

Godly Planning Principles

Allow these foundational principles to guide your decisions as you work with your planning professionals in creating a godly, well-designed, estate and gift plan that will benefit you, your family and the ministries you love.

Principle # 1: God is the owner of all. (Psalm 24:1) God does not own 10 percent of our wealth; He owns 100 percent of it. God cares just as much about what we spend on Sunday lunch as He does with what we placed in the offering plate that morning. Until we open our hands, allowing Him access to all of our things, we limit His blessing.

Principle # 2: We are to be faithful managers of all God gives us. (1 Corinthians 4:1-2) This stewardship responsibility goes far deeper than our finances. As parents and grandparents, we are stewards over our families. Our role is to help them develop their God-given skills and talents. It is our responsibility to ensure that the next generation has a deep understanding and appreciation for their Lord and Savior and that they can defend their faith in an ever-growing secular world. (Psalm 71:18)

Principle #3: As managers of our finances, we will all have to give an accounting. (1 Corinthians 3:8, 14; Ephesians 6:7) As Christians, we will have to give an accounting as to how we used the opportunities, resources, and blessings that God entrusted us in this life. This event is just for believers and is not a judgment; on the contrary, it is described as a rewards ceremony. The Bible states that we will be rewarded for our role as stewards over what God has entrusted us during our life. What an amazing blessing! God provides for us and then promises to reward us for properly managing those provisions. A good manager longs to hear his Master say, "Well done, my good and faithful servant." (Matthew 25:23).

Applying these three Principles - As we approach our gift and estate planning process, use these principles to create a few guidelines.

1. A Christian's estate plan should be motivated by our relationship with God.
2. All planning should foremost provide for our loved ones (1 Timothy 5:8), by reducing the likelihood of interpersonal conflicts, passing on our redemptive lifestyles, and including individuals and organizations that will continue to perpetuate that redemptive lifestyle to future generations (Proverbs 13:22; Matthew 28:19-20).
3. Estate planning must be a spiritual process before it can become a set of documents (Luke 12:31).
4. Honoring the Lord should be our primary goal in the planning process (Proverbs 3: 9-10).

5. A good steward will take advantage of tax savings and legal tax avoidance methods (Matthew 22:21).

6. A good steward will avoid building bigger barns during their life (Luke 12). Be careful to not store up what you can never use during your lifetime, only to transfer it at death to those who no longer need it.

7. Remember that people are more important than dollars. Never do anything in your planning that could put your children and grandchildren at odds with each other or cause them to have anger against God.

As you prayerfully proceed, remember that the goal of estate and gift planning is to help you maximize the resources that God has entrusted to you for greater impact to your loved ones and the charities who will continue their work here on Earth even after you are home with the Lord.