

5 QUESTIONS EVERY CHRISTIAN NON-PROFIT MUST ANSWER

by, Dr. Scott Rodin, [The Steward's Way](#), Cohort Coach

A great deal of time and resources are being invested these days in helping non-profit boards be more effective. There are a growing number of books, seminars, webinars, training programs, online resources, and assessment tools available to boards seeking to better serve the organizations they hold in trust. I am part of a consortium of experienced consultants that focus specifically on board effectiveness, and our numbers are increasing.

This is important work. Studies and anecdotal evidence continue to point to the health of boards as a leading indicator of the success and effectiveness of a non-profit organization or ministry.

For all this critical attention, I am concerned that we help boards ask the right questions. By that, I mean 'kingdom' questions. The questions we ask should be oriented around a unified passion for boards to be faithful to God's leading in pursuit of kingdom outcomes. For all our zeal for quality board governance, we must not be lured into pursuing a model for governance that is indecipherable from our non-faith-based non-profit neighbors.

That is, our board work should reflect the values of the kingdom of God just as unequivocally as the programs and outcomes of the ministries we govern.

There is a crossroads at which every board stands; a decision we make that determines everything else we do. It is this: are we 'owner-boards' or 'steward-boards'? A board's most critical task is helping the organization discern God's will and pursue it with excellence. If you agree, then the owner-board/steward-board decision is critical.

Allow me to demonstrate five ways that this distinction shapes the way we lead and serve as boards.

1. **Owner Boards seek God's blessing on their work...*Steward Boards seek to know and do God's work.***

Do you plan your work and ask God to bless it, or do you seek to know God's plan and pursue it regardless of the cost?

2. **Owner Boards add prayer to their agenda...*Steward Boards make prayer their agenda.***

Do you see prayer as a 'bookend' to your work or is it the vital, driving lifeblood for all of your board work? Do you pray for God to endorse your work or does your work depend on hearing first from God to guide you?

3. **Owner Boards focus on controlling outcomes...*Steward Boards surrender their need for control.***

Do you see your board work as a process of maintaining control of the outcomes of the ministry or do you 'plant and water' then look to God to 'bring the increase?' (1 Corinthians 3:6)

4. **Owner Boards defend and take offense...*Steward Boards repent and give grace.***

Are you defensive in the face of criticism or do you steward your role to such a degree that you can deflect praise and absorb criticism?

5. **Owner Boards seek to lead with strength and courage...*Steward Boards seek to follow the One who will lead them with humility and discernment.***

Is your focus on who you are leading or who is leading you?

I contend that we need boards that are listening intently for God's leading and then pursuing it courageously. We need boards that define success in terms of faithfulness and understand that in God's economy victory begins with surrender. We need boards that refuse to play the owner and yield the outcomes of the ministry to God while pursuing excellence in everything they do. We need

boards that are not in bondage to ownership and control. We need boards that are set free to lead. We need steward-boards, comprised of faithful stewards.

What kind of board are you?