel by saying, "Go *and tell David My Servant..."*

(1 Chronicles 17:4). David was serving, despite his position. He said, *"I had rather be a doorkeeper in the House of the Lord* ... "(Psalm 84:10). No wonder God so blessed him. You are the next in line!

Celebrate service more than your position.

As men revere you and the sirens announce you, take a strong stand to service the needs of your subjects. Job, in witnessing to his unequalled greatest testified,

I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor: and the cause which I knew not I searched **out. And** I **brake the jaws of the wicked*****, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth.***

Job29:12-17

Thank God for your titles and position.

Praise God for your mansions and cars. But let nothing deny you of your service to your Maker. There are greater heights He still wants to take you are you humble yourself before Him and serve.

Incorporated Stewardship

In the same vein, the pursuit of vision received by a man automatically integrates his wife, and sometimes even his children.

God will not bind a man and a woman together with martial vows and break them apart by giving the couples totally divergent assignments.

The Bible does not mention anything like joint calling into ministry. Wherever God has a common destiny for a people, He always calls out one man out of them to carry the burden of the vision and raises others beside him to support him in running with the vision. By reason of man's lateral connections, there are individuals around him that are inevitably part of his vertical dealings, because where the head goes, the body is bound to follow.

We have enviable examples of great couples in ministry . In some of the cases, the woman has so developed and drank into the unction upon her husband that she naturally fit in as direct assistant to her husband in his ministerial duties.

In situations where the wife is pursuing a fulfilling career that does not constitute a barrier to her supportive roles to her husband, she should wisely occupy her place and not lag behind her husband in his ministry. We have several great women whose names are not heard with their world-acclaimed husbands who are quietly serving and supporting their husbands in their God-given assignments.

It is important to note that God expects the spouses of His chosen vessels to be a strong encouragement and support to them.

The greatest distraction and attack a minister can receive, is on the home front. "If *a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand." (Mark 3:24}. "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. " (James 3:16).* A weak home offers the devil a breeding ground for his destructive schemes.

For purpose of unity and focus, a wife should earnestly stand by her husband, and the husband also by his wife as the case may be for three important reasons:

(i.) To partake of the grace at work in your spouse. The anointing upon your husband or wife will not profit you until you believe in it and yield yourself to it. The anointing on Christ could not for His kinsmen, because they looked down on it. (Matthew 13:58). You could sleep on the same bed with a man and have nothing spiritual rob off on you, whereas the same man's shadow could raise the dead.

(ii.) To occupy your place beside your spouse without creating strains in the structure of the ministry. I have witnessed instances where a woman feels she is being relegated to the background as the ministry grows and more vibrant hands are allowed to assume certain responsibilities in the work. If you take your place beside your spouse, you will suffer no loss; neither will you be a shameful misfit.

(iii.) For balance in private and public relationship. In the case of a woman being called to head a ministry, the man should know how to exercise himself as husband at home and as a support and toward to his wife in the area of her ministry. A man's leadership does not extend to dictating to the

wife what she should do in her ministry; that is God's prerogative, because He called her. The same goes for the woman. Your husband assumes another level of authority over you as your "leader" when he steps into his ministerial office.

Wisdom is required to manage these to dimensions of relationship.

You may not have received a direct call from God but if your spouse is called, you are naturally integrated into his or her assignment as a steward. Take it as an assignment from the Lord and watch how Heaven's honor and glory comes on you. There are immense rewards for faithful stewards.

Chapter 2

RENDERING ACCEPTABLE SERVICE

It is unfortunate to note from scriptures to note that a number of men who were called to serve as stewards ended as casualties instead of bee blessed . This is largely because their services were unacceptable. We have record of men like Gehazi who should have probably accessed a double portion of the anointing upon Elisha but ended as a leper. Not every service is acceptable to the Lord. The service that triggers God's blessing is well qualified in Scripture.

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

Hebrews 12:28 (NKJV)

Only one thing is required to be saved, i.e. faith; but several things are required to serve and except tho se requirements are fulfilled, service will be unacceptable and even sometimes become a curse. The Scriptures show us several instances of people who in their bid to "serve" God ended up incurring His wrath and judgment upon themselves and their children. (Leviticus 10:1-2, II Sam 6:22). Now, what does it take to serve expectably?

1. A Servant's Attitude

I have observed promising young men who seek relation ship with servants of God in higher positions for the purpose of material gain from such association. They are carnally looking for ladders to climb up with.

Such motive is wrong. Don't seek relationship with someone ahead of you because of what you will gain personally. Let service be your motive, and *"all these things shall be added unto you," (Matthew 6:33).*

Those who enter mentoring relationship seeking the additions end up reducing themselves. Such games may start well, but they never end well.

Elisha followed Elijah as if that was all he was going to be doing all his life. But story of a servant cannot end with service. Every man who started with service ended up with greatness. Jesus made it very clear:

But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

Matthew 23:11-12

Make service your motivation at every position God moves you to. The mantle of exploits does not fall on positions, but on servants. The motive of Elisha for following hard after Elijah was not for the mantle of power. If you read the account closely, the promise of power was provoked by the pursuit of Elisha to serve his master to the end. (2 Kings 2:1-10).

The elevation of Joshua above other lieutenants of Moses and the seventy elders was not accidental. God's assessment is not democratic. Joshua was a servant, and that is the quality God looks out for in his promotion and assessment program.

And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua: and Moses went up into the mount of God.

Exodus 24:12

Don't seek your master's commendation but when and if it comes receive it with meekness.

Seek for corrections and admonitions that will further improve your results. A servant whose objective is to seek his master ' s commendation will never become perfect. Be meek and teachable.

Corrections and rebuke help to prune you and sharpen you to be more usable and effective in your service. Corrections should not be viewed as

condemn ations. But if your master's approach at anytime seems like a condemnation, take it in good faith and it will turn into an issue of thanksgiving tomorrow.

Jesus' recommendation is very clear on what your attitude should be as a servant .

So *likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.*

Luke 17:9-10

The phrase, *"we are unprofitable servants"* is not the same as "unworthy servants." It is rather an expression of the fact that, the servant is not seeking for personal gains but regards himself as one who has simply carried out his duty, as is expected of hi m. He doesn't seek for water and bread until his master is fully satisfied.

So what he is after is the master's interest and well-being; he forgets about his own interest and seeks the master's. let this be the principles you live by in relation to you master. Don't be mindful of what you can get out of the relationship with him.

Servants who seek for their own rights end up missing their own good. Right-seeking is a strong dis-qualifier to receiving the anointing.

Never seek the things that your master possesses, rather seek the thing that gave him those possessions. You may as well be on way to getting double of whatever he has if you know and practice what he did to acquire them. Servants who clamor for the glamour of their masters end up in chains.

Gehazi went for the grains he could see around Elisha, his master and procured leprosy for himself and his generation.(2 Kings 5:21-27).

Don't strive to for opportunity to preach with your master on the same platform; rather, seek for every opportunity to serve.

God spoke to me categorically in October 1983 while in the company of Bishop David Oyedepo in a leadership conference held at Government Secondary School, Omu-Aran, Kwara State, Nigeria. He called me aside and said to me, *"if you are faithful in that which is another m an 's, I will give you your own." (Luke 16:12).* Since that time I knew that my portion in God is tied to faithful stewardship under Bishop Oyedepo, and till today, I have no regrets. Before God gave me a word to preach, I got busy and preoccupied preaching my master's messages.

God doesn't believe you can do it until you have been proved under another man. What you are now doing for another man is a stepping stone to what He will do for you. A man, who is not found faithful in another man's service, will never have a taste of what is his own. God uses your master's field as a testing ground for you. When He finds you faithful, He graduates you from been on aide into being a leader.

As great as the calling of Moses was ordained to be, he was first proved as aide to Jethro his father-in-law .

2. Kingdom Mindedness

Acceptable service should God-directed i.e. kingdom service in response to the Word of God to you. Let your service be strategic to the advancement of His kingdom on earth.

If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serve Me, him will My Father honour.

John 12:26

There are degrees of so conferred by men.

Many who have been lifted by men have been dropped by the same men. You don't have to look far to see this reality in our society. But there is an honor that comes from above.

When the Father honors, you go from glory to glory.

Men do all kinds of things to buy honor, but the honor from above flows on the path of service. Serving God and attending to the affairs of His Kingdom enlists you for His honor. Many have used con, lobbying, cheating and outright bribery to get seats of honor. Human wisdom has schemes that may smuggle you into a place of honor, but they cannot sustain you there. The way of service is the most authentic & reliable way to will obtain and sustain honor for you. If you want to be honored, serve the Kingdom of God and His interests.

3. Focus

Offering acceptable service requires demand absolute focus. In your stewardship, times of distraction and discouragement many come from your feelings, from people around you, and may be every from your master. In the passage to the seat of honor, you will be stretched and tested. I found that God will give you several opportunities to turn back from the path of honor; not for not wanting you to get there, but to proof and mature you for the crown of glory.

And it came to pass, when the LORD *would take up Eli;ah into Heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.*

And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Bethel.

And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, knowest thou that the LORD

will take away thy master from thy head to day/ And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace.

And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me toTericho. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So *they came to Tericho.*

And the sons of the prophets that were at Tericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace.

And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.

And they two went on. And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, an stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan .

And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither,* so *that they two went over on dry ground.

2 Kings 2:1-8

The double portion of the anointing on Elijah that came upon Elisha was not without the full-blown test on his focus . He followed hard in serving his master before the honor came to him.

As you follow on in service to your master, refuse to be distracted. It may not always be easy and rosy, but remain steadfast in your service. The tide will tum, your story will changei so, battle your way till you get the mantle. The truth is that there is no faithful servant that did not end his journey as a master. Never allow immediate discomforts and some times, humiliation, distract your attention from the seat of honor waiting for you.

4. Selflessness

Your motivation for service must be right. If you are serving God for things, you will end up with nothing. If all you are doing is for people to acknowledge and praise you for your good works, then you reward is lost.

Jesus said,

Take heed that ye do not your alms *before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in Heaven.*

Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.

But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

That thine alms may be in secret: and thy father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly.

Matthew 6:1-4

It is alright for people, especially immediate beneficiaries of your service to appreciate you for whatever you have done, but is most times unnecessary. Be selfless.

Apostle Paul adopted the nomenclature of servant of Jesus Christ because he had an understanding of this principle in his service. (Romans 1:1). As a servant, he lost all sense of personal identity and gain in his service. His life was tied to pleasing the Master, to the point he said, *"though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel." (1 Corinthians 9:16).* Paul was selfless.

Jesus was succinct in His address about selfless service, He said,

But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle,* will *say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat; And will not rather unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

Luke 17:7-10

Those who live for self has settled for less. Self is a reducer. Jesus said, *"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. " (John 12:24).* You must be dead to self if you must receive full reward for your service. Jesus further pressed the point home by saying, *"He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. " (John 12:25}.*

Implying that God and the Kingdom must be put first and foremost while self is relegated to the last consideration in our call to duty.

Jesus set the stake of stewardship very clearly to His disciples.

Then said Jesus unto His disciples, if any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for* My *sake shall find it.

Matthew 16:24-25

Death is the passage to life. Until you die to your feelings, emotions and personal ambitions, you cannot receive the full rewards for your stewardship. Those who wait for commendation are calling for condemnation without knowing. Lovers commendation have personal image to protect and are edgy about criticisms, especially from the enemies of the Cross. If Elisha wasn't dead to self he would have succumbed to the intimidating mockeries of his colleagues in the school of prophets.

Selfless servants perceive commendation as mere encouragement.

Selfless stewards consider their services as privileges and duties to be carried out. I have been tagged by countless number of people who feel I'm an extremist in my stewardship under Bishop Oyedepo.

5. Faithfulness

Faithfulness means to be full of faith in your assignment, such that you put in all your energy and ability into getting it done well. God called us to service and all He expects us as stewards is faithfulness . You are called to be faithful, not to be famous .

Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful

1 Corinthians 4:2

It is requirement that registers your commitment to your master. Peter vowed to be faithful to his master even in the face of death. John 13:37, Matt 26:23, same was Joshua & Caleb. They stood faithful to their Moses even at the point of strong him.

Your entitlement in any engagement is guaranteed by your delivery of the requirements of the assignment . You will be paid only for doing what you were required to do.

In the Parable of the Talents, Jesus demonstrated that Heaven's rewards are based on faithful stewardship.

His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou has been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the* joy *of thy lord.

Matthew 25:21

Faithfulness is your access to the rest the Lord gives to His servants. The lord of the servants said the unfaithful servant was both wicked and slothful and appointed him a portion in *"outer darkness"* where *"there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth". (Matthew 25:26,30).*

Summarily,

A faithful man shall abound with blessings .. .

Proverbs 28:20

There is an ever-abounding blessing for the faithful. Faithfulness means to heap what is committed to you in a way and manner in which you will keep yours personally.

Moses left his father-in-law's sheep (Ex 3:1), David also kept his father's sheep (1 Sam 17:34). In both cases, they ended in the class of greatness. You can't be a keeper of what is committed to your charge without eating of the fruits of your work. (Prov 27:18), your fig tree is your master, keep him, protect him, tend him & you will end up eating from the fruit he bears.

6. Willingness

God is not a taskmaster; never render your service to your master grudgingly. God prefers that you do nothing for Him than engage in unexcited service for Him. In fact He said,

Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and He shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until He have destroyed thee.

Deuteronomy 28:47-48

Don't put yourself under a burden for any reason. To render your stewardship unwillingly is t be under a curse. Paul said, *"if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me."* (1 Corinthians 9:17). He said in preceding verse, ".. .*necessity is laid upon me; yea woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel."* It is better to disengage from a place where you find yourself under strains to give your service to the Lord than to bring yourself under the curse of the Lord.

7. Joyfulness

"God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7) this is not limited to material offerings. It is an attitude He requires of us in everything that joins us to Him. Whatever you place on His altar from an unhappy heart is unacceptable and therefore attracts no rewards. The location and positioning of Joseph as Prime Minister in Egypt was rooted in his cheerfulness . The choking and demoralizing experiences of the prison house could not suppress the flow of joy from his innermost being as he oversees the affairs of the prison.

Don't be a "Thermometer" steward - responding to the environment and "happenstances." When Joseph was in the house of Potiphar as slave he rendered his stewardship with such contagious joy that attracted utmost

trust from Potiphar’s household. That is a clear template for rendering acceptable stewardship.

8. Diligence

God will go all the way to bless those who go all the length in their service to Him in their assigned place of stewardship. He is a *"rewarder of them that diligently seek (serve) Him." (Hebrews 11:6). The Apostle Paul charged us,*

Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.

Romans 12:11

Diligence is your ladder to the top. Your journey to the top does not really take time, it only takes diligence. Be faithful to your master and be diligent to all the duties assigned to you.

God will reward only diligent service. God has record of all your secret services, even the ones your master is not aware of. This reality has helped me to be faithful in my stewardship to my master over the years.

Chapter 3

MILESTONES TO HONOR

The wisdom path onto honor is faithful stewardship. Jesus made it clear in his teaching that honor is heaven's reward to all who serve.

… ***If any man serve Me, him will*** **My** ***Father honour.***

John 12:26

Furthermore, Solomon in extolling the virtues of wisdom says,

She shall bring thee to honour, when

thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.

Proverbs 4:8-9

Wisdom of faithful stewardship shall *"bring thee to honor"* if you follow her.

There are clear landmarks established by the wisdom of God that lead those who are willing to follow into their place of honour.

I want to show you that road map to the honor you desire.

This different from the world's system where you have to lobby and apply for recognition, prestige and position. In the Kingdom, you simply line up with God to secure your place in honor.

In this Chapter, I want to specifically show to you the honor that comes on stewards who will serve their masters faithfully as was bestowed on Joshua, the servant of Moses.

And the Lord said unto Moses, take thee Joshua the son of Nun ... And thou shalt put some of thine honor upon him ...

Numbers 27:18,20

This honor doesn't come cheap. It cannot be wished nor prayed for it. It is reserved for those who have passed the various tests of following their masters.

Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof:* so *he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured.

Proverbs 27:18

Below, you will find the milestones which I have personally experienced which of course are common to all who have passed through the same process.

1. Courage To Follow

It takes courage to put your destiny in somebody's hands, because men can fail.

Courage is the inner virtue required to take steps in the direction of your inner conviction, especially when others around you cannot see what you can see ahead. Of course, there will never be need for courage if steps to be taken are void of risk. Such is the description of actions of great stewards like Joshua, Elisha and Peter who never made their choice on concession but on personal conviction. Any steward that will successfully serve his master must be ready to stand independent of other people's view. And that calls for courage.

At the onset of your journey, the man may seem not to open up to you where he is taking you, because he also, in some cases he doesn't have full details of where he is headed, though he knows it by faith in the One who assigned him . He is walking by faith in what God showed him and you are following him. It is easier to believe God than believe men, so you need

courage. In the ultimate, your faith in the man is faith in the God that he represents.

Elisha distinguished himself as one of the most courageous stewards in history. He is an outstanding model. It is interesting to note that Elisha was out in the farm one day when Elijah came along and threw his mantle upon him. Elisha did not have as much time to go and bid his father and his mother goodbye before he followed and began stewardship with Elijah the Prophet. (1 Kings 19:19-21).

At the point of Elisha's appointment, his master, Elijah was a hunted man. He was on the news as a man slayer, having killed four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. Ahab's wife, Jezebel, confident on the arms of the military might of Israel had sent him on note that she would skin him like one of the prophets in twenty four hours. It was in his escape from the sword of Jezebel in 1 Kings chapter 19 that Elisha was introduced in verse 19. I perceive that Elisha was very courageous to put out his neck as a personal Assistant to Prophet Elijah at that point in time when he was on the danger list as a wanted man.

Can you dare to stand with your master when tongues begin to slash him, and the media runs theirs wild pens to paint him black? Do you sit with scoffers and mess your master in the secret? Are you ready to go all the way with your master through the thick and thin?

Jesus suffered misrepresentations and His works were misjudged. The authorities accused Him and He was labeled a false prophet. The Scribes said, *"He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth He out devils." (Mark 3;22).* But courageous stewards like Peter will stand strong to defend and fight for the truth they know, even when all others have turned their backs on the Master. (John 6:68). Peter would dare to confront sword-bearing soldiers who came to arrest Jesus. (Matthew 26:51).

Earlier Peter had courageously left all including his father, without prior notice to follow his new found "master". The courage exhibited of Joshua & Caleb is also rare & uncommon to find. They both stood uncourageously firm even when Moses was going to be stoned by the mammoth angry & in subtracted mob.

2. Discipline To Follow

Servants live a separated life of self-denial.

The servant must bridle his eyes, his tongue and his feet both in the presence and in the absence of his master. There are times when you need to keep surveillance and watch over your master, but at other times it is discrete for you to look away from him.

While opportunities abound to enjoy intimacy with your master, extreme caution must be put in place not to become over familiar with him. This is where self discipline is necessary. Discipline is about control, restrains & caution. Without discipline a servant will falter and lose his privileged position to another.

Jesus had demanded that his disciples will become totally self abandoned.

Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

Matthew 16:24

Serving as a steward under a man of God demands a total abandonment of a personal program. Since it is a calling to serve him, your vision must be basically focused on how he will fulfill his vision.

Just as an Aide-De-Camp is positioned to align with his boss' interests, so is every steward expected to deny himself to satisfy his master.

This discipline covers all areas of his life such as taste, utterances, and the thoughts of his heart.

Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.

Ecclesiastes 10:20

You must guard the loins of your mind against every form of evil thought against your master. When arrogance is locked up in your heart, your master will pick it immediately from your stance. It is better to stay away from him than to serve him with murmuring and disinterest. Gehazi's hypocrisy was eventually exposed with grave consequences that made him, his children, and his children's children lepers. (2 Kings 5:27).

At times you may feel that some decisions taken by your master are "out of course". But you must know your place. You are called to serve him. You are to pursue his instructions and help him realize his objectives. The best you can do at such crossroads is to look up to God and talk to Him about your concerns and fears. Sometimes the decisions could be changed, but when they are not, glory be to God, just put your little weight behind him and run with his judgments. Your master does not have to work by your opinion, so keep it to yourself if you have one. You must know your limits & define your jurisdiction.

3. Zeal To Follow

Peter, the then foremost disciple of Christ demonstrated higher degree of zeal in following the Master. When he was Christ's disciple, Peter expressed an uncommon zeal in following His Master. At his first contact with Christ, he responded to the command to follow instantly.

And He saith unto them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.

Matthew 4:19

When most people stopped following Christ, he vowed to follow Him to the end.

Peter's zeal undoubtedly was his qualifier for the leadership position God eventually gave to him.

Joshua's zealous association with Moses as not without his willingness to die with him if need arose for that. Elisha also distinguished himself by zealously following Elijah to the end.

Passivity and slothfulness has been the bane of many failing stewards. Zeal means to possess an inner drive to follow irrespective of oppositions or other circumstances of life. It is hot purchase, it is an undaunted soul tie followership. It brings you into the same degree of holiness & fervency with your master. It is what God described concerning Joshua as "a man in whom is the spirit." - Num 27:18.

Ruth's example- Ruth 1:14, 16-17

Elisha's uncommon attitude -2 Kings 2:2, 4, 6.

Peter's undaunted zeal - Matthew 26:58

4. Patience To Follow

Patience is an inner virtue. While its basic definition means to wait. Its description goes beyond that . It is a test of character which centers around how you comport yourself while waiting. It is about one's attitude while waiting on his master.

Just as it takes time to tend the fig tree to fruition, qualitative times of waiting is required to receive the honor of serving your master.

Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof:* so *he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured.

Proverbs 27:18

In your service to your master, you need patience. Don't be in a hurry. Be a silent worker, ready to take reproaches and shame.

God at times allows us to face humiliating circumstances just to check what is hidden in our hearts. "... *and thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart , whether thou woulde st keep his commandments, or no .. ."*

Be patient. A fame-seeker will be impatient with having to be put behind the scene. Years back I learnt that repression is not oppression. I was

serving my master with some other vibrant minister who were most times given room to teach in Sunday School Classes while I was relegated to sharing tithes and offering envelopes .

The repression was a build up technique to condition my heart for greater future opportunities . While you carrying out your stewardship don't seek to express yourself beyond your limit, I have witnessed young ministers bang the door of destiny against themselves because they felt they already know what to preach and were not given ample opportunities to express themselves in their local assemblies.

There is an appointed time for your manifestation. If you jump the beat, you'll end in the pit. God is a God of times and season. He cannot mismanage your destiny. Patiently wait on your master and wait for God.

The impatience of the other fifty sons of the prophet was responsible for their fall out by the way side while Elisha patiently followed after Elijah to qualify for the mantle.

Perhaps they considered that remaining in a particular status for that long didn't make sense but Elisha patiently followed on and remained in a status where he was simply described as a man who poured water in the hand of Elijah.

Servants understand mountaintop experiences of their masters. Their followership has exposed them to the hardness of ministry and the ways of the Spirit as they have closer and more intimate fellowship with the master. As the cloud of glory came upon Mount Horeb, Joshua also partook of the experience.

When Moses was about to depart he prayed unto the Lord, saying,

Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, Which may* go *out before them and which may* go *in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the LORD be not as sheep which have no shepherd . And the LORD said unto Moses, take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him.

Numbers 27:16-18

Who would have imagined that Joshua, "a common minister" or servant of Moses was going to wear Moses' shoes while Aaron, Miriam, Hur and the seventy elders of Israel were yet alive. Joshua was the "hanger on" who carried Moses' scroll and staff around the tabernacle. He was the messenger to the man of God. But he had the heart of a servant.

God said, he was *"a man in whom is the spirit."* May God locate you for the next promotion.

5. Loyalty In Following

Loyalty means to cleave, to stick to become inseparably one with another person. Simply put, it is wholesome followership. This is the peak requirement for stewardship. It is the factor that distinguished Joshua & Caleb.

"… But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it .. ." Numbers 14:24, "... Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite, and Joshua the son of Nun: for they have wholly followed the L ORD ... " Numbers 32:12.

Those who render the stewardship with partial, fractional & caution will suffer major hindrances & untold hardship in the journey. Stewardship calls for ardent, addicted followership that draws concession & public opinion. Loyal stewards are unafraid & unashamed to be identified with their master on any issue and in any circumstance. Truly loyal servants are consistently principled in addicted followership.

Loyalty is a virtue you must cultivate as a steward. You must stand strong in defense of your master especially when others are against him. Don't hide your feelings about your loyalty to your master.

A son honorueth his father, and a servant his master: if then** I **be a Father, where is Mine honour? And if** I **be a Master, where is My fear?

Malachi 1:6

Masters are to be honored and revered. Every servant that understands loyalty will end up in royalty. Your loyalty is to a person and not to a character. You are not permitted to point an accusing finger at your master, even if everybody else does this is to avoid any room to seeds of bitterness in your soul.

Miriam in a bid to "straighten " Moses ended up with leprosy. (Numbers 12:1-10).

David well understood this in his relationship with Saul. Even after Saul had backslidden and God had rejected him, David still revered him and said to his men,

The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD's anointed, to stretch forth mine had against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD.

1 Samuel 24:6

As a servant you are expected to stand by your master in the thick and in the thin.

You are to serve your master by magnifying his good deeds and making up for his shortcomings as occasion demands. God was vehement against the error of Miriam because she was in position to have covered up and defended Moses' perceived shortcomings in love and with meekness.

Handling Issues Of Errors In Your Master's Life

What do you do when you observe that your master is failing in an aspect of his character.

a. Understand that he is a servant of God, and he is answerable to God.

Leave him to the God of calling and be faithful with your own part with him. It is only God or someone who is higher than him (your master) that can caution him.

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifeth. Who is he that comdemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Romans 8:33-34

b. Pray for him passionately.

Recognize that he is human with tendency to err just as other human does.

Bear ye one another's burdens, and* so *fulfil the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:2

c. Don't partake of the evil.

You need the wisdom of God to do this in meekness of the spirit. (1 Timothy 5:22).

d. Serve him with integrity.

You are first of all serving his God and secondarily his person, so don't hold back in your commitment to him and the mandate he represents.

7. **Accountability In Following**

As your master expose you to opportunities, be accountable to him.

Report back to him, even when he doesn't ask you to do so. Be careful not to abuse the authority you are given and don't assume more than you are accorded per time. Use the privileges you are given to promote your master and not to show off your abilities.

Make your master comfortable with you as you grow in your levels of service to him.

Except when it becomes necessary, never use all the authority delegated to you by your master. Remain submissive to your master while exercising the

authority, he has given to you.

And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.* So *also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.

Hebrews 5:4-5

Protect your master's interest with the authority he has given you. Beware of "Absalom Syndrome." (2 Samuel 15:l-6).

Don't use the authority he has given you to steal the heart of the people.

A good steward considers that he would not have qualified for where he is been placed presently except for the opportunities he's received, so he carries himself with a sense of accountability in discharging his duties under his master.

Chapter 4

WINNING ATTITUDES OF A STEWARD

What makes a man is basically who he is not what he does. And who he is traceable to his attitudes which are a set of character traits that does not only describe him in the present but also defines his future. The following are traits that define successful stewardship.

1. Humility

The humble is always the winner!

The life of Moses is a great description of humility to the core. Before his exit from Pharaoh palace, he had earned a position of a commander and undergoing a growing process as successor of the incumbent Pha raoh. But from that high position, he descended to become a steward to Jethrowhos sheep he help faithfully as he prepared for his next assignment from God. Ex 3:1

It's similar in Elisha who was a successful & reputable merchandised farmer who abandoned all to become a servant described as one who poured water in the hand of Elijah. 1 Kings 19 :19-21; 11 Kings 3:11.

It is important to note out this point that you are not at the same class with your master. Jesus made this very clear "...verily verily *I say unto you, The servantis not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him ..."* God is not a confusionist, He will never place above you one who is lower than you, let it be settled in your mind that the person under who God assigned you to serve is greater than you.

Even if you appear to have a record of testimonies that are not common in his own ministry, don't be fooled. Leadership is by divine placement. If you

are not so appointed by God, no effort can get you there. Remain submissive and humble yourself under him.

If you have a dream or a vision to branch out to do something else for the Lord, be careful how you present it to your master. Be modest in presenting such vision to that you don't put ego into it. Don't forget that even though your master wants to see you great, there is still a human element in him. If he perceives an air of arrogance in you, it will jeopardize your relationship with him.

2. Do you have the spirit

Just as an umbilical cord biologically connect the foetus to its mother so is the spirit of a steward that will success must be strongly connected to his master.

Joshua was turned into a winner in the class of Moses because they tied the spirit in them *"... And the LORD said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and la y thine hand upon him (Num 27:18).*

It is a soul tie, it makes you inseparable from your God ordained root even when all others get detached .

"... ***And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me*** **to** ***Bethel. And Elisha said unto him, As the*** *LORD* ***liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.*** **So** ***they went down*** **to** ***Bethel.***

And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me **to** ***Jericho. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth,*** *I* ***will not leave thee.*** **So** ***they came to Jericho. And Elijah said unto him, Tarry,*** *I* ***pray thee, here; for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth,*** *I* ***will not leave thee. And they two went on***

(II Kings 2,4,6) .

Every true steward must be able to commitedly declare like Jonathan's armour bearer did in 1 Sam 14:7.

"... ***And his armourbearer said unto him, Do all that is in thine heart: turn thee; behold, I am with thee according to thy heart."***

All of my years of stewardship under Bishop Oyedepo my heart hasn't shifted once. It is constantly with him.

It you don't have the spirit please don't stay so as not to end as casualty like Gehazi did.

You enjoy the privilege of intimacy with your master more than anybody else. That calls for great caution, so that you don't abuse that privilege. Never take your master for granted. Your closeness to him and his openness to you will make him almost vulnerable to you, but watch it. It was an abuse of intimacy for Peter to rebuke Jesus his Master.

Then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him.

Matthew 16:22

However, another disciple, John also was intimate with Jesus, but he applied discretion to his association with Christ. By this attitude, he had access to such degree of information that even Peter couldn't have.

He had to liaise with John to find out certain things from Jesus as we find in John 13:23-24.

Now there was leaning on fesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom He spake.

John was able to use his intimacy to build closer and stronger relationship with the Master. Your master may condescend to chatting and sharing humor with you from time to time, but never take that for granted; you are not at the same level. Be discrete to flow with him and yet keep him in his place of honor.

3. Contentment

Contentment is an attitude of appreciation for where you are and what you have per time. Gehazi was discontented and covetous. He must have been "eyeing" his master's possessions and murmuring over his own lack. His eyes were on Elisha's cloths and well earned silver and gold. The secret of his heart was exposed on the day he was opportune to meet one of his master's visitors, General Naaman. His master had ministered to the army officer and would not accept any offering or gift from him; but Gehazi ran after him and lied to him to collect gifts from him. He wanted to amass wealth and be like his master (2 Kings 5:15-25).

And he said unto him, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he posseth.

Luke 12:15

Don't measure your life by material possessions. Your worth is not valued in silver and gold. Always remember the reason for your association with your master is to serve. A laborer is worthy of his wages. (Luke 10:7) . Seek to labor like your master labors and you will surely reap his kind of harvest in due course.

4. Impress Your Master

Availability means to be right on ground when a need arises & responding with obligate to meet such needs.

Every servant of God needs available hands to assist him in carrying out his mandate. If God called you to be a steward to such a man of God then your availability is of utmost value to him. Do not be around him in figure but in full fledge availability. The reason Paul insisted in obeying John Mark in the 2nd missionary journey was because of his unavailability.

And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.

Act 15:37, 38

Inavailability is a disqualifier from stewardship, Joshua was always there for Moses to run errand at his command.

So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

Exodus 17:10

And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them.

And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua: and Moses went upinto the mount of God.

Exodus 24:12

And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle.

Exodus 33: 11.

The availability of Elisha to Elijah was so obvious to all that they described him as a man who poured water in Elijah's hand. 2Kings 3:11

Your master needs to have a good impression about you and your capability.

Through diligence, skill and comportment, prove to your master that you are dependable and can handle the tasks committed to you from time to time. Seek to satisfy him always.

This is where many servants miss it. Eye service and good impression are two different things. Be your very best especially in his absence. Don't engage in anything in his absence that you know he would not tolerate if he were around. Don't live in hypocrisy. Be true in your master's presence and in his absence. God is till God, either your master is around or absent.

A good impression will make your master happy and to appreciate you the more. Pray and reason along with him in his visions and activities. Occasionally, propose ideas that will enhance his results. Doing in his absence what you perceive he would want done if he were around makes him repose more confidence in your competence and places more value on your involvement.

When your master gives you an assignment, don't struggle to barely finish it. You are reducing yourself by allowing your master to always call you up for irregularities and errors in your submissions to him.

Rather, strive to impress him by going the extra mile in whatever he commits to your hands. Let him know your entire being is in what you are doing for him.

5. Skillfulness

Among the virtues that gave David an extra ordinary placement in this stewardship under King Saul was skillfulness.

Skillfulness is a combination of several virtues which notably includes prudency in handling matters, expertise in solving problems, soundness of utterance and wise behavior. It defines your degree of usefulness.

And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD was with him.

Then the princes of the Philistines went forth: and it came to pass, after they went ***forth, that David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul;*** **so** ***that his name was much set by.***

1 Sam 18:5, 14, 30

Daniel and his companions were among the men that kings in Babylon could not ignore your skillfulness will make it almost impossible for your master to do without your company at all times.

Paul the Apostle requested for the company of one of his gospel aides .

Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.

2 Timothy 4:11

Your skillfulness will certainly enhance your profitability. All leaders of reknown demands for aides who are skillfull in executing their duties.

Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king.

Dan 1:4, 17, 19

Occasionally, propose ideas that will enhance his results . Doing in his absence what you perceive he would want done if he were around makes him repose more confidence in your competence and places more value on your involvement.

6. Honour Your Master

Relationship between a servant of God and his aides should not be absolutely restricted to Master /Servant relationship.

Living it at that level will make it absolutely legalistic which doesn't represent full commitment and rob the aide of his due rewards of service.

Elisha elevated his stewardship relationships with his master, Elijah to that of Father/Son relationship.

Why is this necessary?

It is because the fruit of honor is not possible without seeds of honor been sown for a steward to access honor of his master he must necessarily upgrade that relation shop to Father/Son.

Only a son (not a steward) qualifies for honor. The honor passed on to Joshua from Moses was made possible because he related with Moses as his father. Num 27:18. Elisha address Elijah as his father .

As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. Elisha saw this and cried out, "My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!" And Elisha saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them apart.

2Kings 2:11-12

Fathers require honor before they can impart honor.

A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear/? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?

Malachi 1:6

It is honor imparted by fathers that distinguishes stewards from stewards.

Even Jesus had to be armored about the disciples position in this kind of relation.

He addressed them as the children because they had received him as their father.

Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.

John 21:5

Bishop Oyedepo under who I'm privilege to render my stewardship is not only my master but as well my father.

The clear evidence of father/son relationship is absolute trust. At that point relationship between the due has no strings attached but love immeasurable.

7. Impress Your Master

Your master needs to have a good impression about you and your capability.

Through diligence, skill and comportment you can prove to your master that you are dependable and can handle the tasks committed to you from time to time. Seek to satisfy him always. This is where many servants miss it. I here some say: I don't want to impress anybody.

Do you know that even God wants us to impress Him? To impress means to please.

Solomon please God to be endured by God (1 Kings 3:10), Enoch pleased God (Heb 11:5) Even Christ please God (Lk 3: 22). The stewardship that Timothy rendered under Paul so please him that he gave such commendation of him.

But I ***trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that*** *I* ***also may be of good comfort, when*** *I know* ***your state. For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel. Him therefore*** *I* ***hope to send presently,*** **so** ***soon as*** *I* ***shall see how it will*** **go** ***with me.***

Philippians 2:19-23

Eye service and good impression are two difference things, creating good impression simply means to be your very best in every assignment committed to your hands. Don't live in hypocrisy but, true in your master's presence and in his absence.

A good impress will make your master happy and appreciate you the more. Pray and reason along with him in his visions and activities.

When your master gives you an assignment, don't struggle to barely finish it. You are reducing yourself by allowing your master to always call up for irregularities and errors in your submissions to him. Rather, strive to impress him by going the extra mile in whatever he commits to your hands. Let him know your entire being is in what you are doing for him.

If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place; for yielding pacifieth great offences.

Ecclesiastes 10:4

However, it is better to avoid being faulted too often. It will amount to immaturity to be saying "sorry" every other time. Find lasting solution to anything over which you have been faulted and uphold a decision to always avoid it.

Whenever I discovered that my master is unhappy over anything, I step in immediately to pacify him. Another associate might have caused him the grief, but I am there to contribute to his joy, so I go ahead with right words to see him calm again. I don't like to see my master grieved over anything .

When it is obvious that you are right and your master insists that you are wrong, immediately accept the blame and apologize. You must jealously guard the heart of your master from any form of unhappiness, even to the point of losing your own rights, if need be.

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it

with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

Hebrews 13:17

Shielding your master from sorrow is protecting your own destiny from damage.

Your leader watches over your soul, so grieving his heart is pulling down the covering he has over you. It is better for you to be grieved and enjoy the covering of your master than for you to grief him and lose his covering over your life.

6. Managing Opportunities

Doors of opportunities shall be opened to you from to time as a servant. You need wisdom to explore such privileges. Your master will occasionally give you such lease for exposure and development of your potentials. If you manage them well, more doors will open for you, but if you abuse them, you will have to "repeat" the class again.

Chapter 5

REWARDS OF STEWARDSHIP

The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.

Ruth 2:12

God is not a user of men. Everyone who made a commitment to serve Him ended up being abundantly rewarded. God offers compensation for your labor of love towards Him and for your obedience to His Words.

God's rewards are not in half measures, but in full. Rewards come in measures, both in quantity and in quality. I have proven certain principles that affect the quality and quantity of rewards for service towards God.

Just as farmers can enhance the produce of their farms by introducing certain elements to the soil and their seeds, so you can influence the rewards for your service in the Kingdom.

Successful servants enjoy four levels of rewards:

1. The Anointing

Every faithful servant is entitled to reward of more grace and anointing. Elisha, having faithfully served Elijah ended up with double portion of the anointing upon Elijah. Two different mantles came upon Elisha, the one before the other. The first is in 1 Kings Chapter 19.

So he departed thence, and found Elisha *the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him.*

And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee?

And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.

Verse 19-21 (Emphasis mine)

The first mantle that Elisha received from Elijah was the mantle of service. After the mantle came on him, *"he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him."* The mantle of power that came upon Elisha was not a response to some prayer points and desperate fasting programs . After God and his master were satisfied with his faithful service, an open cheque was offered to him to fill, whereupon he asked for the double portion of the spirit upon Elijah to rest upon him.

And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.

2 Kings 2:9

The greater works that Jesus promised that His disciples would do was not a response to their agitations and demand. (John 14:12).

Rather, it was done to endorse their satisfactory services to Him and His Father.

To qualify for such anointing, you must be consistently faithful to the end. Elijah said to Elisha, *"if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee." (2 Kings 2: 10).* He meant to say, "if you remain faithfully focused to the end, the anointing will be yours."

2. Divine Placement

While it is never the zeal of any good servant to seek position, his commitment and unalloyed loyalty to his master charts a course for him to divine placement. It is faithful service that recommends and prepares you for positions of authority. Jesus said to His disciples, who were stepping into the shores of Apostles,

Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as* My *Father hath appointed unto Me.

Luke 22:28-29

The master you are not identified with in service is not the one you will seat with in position.

After Elisha had faithfully served Elijah, he became distinguished among the other fifty-one sons of the prophets. He had laid an extra-ordinary foundation of committed and loyal service to Elijah which in tum qualified him to be placed over and above the other fifty. He was before then a co-servant; now he was addressed as "lord" (master).

And when the sons of the prophets which were to view at Jericho saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him... And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth ...

2 Kings 2:15, 19

It's the same trend with Joshua. Joshua seemed to have been content to be addressed as Moses' steward. This opinion could be validated by the fact that he needed a divine propping to occupy his new position as shown in Joshua 1:1-2.

Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, Moses* My *servant is dead; now therefore arise,* go *over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.

From his position of faithful stewardship, God divinely placed him even above the seventy elders who were then the rulers among the people.

3. Sonship

Elisha started off his relationship with Elijah as a servant or minister but grew in the process of time onto that of a son. This is not orchestrated by the "eye-service" of Elisha but as endowed by Elijah his master.

At the end, Elisha could cry out to Elijah, *"my father, my father..." (2 Kings 2: 12}*

4. Fruit Eating

Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof:* so *he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured.

Proverbs 27:18

Your master is a fruit-bearing tree; as you nourish him, you will someday eat of his fruits. You are entitled to eat only from what you are committed to keep.

If you tend the tree and preserve it, it wil yield fruits for you. The wellbeing of your master will result in your ultimate wellbeing also. As you serve, nourish and protect your master, you are doing same to yourself directly.

After Joshua had served Moses satisfactorily, the Lord instructed Moses to lay hands on Joshua and put some of his honor on him.

And thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient.

Numbers 27:20

Chapter 6

PITFALLS IN STEWARDSHIP

A call to stewardship comes with quite a lot of temptations. Unfortunately, many have ended as victims of these pitfalls because they lack basic understanding.

The following are danger spots m stewardship.

1. Covetousness

A note of warning was sounded by Christ in Luke Chapter 12:

And He said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness ...

Verse 15

Covetousness is the crave to possess what does not belong to one. Covetousness is a deadly disease. The fact that it led to the undoing of stewards of a major prophet makes it a necessary matter to examine in our considerations. Gehazi, Elisha's steward was turned leprous by it. Judas, a trusted steward of Christ lost his life completely to covetousness as well.

Covetousness arises when a steward losses his focus from his assignment to materialism. The cure to covetousness in stewardship is contentment with what you have and where you are per time.

2. Self-Seeking

Jesus also warned His disciples not to seek personal reputation.

*... **If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.***

Matthew 16:24

Jesus Himself had to lose His reputation to be exalted by the Father.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name.

Philippians 2:5-9

Self-seeking is an inherent thing in every man. By divine order, you can never be known by malting yourself known; for a man can receive nothing except it be given to him.

John the Baptist understood this when he said,

*... **A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from Heaven.***

John 3:27

He made this known when men jeered on him to identify himself.

A steward's assignment is usually at the background. It is usually covered out behind the veil. While your master seems to be making waves in the open and all eyes seems to be on him, you may be tempted to ask,

"When will I ever be known if I continue in this 'corner.'? 11 That of course is a foul question because already your motive for being in ministry is corrupted. The cheapest way to end in obscurity is to seek to be in the limelight.

The cure to this pitfall is to understand that God sees in the secret and rewards in the open. Only those who happily render their services in the secret, behind the veil and at the background are those who will ever be displayed by God for public recognition.

Never seek fame if you don't want to end in shame.

Aaron who was originally chosen by God to be a steward to Moses failed because he yielded to the pressure from Miriam to push for recognition among the children of Israel.

And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses/ Hath he not spoken by us?.. .

Numbers 12:1-2

3. Position-Seeking

Position- recognition was the pitfall of Dathan, Korah and Abiram. These men gathered some other two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation and renown and challenged Moses and Aaron, saying,

*... **Ye take too much upon you ...***

Numbers 16:1-3

Chapter 7

RAISING LEADERS FROM STEWARDS

Graduating from being a chosen servant to a called servant of God is God's sole prerogative. All the celebrated stewards of Scripture ended up as enviable leaders. That is the order all the way from Joshua to Elisha and the disciples of Jesus Christ.

The effort of raising leaders out of servants is a sacrificial one. The servant carries hidden potentials that himself may not even know at the point of assumption of stewardship. It is the responsibility of leaders to discover, uncover and release the laden ability of their stewards and followers.

The tutelage of a steward is to offer the master the opportunity to develop and groom him to manifest his full potentials to the glory of God.

He chose David also His servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: From following the ewes great with young. He brought him to feed Tacob His people, and Israel His inheritance.* So *he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands.

Psalm 78:70-72

We need more leaders like David who had the credit of raising great captains from nonentities. Every leader need to understand what it means to feed their subjects with the integrity of the heart and to guide them with the skillfulness of their hands. It takes integrity of heart and skillfulness of hands to raise stewards into great leaders.

A leader should be able to see beyond the inadequacies of his ministers to their potentials. Don't keep hitting your servants over the head on issues of their shortcomings and inefficiencies. Rather than seeing their shortcomings, capitalize on their 'long comings' and commit to bringing out the best in them. If they were already perfect they would not be there as

your apprentices in the first place. So take them by the hands and pull them up.

You cannot raise men by pushing them down all the time. Focus on their potentials and do all in your power to bum off all the dross upon them till they emerge as bold soldiers from your chambers, wielding the effectual tools of ministry to conquer greater grounds than you have claimed.

I don't think any of us can ever suffer the kind of disappointments and frustration that Jesus suffered from His disciples. Jesus overlooked their unbelief, ignored their follies, and forgave all their errors to make them men that did greater things than He did. The world is yet to recover from the impact of men like Peter, John, James, Matthew and the rest of the m.

1. Serve Your Servants

Nothing triggers the commitment and loyalty of your servants to you than you convincing them that they matter to you more than the services they render to you.

Peter was sold out to Je s us and would do anything to please and protect Him because Jesus had on several occasions served him .

When what touches your servant touches you, he will subsequently go to any length to ensure that nothing touches you also.

You cannot compel anybody to serve you.

When you serve others with integrity, they will be overwhelmed to give even their lives for you.

Your servants should learn service by your examples. Paul could tell the Philippians,

Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

Philippians 4:9

You inspire service in your servants by setting examples of service for them. Paul used four keywords that are worth studying here:

a. Learned - connotes training.

b. Received - they were given.

c. Heard - theoretical instructions .

d. Seen - demonstrations and examples.

Consciously, Jesus took His disciples along in His ministry. He allowed some of them the privilege of seeing Him heal the sick, cleanse lepers and raise the dead. He went through hunger with them, and travelled the same routes with them.

Jesus proved the impact of His training on His servants by giving them responsibilities accordingly. (Matthew 10:1; Luke 9:1-3; Luke 10:1-24). As He proved them, He had occasion to show them where they missed it, developing and perfecting them to do greater works than He did. (Mark 9:14-29). I enjoyed the same opportunities with my master till I was groomed to represent him on international platforms. I am doing those things I have learned, received, heard and seen in him.

Your servants become a formidable force if you go all the way to develop them. Peter's response to the challenge of the authorities to stop him from preaching the gospel is an expression of a well-trained servant.

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel

... ***Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.***

For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

Acts 4:8, 19-20

No threat or sword can stop trained servants . Peter came to Jesus, fearful and easily shaken . Jesus transformed him from a "reed" into a "rock." God chooses "foolish, weak, and nonentities" for His service. (1 Corinthians 1:26-27). As His co-laborers, the Christian leader must depend on Him to transform these ordained men into great captains for God. Your greatest privilege as a leader is to see God raise other men like you under your leadership.

2. Forbear With Your Servants

Bringing out the best in your servants is not always exciting. You need to patiently forbear with them at some time. Jesus said to Philip:

Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip/ He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father

John 14:9

After series of instructions and examples, the disciples failed at ministering to a boy who was possessed by an evil spirit. When Jesus came there, He said to them:

O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you t How long shall I suffer you? Bring him unto Me.

Mark 9:19

He was patient with them, training, instructing and guiding them until Peter's shadow could heal the sick and cast out demons. (Acts 5:15-16).

See beyond the immediate failures and inadequacies of your servants to their potentials and the possibilities of God's grace in their lives.

For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:

Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.

Hebrews 5:1-2

Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses, but it was only Miriam that was stricken with leprosy. Aaron was spared because he did it in ignorance, but Miriam did not escape discipline because she did it willfully.

The leader should discipline those who oppose authority willfully and show lenience to the ignorant offenders.

CONCLUSION

Stewards don't have to wait till their "masters" are dying or dead before they can walk and fully manifest in their blessings.

This is the New Testament approach. The grace of God has increased upon my life over the years that now I am a servant-leader under my leader. While I still look up to my "master" and mentor, I have also been privileged by God under him to handle responsibilities and exercise some level of authority that puts several other ministers under my in the system.

Every day, I still seek avenues of improving my productivity and service to the enormous work God has committed to my "master." I discovered that every level of service I render to him brings increase in the grace and anointing at work in my life.

I have seen promotions and increases on every side that I never bargained for, nor even desired in the secrecy of my heart. God is bound to His Word: you cannot serve faithfully and lose out of the blessings that accrue to the faithful.

Experience has proofed to me that every point of lifting in my master's life and ministry has seen me also to the next level of promotion. You don't have to run down your "master" in order for you to rise. His rising cannot push you down if your heart is right with him.

Judas though Jesus had to give way for him to increase; but he ended up in a most shameful death.