

WARD MISSION MESSAGE #14
DEFINITION OF THE WORD STEWARDSHIP IN THE LDS CHURCH
AS IT RELATES TO DOING MISSIONARY WORK

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In English we use the ending "ER" to mean a person. An example would be the word teachER.

In English we have another ending that in a sense works like the ending ER. That ending is "SHIP".

For example we have a person who is called an Apprentice. If you look up the word apprentice in the dictionary it says:

Apprentice: One who is learning a new skill or in training.

We do not say apprenticER in English. Sometimes we just assume that ER is there on the end of English words and don't say it.

If you look up the word apprenticeship in the dictionary, you will see that it means:

Apprenticeship: The training opportunity provided for a person to learn a new skill.

So that means that a person who is new and unskilled can go to some place like a school or like a job and the SCHOOL or the JOB is called his or her APPRENTICESHIP. It is the place or opportunity where you learn the new skill. So here you can see the use of the ending "ship" on the end of a word that makes it the "opportunity to learn" that is given to the person.

I used this example to help you see how we use the ending SHIP on the end of words in English. Now let's look at the word stewardship.....

A person who is called a steward would be referred to in the same way as apprentice as far as the English grammar is concerned. We don't say in English stewardER. We just know that it is a steward person in English without the ER.

So if you look up steward in the dictionary you see that it means:

Steward: A person who is trusted with the management of property, finances, or the affairs of others. Someone who takes care of something.

The scriptures refer to us often as stewards. We are people who the Lord has trusted with responsibility. We are his stewards. We take care of things for Him. We take care of His church for him. We take care of his children (our kids) for Him. We take care of our bodies for Him. We take upon ourselves the responsibilities of having the gospel in our lives. We are stewards in that sense in the Kingdom of God here on the earth and in eternal life as well. When he gives us the responsibility of having the gospel in our lives we then become stewards to Him. He gives us gifts and talents. That trusting us with the gifts and talents makes us stewards for Him. Those who have become parents are asked to watch over a family. Sometimes that responsibility includes having children, so in that sense we are stewards for Him.

Now if we look up the word stewardship in the dictionary we see it means:

Stewardship: The responsibility given to a person to watch over something. That which is to be watched over or taken care of or be held responsible for.

We could simply say that stewardship really means "a responsibility given".

So if we have a stewardship it is the responsibility the Lord gave us to watch over something. It is like our apprenticeship. It is what He has trusted us with.

We talk about reporting our stewardship to someone in the Church. We always connect HAVING a stewardship with REPORTING BACK on our stewardship. The two cannot be separated in God's Kingdom. That is like when we are at school and we take a test and get a report card back. IT IS THE REPORTING BACK that makes stewardships in the church work. Where there is no accountability, there is no responsibility. We see that principle very clearly outlined in the temple ceremony. It is filled with people reporting back on the responsibilities or assignments they were given. They are reporting on their stewardship to the person who gave them the responsibility.

When you go to get your temple recommend, it is like a reporting back on your stewardship in the church. When you talk to the Elders Quorum President or Relief Society President about your Ministering assignment at each PPI, you are reporting back to them on your STEWARDSHIP as a Ministering Brother or Sister. They have assigned you a responsibility to look over a few families. That responsibility is your stewardship as their minister. Then each time you report back to them on what you and your companion did with that responsibility or stewardship this month.

In life the Lord has given us many different stewardships, as a father or mother, as a husband or wife, as a child in a family. As a parent we have stewardship over our children, our money, and our health. Really you could say that anything you are responsible for is a stewardship. Obviously our whole life is then a stewardship. And on judgment day we will report on the final stewardship.... our salvation.

In D&C 72 we find just one example where it refers to one of these many types of stewardships. Any time you see the word stewardship you can just say that means something that was given to a person to be responsible for and then the person will be required to report back later on what we did with that responsibility. That is the whole meaning of the parable of the talents in the New Testament.

One of the stewardships we have been given as members of this church is to share the gospel with our family, friends and neighbors. However in that stewardship there is not the same kind of reporting back that there is with our new ministering brother or sister assignments. Hopefully we will not fall into the pitfall of where there is no accountability there is no responsibility.

[Back To Index Page](#)