




Digital stewardship: Towards Theology of Digital Banking

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ABSTRACT

The article explored the intersection of financial technology and Christian ethics, proposing a framework for a Theology of Digital Banking centred on digital stewardship. As banking transitions from the physical space of brick-and-mortar to invisible streams of data, the traditional theological frameworks of stewardship, ethics and the concept of success face new opportunities and challenges. In digital banking, talent is not just money; it is data, digital assets, and financial literacy. The study posited that societies must better navigate the digital economy, advocating for a human-centred digital banking system that prioritizes high-frequency trading, human flourishing and the common good over algorithmic extraction. It concludes that a robust digital stewardship requires more than technical proficiency; it demands a liturgical approach to finance that prioritizes human dignity, transparency, and the common good in an increasingly digitized world. The article recommends that zero growth and digital banking illiteracy are social wickedness to which the banking industry must respond with a public literacy campaign beyond the National Banking College and banking professionals, especially with the emergence and spread of financial technology, digital and AI banking.

Keywords: Theology of Money, Ethics, Theology of Digital Banking, Digital Stewardship, Public Theology.

INTRODUCTION

The author happened to provide an exhortation at the end of the year Thanksgiving Service of the National Banking College, Ghana, at Accra in December 2025. His reflection on some portions of the Bible (Matt 25:14-30) pointed to some unhelpful attitudes toward resources and the urgency of digital banking literacy. The implications of the exhortation, it was observed, have direct bearing on capacity building for the future of digital banking, hence the effort to initiate an interdisciplinary conversation on Digital Stewardship: Toward the Theology of Digital Banking.

In an era where financial lives are increasingly mediated by pixels rather than paper, the intersection of faith and finance has moved beyond the collection plate into the digital space. Digital stewardship is no longer just about how much people give, but how they engage with the systems that manage wealth. As citizens navigate a landscape of contactless payments, algorithmic lending, and decentralized currencies, a critical question emerges: How does digital interaction with money reflect spiritual convictions and values?

Historically, stewardship was rooted in the tangible; the tilling of soil, the counting of money, and the physical act of sharing resources within a community. Today, banking is an exercise in

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abstraction. When money becomes data, it is easy to lose sight of its moral weight and its impact on our neighbours. A Theology of Digital Banking seeks to bridge this gap, reclaiming the digital space as a domain of intentional discipleship.

To develop a theology for this frontier, people must move past viewing technology as a neutral tool. Instead, they must see the digital banking ecosystem as a space where they either practice justice or inadvertently participate in systemic greed, as indicated by Toine van den Hoogen.¹ Digital stewardship is the art of ensuring that even in a world of high-speed transactions, the financial bits and bytes of Christians remain tethered to the eternal values of the Kingdom of God. The article explores how digital wallets can be transformed into instruments of grace, ensuring that technology serves spirituality and theology.

The study is an attempt to provide answers to how the invisibility of digital money affects the spiritual discipline of stewardship and how digital banking facilitates a more global neighbourliness. Moreover, what does it mean to honour God and be my neighbour's keeper with bits and bytes? Does digital banking deepen the digital divide in a way that contradicts the Gospel? The responses to the underlying questions are pursued through a review of available literature and interviews with some selected individuals with accumulated knowledge in related areas, as the theology of digital banking remains an emerging area of study.

METHODOLOGY

The study sought to bring digital banking and the Christian public theology (integration of faith perspectives into public issues) into conversation. It evaluated digital stewardship through the lens of human dignity in a data-driven economy from the Parable of the Talents. The study used an interdisciplinary qualitative approach, integrating digital stewardship frameworks with theological inquiry. The goal is to move beyond a mere ethical critique of digital banking toward a construction of a theology of digital banking.

DISCUSSION

The Parable of the Talents

The Parable of the Talents, according to Matthew 25:14-30, provides an insightful theological framework for building capacity. In the context of a digital financial future, it shifts the focus from simply having money to the active, responsible, and ethical management of the tools and systems that define modern wealth.

In the parable, the Master entrusts his wealth to three servants before embarking on a journey. To one, he gives five talents, to another two, and to another one, each according to their ability. The Master expected more than just the return of the principal; he expected growth and increase on the day of accountability. The first two servants recognized that their Master's resources were not meant to be preserved in a vacuum, but to be deployed.

Although often the parable is read as a lesson in spiritual diligence, the parable offers a profound framework for building capacity in our rapidly evolving digital banking landscape. As banking transitions from physical currency to decentralized ledgers, AI-driven markets, and digital assets, there is a need to re-examine the contemporary concept of talent in the digital financial context. In digital banking, talents are no longer just money; they are data, connectivity, digital assets, and financial literacy.

Theology of Digital Banking

The term Theology of Digital Banking is an emerging interdisciplinary concept that explores the ethical, moral, and philosophical implications of financial technology through the lens of religious and spiritual frameworks. Digital services have been noted by Kenneth Ashigbey as the digitization of the operations of traditional banking and educational systems.² It allows customers to perform activities like deposits

¹ Toine van den Hoogen, *Public Theology and Institutional Economics: All Is Economy* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019).

² Kenneth Ashigbey is a former Chief Executive Officer of Ghana Chamber of Telecommunications and Digital Chamber

and transfers remotely over the Internet instead of visiting a physical brick-and-mortar branch. It is usually facilitated by financial technology, which is about the use of software, algorithms, and mobile applications to provide financial services. According to Kenneth Ashigbey in an interview, financial technology focuses on replacing traditional banking methods with faster and tech-driven ones.

Theology usually refers to the study of God or religious beliefs. In this context, it is about the Bible; however, the lessons transcend the Christian faith. It is more about the ultimate values and ethical motivation behind the financial technology. A theological critique of digital banking asks questions about inclusion and exclusion. Does the system help the illiterates of digital banking and the poor, or does it create a digital divide where only those with high-end smartphones can participate in the economy? Does making money invisible make us less mindful of our spending and our obligations to others? Theology of Digital Banking asks questions about what this technology does to our common humanity, our values, and our relationship with money.

Theology of Money has been emphasized in some of my earlier publications as a tool for the common good.³ Traditional banking was built on human relationships with engagement with a local banker. Digital banking, however, replaces the person with an interface. Theology of Digital Banking explores how trust is built. If a system allows a scammer to have access to life savings, where will grace and forgiveness be located? Theology of Digital Banking thus examines the shift from interpersonal trust to systemic trust. Creating a Theology of Digital Banking requires bridging ancient principles of stewardship (*oikonomia*) with the modern, intangible world of digital finance.

Divine Ownership of the Digital

In a digital context, Ritesh Ranjan has opined that money is no longer just physical coins or paper; it is data, attention, and code (Ritesh Ranjan:2024). A theology of digital banking begins with the recognition that God's sovereignty extends over the virtual just as it does over the physical. 'The earth is the Lord's and everything in it' Psalm 24:1. Divine ownership includes the servers, the fiber-optic cables, and the binary code that represents our wealth. Our devices, apps, and digital attention ultimately belong to God. Digital stewardship means managing them according to his purposes, not just the tech industry's agenda. In Haggai 2:8, the Prophet pointed out that, 'the silver is mine and the gold is mine, declares the Lord Almighty'. In a digital age, this translates to: the data is mine and the encryption is mine.

The development of financial technology can be seen as an extension of the creation mandate, according to Genesis 1:28, using human creativity to manage resources more effectively. Financial innovations like banking are genuine ways that humans have learned to better exercise dominion as God's image-bearers, even with all the spiritual and social pitfalls that come with them. Although the saver and borrower never meet, they care for each other by sharing resources in this way. Digital banking makes money frictionless, creating a theological challenge in terms of self-control and the 'love of money'. 'For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil' 1 Timothy 6:10. In digital banking, the ease of a one-click transaction can hide the spiritual weight of our choices.

Digital Stewardship as Data Integrity

In the digital realm, stewardship is not just about the amount of money, but the integrity of the systems and the protection of the vulnerable. According to Proverbs 11:1, 'the Lord detests dishonest scales, but accurate weights find favor with him.' In a digital context, this refers to transparent algorithms, fair interest rates in apps, and data privacy. Stewardship is about more than giving; it is about using all of our resources in a way that glorifies God. Ethical banking helps to ensure that our finances are managed in a way that serves the interests of others and glorifies God.

The Fear of Change

The third servant was considered on the return of the Master as 'lazy and wicked.' His failure was not that he lost the money; it was the fact that he hid it. 'I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground.' He chose safety over growth because he was afraid of the Master and the risk in the financial

³ Kwabena Opuni-Frimpong, *Public Theology in African Christianity* (Accra: SonLife Limited, 2023).

market. The Master in the parable does not expect his servants to merely guard his wealth, but to deploy it. In a digital context, refusing to engage with or understand a new financial system is equivalent to burying the talent. Therefore, zero growth as a result of refusing to engage the financial systems was considered as laziness and wickedness.

The fear of new technology (tech-phobia) can lead to financial exclusion. Although digital markets carry risks, such as the ‘hard Master’ mentioned in the parable, the biblical rebuke is for those who let fear paralyze their productivity. The faithful servants went at once and put their money to work. They engaged with the economy of their day.

In the digital age, burying talents looks like technological stagnation. It is the refusal to adapt to digital payment rails due to fear of the unknown. Holding onto legacy systems that lack interoperability is effectively burying the potential for financial inclusion. Allowing fear of cybersecurity threats to prevent the development of more secure, transparent digital identities is an effort to bury talents. The question is not if Christians will engage with the digital financial future, but how they pursue engagement in the digital space. Will they be the ones who buried the potential of technology in the soil of fear, or will they be the ones who saw the digital ‘talent’ for what it is, a gift to be multiplied for the Master’s glory? Fear is the enemy of stewardship. It must be overcome through education.

Zero Growth and Digital Banking Illiteracy

Both zero growth and digital finance illiteracy describe states of stagnation. In economics and demographics, zero growth refers to a state where there is no net increase in a specific metric, such as population or economic output. On the other hand, digital finance illiteracy is the lack of knowledge and skills required to safely and effectively use digital financial tools, as pointed out by Ritesh Ranjan.⁴ Digital illiteracy has been described by Ashigbey as the gap between having a smartphone and actually knowing how to manage money with it securely. While financial literacy is about the effort to know how interest rates and budgets work, digital finance illiteracy specifically refers to failing to understand the technology that delivers those services.

Many people view the digital financial shift with trepidation, fear of hacking, fear of loss of privacy, and fear of the unknown. However, burying financial resources in non-digital systems often leads to financial exclusion. When stakeholders fail to build digital capacity, they are not just playing it safe; they are opting out of the very tools required to trade in the modern marketplace. For the individual, this means a lack of credit history and access to low-cost remittances.

Burying potential by refusing to learn new financial systems is viewed biblically as ‘wicked and lazy’ because it wastes the opportunity for growth. To put money to work with the bankers (v.27) in the 21st century requires specific pillars of capacity building, including digital and financial literacy. Just as the stewards had to understand the markets at their times, modern stewards must understand the mechanics of digital banking. This includes, according to Ashwini Sanmath, understanding digital security, the basics of blockchain, and the ethics of data privacy.⁵ One cannot manage what he/she does not understand. Digital banking, it must be noted, relies on trust. In the parable, the stewards acted on behalf of the Master's reputation.

Curriculum for Interdisciplinary Digital Banking Literacy

An interdisciplinary curriculum that bridges Digital Banking and Theology requires looking beyond traditional boundaries. It connects the how of modern financial technology with the why of human ethics, stewardship, and the common good. The interdisciplinary curriculum ought to be structured around shared ethical frameworks, the social impact of financial technology, and the theological perspectives on wealth, the common good and justice in a digital age.⁶ The approach fosters a holistic

⁴ Ram Ranjan, “Balancing Greenwashing Risks and Forest Carbon Sequestration Benefits: A Simulation Model Linking Formal and Voluntary Carbon Markets,” *Forest Policy and Economics* 168 (2024): 103317.

⁵ Ashwini Sanmath, “Fin Tech Banking—The Revolutionized Digital Banking,” *International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development* 1, no. 1 (2018): 172–80.

⁶ Opuni-Frimpong, *Public Theology in African Christianity*.

understanding of how financial practices intersect with faith and community life. The focus is on building the capacity of professionals and non-professionals in the digital banking economy.

The third servant was accused of laziness and wickedness due to zero growth and a lack of increase. In the parable, the Master and the two other servants knew what to do with the talents. Surprisingly, the third servant who received one talent lacked basic knowledge of money. The fact that money without immediate plans should be given to the bankers was pointed out to him later on the day of reckoning, and it was too late. While his actions may not need to be justified, it poses another question about the public role of those responsible for banking education and financial literacy, like the National Banking College. How come he did not receive banking education from his internal institution or the general public?

If I may stretch the question, would National Banking College have made any significant intervention and difference with such a high level of banking illiteracy and zero growth? The focus of building capacity for a digital financial future must definitely transcend the key professional staff in the banking industry. Curriculum for financial literacy and digital banking in Ghana must have intentional interdisciplinary programmes for leaders of faith-based organizations, mechanics, market women, chieftaincy institutions, media, farmers, etc. Such intentional interdisciplinary programmes by institutions like the National Banking College will definitely have a significant impact on the emerging Digital and AI Banking economy in Ghana.

Literacy in digital banking means recognizing that digital tools such as AI, blockchain, and fintech apps are resources entrusted to us. To be a good steward is to master these tools rather than be intimidated by them. The shift seems to be moving from a consumer mindset (what can I buy?) to a stewardship mindset (how can I use this digital infrastructure to create value?). The Master praised the first two servants for trading and taking calculated risks. The variations in the levels of the talents acknowledge a digital divide. Not everyone starts with the same hardware, internet speed, and education. However, financial and banking education will definitely reduce the impact of the digital divide.

Whether it is building a digital brand or automating investments, growth is the goal of a good steward. Those who take the initiative to get knowledge will find that technology provides them with even more opportunities. Conversely, those who refuse to adapt will find that their traditional financial options shrink or become taken away by obsolescence.

In the context of a digital financial future, this represents the shift from digital literacy to digital fluency. It is an investment over observation. Banking education requires more than just watching the markets; it requires active participation in new ecosystems. Similarly, building digital capacity involves the productive risk of learning complex new systems before they become mainstream by both professional and non-professional actors in the banking sector. This highlights the critical reality of the digital divide. Not every economy or individual starts with five talents, but all men can make significant contributions with the right knowledge and information.

Building Capacity for the Future

The Master gave to each servant according to his ability. This is a crucial principle for the digital economy. Tony Oteng Gyasi has opined that the market rewards those who have developed the technical and cognitive capacity to handle its tools. “You cannot manage five digital talents if you only have the capacity for one. Building capacity means continuous learning, understanding how digital ledgers work, how to navigate online security, and how to use financial apps. Capacity determines the level of resources that an individual can effectively manage.”⁷

Building capacity for the future of digital banking and any form of development, according to Kwasi Kwafu Adarkwa, is the strategic planning process to strengthen an institution's infrastructure, skills, and culture to thrive in an increasingly automated and customer-centric financial landscape.⁸ It is

⁷ Tony Oteng Gyasi is a former President of the Association of Ghana Industries, Council Member of the Ghana Stock Exchange and Chairman of the Governing Council of the University of Ghana Legon.

⁸ Kwasi Kwafu Adarkwa is a Planning Professor and former Vice-Chancellor of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi.

less about buying the latest software and more about ensuring that the organization has the enduring ability to adapt to constant technological changes.

In the past, a bank's capacity was measured by how many physical branches it had or how much cash it had. Today, capacity seems to be measured by agility. If a new competitor launches a better way to send money, a high-capacity bank should build and launch a similar feature in weeks, not years. Capacity building is about moving from being a vessel for money to being a technology company with a banking license.

Capacity building requires financial literacy to distinguish between reckless gambling and wise digital investment. It means creating secure and transparent systems, such as smart contracts or verified digital IDs that reflect the 'good and faithful' nature of the Kingdom of God. The Master praised the stewards who took risks. Building capacity for a digital future requires a willingness to experiment with new models of micro-finance, decentralized banking, and digital currencies that can reach the least of these in ways traditional banks never could. It is not about giving everyone a five-talent workload. It is more about ensuring that the one-talent user has the infrastructure to grow. Digital financial systems, from the viewpoint of Kenneth Ashigbey, must be designed to meet users where they are, whether that is a smartphone in a high-tech hub or a basic SMS-based payment system in a challenging location.

Capacity building is a personal journey. Stewards are not judged against someone else's five-talent portfolio, but against what they do with their specific one-talent starting point. It calls for inclusive systems that help those with one talent increase their ability so they can eventually handle more. As digital systems become more transparent, it implies that our ethical capacity must grow alongside our technical capacity.

Success in the parable leads to greater responsibility. 'I will put you in charge of many things.' In the digital economy, those who prove they can manage small digital assets with integrity are the ones who build the social capital and trust needed to lead larger networks. Just as the servants did not own the talents, we must realize that digital resources, i.e. access to markets, information, and capital, are entrusted to us to be used for a greater purpose. Capacity building starts with a mindset of responsibility.

Life Opportunities have Expiring Dates

Opportunities in life, be they in resources, careers, relationships, or personal growth, are not permanent. Unlike a physical product with a stamped date, these expiration dates are often invisible, making it easy to procrastinate until the window of opportunity has closed. Life opportunities are like sunrises. If you wait too long, you miss them.

Even though the servants knew that their Master would return someday, they were not given the specifics about his return. The facts, however, remain that the servants were not going to keep the talents forever. The talents in their possession, like all other life opportunities, had expiring dates. The day of reckoning came with the return of the Master. The Master rewards the courage to grow and the wisdom to use whatever has been made available before the day of reckoning. The digital financial future is not about chasing every tech trend; it is about the faithful management of the offered opportunity.

The Shift from Transaction to Relationship

The digitization of finance often threatens to depersonalize our neighbours, turning human needs into data points and credit scores. However, a robust Theology of Digital Banking reclaims these tools to foster radical transparency and equitable access. It challenges us to ensure that the speed of fiber-optic commerce does not outrun our commitment to justice and the protection of the vulnerable.

Ultimately, the goal of digital stewardship is to ensure that our virtual ledgers reflect our spiritual and moral values. As we navigate this algorithmic age, our Theology of Banking serves as a moral compass, reminding us that every click, transfer, and investment is an opportunity to participate in the restoration of the world. Beneficiaries are not just users of a system; they are stewards of a digital commons that must be cultivated with wisdom, equity, and care. The shift towards a Theology of Digital Banking, therefore, requires a look past the user interface and see the human soul behind the screen.

Digital stewardship is the active choice to ensure that technology serves humanity, rather than enslaving it to debt and depersonalization. The temptation to see digital money as spiritually

insignificant must be rejected. Instead, holistic stewardship must be embraced. It is the realization that every tap of a smartphone is an opportunity to participate in the Kingdom of God by practicing honesty, generosity, integrity, and equity. Digital ledgers must reflect a commitment to the common good. The algorithms should be infused with mercy. Stewardship must be marked by the realization that while the platforms may change, the call remains the same: ‘to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God’ (Micah 6:8), even in the digital cloud. Theology of Digital Banking must keep asking the question: what does it mean to honour God and be my neighbour’s keeper with bits and bytes?

CONCLUSION

A Call to Digital Stewardship

A call to digital stewardship is a directive and moral appeal for individuals and organizations to take active responsibility for the digital assets they create, manage, and consume. Although stewardship traditionally refers to the careful management of natural resources, in the digital age, it shifts the focus to the longevity, ethics, and sustainability of data and digital infrastructure. A call to digital stewardship suggests that simply using technology is no longer enough. Instead, people must be stewards, custodians who ensure digital resources remain healthy, pay attention to human dignity, integrity and accessible for the future.

The Parable of the Talents teaches that passivity is the only true failure. As people look to a future of programmable money and digital assets, they are called to be ‘good and faithful servants’ of the available technological tools. Building capacity is not an optional upgrade; it is a fundamental requirement of stewardship. The talents of the digital economy must be appreciated and put to work for the common good. When capacities are built, workers trained in AI, securing networks, and education offered to the public, the result isn't just individual profit. It is a robust, resilient economy that serves the many rather than the few. Eventually, it glorifies God and serves the common good.

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