

# Stewardship

Inspiring a deeper understanding of true giving

February 2024

**K**ing David was truly remarkable in the depth of his devotion to God, but no less remarkable was the distance he was able to fall away from God at times. At one point fairly late in his reign, David ordered a census to be taken of the population of his kingdom. For reasons that are not clear from the Scriptures, this census was a sin against God.

The Bible does not even hint at why this act aroused God's anger, but we may assume that the wrongness of the act was so obvious at the time that the biblical author did not feel that he needed to explain it.

It was so clearly wrong that even Joab, the commander-in-chief of David's army, strongly advised the king not to do it, but David ordered it done anyway. Soon thereafter, a plague, which was understood to be God's punishment for David's sin, killed 70,000 men in Israel in three days. The plague ended before Jerusalem itself was touched by it, and David was deeply repentant of his sin.

## David's Sacrifice

The prophet Gad came to David with God's instruction. David was to offer a sacrifice at the place where the angel of death stopped. That spot happened to be the farm of a Jebusite named Araunah.

Araunah was working at his threshing floor harvesting grain when David approached and asked to purchase the threshing floor to build an altar unto the Lord. Araunah felt that it would be a great honor to serve the king and of-

fered to give David not only the threshing floor for the location, but also his oxen for the sacrificial animals and the threshing sleds and ox yoke for the firewood.

But David replied, "No, but I will buy it from you for a price; I will not



offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God which cost me nothing."

## The gift must cost the giver

II Samuel 24:18-25 speaks loudly to us of honoring God. David could have accepted Araunah's generous offer but in so doing he would have dishonored God and himself. The kingdom of God

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*We often forget to thank God and show recognition to the source of our blessings.*

*That is why Old Testament people were required to return the first and best portion of all they gained to God. It was not theirs to keep; it belonged to God.*



## Deacon Dave on stewardship



*Every person receives from God some special ability or quality that can be used to build the church, so it may become more effective in its mission to reach and transform the world.*

*If you have committed yourself to Jesus Christ, then God has committed to your care some special gift or gifts: an ability, a talent or a quality of personality that God expects you to use in service of the kingdom.*

The Deuteronomic Law makes it abundantly clear that the poor and those in need will always be with us and that we are to open our hearts and hands to them in generosity.

St. Paul goes a step beyond this legalistic command and cautions us that our giving must not be with reluctance or under a feeling of compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. In the face of need, wherever it may exist, we, as God's friends are to be generous!


### Which was the most generous?

Once, as Jesus sat in the Temple courtyard, He observed the people dropping their money into the Treasury. Large sums were deposited by the wealthy in their support of the Temple and the needy. However, it was the gift of two small coins by a widow that gladdened the Lord's heart. Why? The rich gave out of their abundance of resources, but the widow gave from her poverty. She gave all that she had. Which, then was most generous?

### Can we doubt our abundance?

Jesus reminds us that much is required from those to whom much is given, and that even more should be expected from those to whom much more is given. Can we American Christians, whether we consider ourselves rich or

poor, doubt our abundance when compared with the rest of God's world and to most of God's children?

Are we not called upon to be cheerful givers, large or small, as we are able? As God's friends, we are to be generous. 

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## LIVE TO GIVE ... WHAT?

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Waiting for a red light to turn green, my eye caught some bold graffiti on a corner telephone pole. "I live 2 give," was the large black spray-painted message.

"Well, that's different," I thought to myself. In fact, it struck me as a rather noble sentiment ... at first. But then, the incongruity of a generous thought delivered by means of a careless defacing of property became apparent.

### What makes a gift a real gift?

I wondered what kinds of gifts does this person "live to give?" And what types of "gifts" are unwelcome ones ... graffiti? thoughtlessness? cheap attention getters? What makes a gift a real gift?

How about quality control! And before judging another, how about my own kind of gifts and my own quality control? Who sets my standard?

Because God gives first to you and to me, giving should be a response to God's loving gifts. God's gifts set the standard! My gifts cannot be on a par with God's gifts to me, but my gifts, large or small, can be my way of showing love and glorifying God. With the best of intentions, I should give my best, knowing that God's grace will overcome my inadequacy. Hopefully, I, too, "can live 2 give," but live to give my best to God and others! 

## Letters to the Editor



### Dear Editor:

Thank you for your thought-provoking piece in the December 2012 issue of *Stewardship* about the two-year-old who offered the first bite of his pear to daddy.

My first thought is that this child had absolutely no thought of generosity. Two-year-olds don't think that way by nature (Actually, neither do adults!). Rather, he gave up the first bite, not the second, and not the core ... really, he gave up the whole pear, trusting he would get most of it back ... and out of self-interest and dependency.

This reminds me of another story about little Johnny who was visiting Mrs. Jenkins with his mother. Mrs. Jenkins gave Johnny an orange. Bewildered, Johnny just stood there silently holding the big orange in his tiny little hands. His mother, wishing to teach him gratitude, bent over and whispered in his ear, "What do you say, Johnny?" Johnny finally looked up directly at Mrs. Jenkins and said, "Peel it!"

How was Johnny supposed to appreciate the orange, much less say "thanks," if his tiny mouth with newly formed teeth and his tender little fingers could not get into it? He had to give it back for preparation.

Infants and toddlers need their pears progressively peeled, cut up, or at least "started" in order to have access to the sweetness and nourishment. The father and author who was offered back the first bite understands that his son

was not so much kind and generous, as needful and dependent on daddy to prepare the snack for eating.

We waste, misuse and destroy time, talent and treasure when we presume to have unilaterally earned and owned and managed them. How we make a mess of ourselves when we try to bite into the whole, big thing without regard to our own juvenile helplessness and dependency.

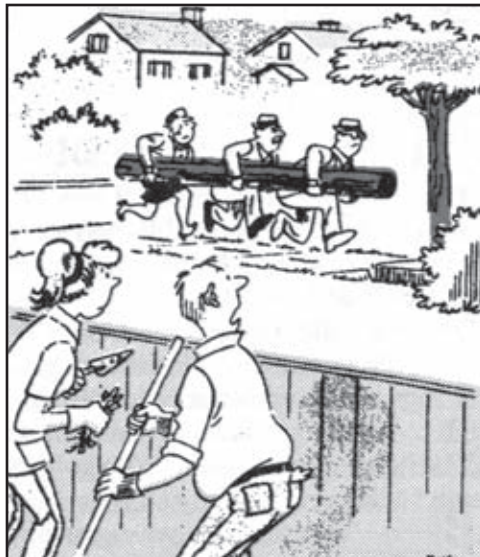
How pleased is our Father when we offer it all back to him, for him to bless it and make it palatable.

As we view tithes and offerings as beneficial to the giver, our stewardship indeed becomes a new way of life.

God bless you and your ministry!

L. Turner

*Stewardship is for every day and not just for February. Come to know that stewardship is not a yearly pledge of money that buys the services of your church for you and your family, but, rather, an offertory to God of your time, talent, and treasure, that by the grace of God, builds up the church and bears witness to the Gospel.*



"I told them they'd have trouble with another parish fund drive!"



On that day Gad went to David and said to him, "Go up and build an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite."

2 Samuel 24: 18



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### King David was truly...

requires sacrificial devotion, and that can only be so when the gift costs the giver.

David knew that the sacrifice would have far less value and meaning if he offered to God that which belonged to another. It was meaningful only if it cost him. David knew something that Christians often overlook ... that stewardship, which is another name for honoring God, is not an optional part of our faith, but an integral element of it. In fact, without stewardship, the rest of our Christian witness is devalued, just as David's sacrifice would have been had he not paid for it. 