



# Depth Perception

leadership perspective for ministry

## ***Wearing the Steward's Lens***

Imagine a pile of eye-glasses from which you must choose a pair to correct your eyesight. Without the help of a trained optometrist it is difficult to know which pair serves best. Getting the prescription right makes the difference in seeing the world in all the brilliance it offers.

Now imagine a variety of lenses you might use to interpret and apply the Scriptures. Which one would you choose and why?

We would want to choose the best lens so we can see all the brilliance the Scriptures offer. This is especially true in any conversation about stewardship — a term used to mean most anything [1] and often used in contradictory ways, many of which have no remaining Biblical mooring even though the word is often used by religious people.

Read the rest of this article at: <http://www.christianleadershipalliance.com/resources/development/2007/wearingastewardslens.html?start=1>

**A** recent blog entry equated taking one's shoes off when entering the home as good stewardship <http://shoesoffatthedoorplease.blogspot.com/>. In fact, the whole blog is devoted to the subject.

While I agree (and so does my wife) that taking off shoes reduces carpet wear and tear and keeps dirt off of clean tile floors, equating stewardship to clean floors makes me wince. This is because I have spent so much time in the theology of stewardship—the idea that God gave us a great treasure in the Good News. Those of us who believe the Good News organize all of life's resources to put that Treasure to good use for the benefit of others. I now use time, talent, money and my vocation to be a good caretaker of the Gospel I have embraced. So it becomes difficult to think of clean floors as a cleanly connected to stewardship theology.

Perhaps part of the problem is we oversucceeded in promoting stewardship as a concept. It is now common and catchall much like *Kleenex* is no longer just a brand name but the name for all forms of facial tissue including Puffs and Scott.

This lack of definitional clarity is a reason to use the word stewardship sparingly and to prefer *Steward* instead. There are four additional reasons for doing so, however, especially when educating others about generous Christian living:

1. **The term stewardship does not appear in Scripture. The word steward does.** If I want to create a theological reference point, working with the term *Steward* is far simpler.
2. **Stewardship is a term removed from the person, but Steward is a title conferred.**

3. **When I talk about being a Steward I am talking about myself and my commitments in relationship to the gospel.** It makes the subject concrete and objective. Stewardship conversations, by contrast, are subjective and often involve judging the actions of others. The gospel rarely comes up.

4. **A conversation about being a Steward remains rooted in grace** (I can't earn this title. It is granted by God). A conversation about stewardship all too often tilts dangerously toward works righteousness, and my opinion about the righteousness of others.

So, exercising greater stewardship of the subject, I choose to focus on the role of the Steward. I find that the audience listens longer these days.

And yes, my tongue was in my cheek as I wrote that last sentence.

-mark I vincent