

Stewardship

I figure I am pretty much the average man; I've been through the typical headaches on the job, the sorrows and the joys of raising five children, paying my bills and generally dealing with the ups and downs life brings. So when I came to consider the question of what stewardship really means, all I had to draw on was my own experiences and those of friends. As I thought about it, here's what went through my mind: First off, the word "stewardship" bothered me. It wasn't exactly part of my daily vocabulary! But then I realized that there are some words which, through generations of use, have come to express a whole set of intertwined truths. I saw that you and I ... all of us ... take care of things either wisely or badly. There are ruined bodies or well-kept homes, dull knives or good friends, polluted streams or secure, well-loved children.

You and I ... all of us ... take care of things either wisely or badly. In the final analysis, we use our time or our abilities or the result of these ... our money ... responsibly or selfishly, thoughtfully or carelessly.

But I've known people who thought, or acted, or said, "I'm a self-made man!" Others showed me, however, that there's no such thing. Where did these priceless gifts of time and ability come from?

A Christian can only answer in humility, "From God."

Showing our gratitude

Further, there can be only one logical reaction for the honest human: Grati-



tude for all God has given us of his free will and love, undeserving as we are.

I wrestled for some time over this and what one's response could be. The General Thanksgiving helped. So did the Sacraments and the Bible. Gradually, it became clearer that we can try to use God's gifts in a way that shows our gratefulness. We can think about how we use our time and abilities and our money.

The New Testament is crammed with examples that Jesus gave about such uses. What else really can we give but the application of these to serve God and our fellow humans? And the church in its mission has shown us many concrete and practical ways of applying our time and talents to these goals.

The proper proportion

Money is perhaps the stickiest aspect

A sense of stewardship tells us we must take time to do God's work on earth. When you compare what you have contributed in time, do not compare it to what your fellow church member has done, Compare what you have done to what God has done for you!



No Pockets for Our Stuff!

It is a fact that we all came into this world, at birth, with nothing. No pockets or handbags to carry our stuff. All that we have from birth to death has been a gift from God. It is also fact that when we leave this earth, we will take nothing with us. There are no pockets or handbags with our spiritual eternal life.



Stewardship is how we manage what God has given us in this life. Stewardship is not a choice that we make. As recipients of God's gifts, we become stewards. The choice we have is to choose to be "good stewards" or "poor stewards." What is your choice?

If we choose to be good stewards, we will realize that all we have comes from God. We will manage our gifts as taught by Jesus. Thus, we move from being good stewards to being good Christian stewards. Stewardship will become a way of life rather than an uneasy subject.

If we choose to do nothing about God's gifts, or if we choose to regard them as our own, we will be unfaithful stewards. Our god will become our material possessions and we may discover a life that reflects greed and selfcenteredness.

Choose today! 

A talent is a talent until it is used to serve God. At that point it becomes a gift of ultimate value, multiplying every time we use it. In man's eyes it may seem insignificant, in God's eyes, you are a superstar.



Jim Newly asked old Sam Elder that frequent question, "How much should I give the church?"

Old Sam answered, "Jim, you are a thinking and a caring person. I will advise you differently than I would someone who must be given rules and limits."


"Don't expect too much from me," Jim answered. "I am not in the comfortable money bracket."

"I can understand that. I want to give you a plan that will make you feel good about your giving," Sam counseled. "I want you to feel good enough about your giving so you would not be embarrassed if they posted the amount on the front door of the church."

"I'm not ready for that much publicity," Jim protested.

"Relax! Your giving is a private covenant between you and your Lord. Only you know your resources. If you live modestly, you should easily manage to give a percentage of income regularly.

Start by giving your Lord his portion first.

Make that a habit. Never become a resentful giver, always thinking of the pleasures you could afford if only God didn't need money now," said Old Sam. "Exult in your giving. What a privilege it is to contribute to bringing God's Kingdom upon this earth." 

The Good Steward

Winter is a time for the garden to be at rest. Beneath the blanket of snow that covers gardens in many parts of America, plants are taking a well deserved rest. Gardeners also have a chance to take a break from their labors. Maybe it is mowing the grass that you really appreciate not having to do, because it seems more like work than gardening.

Life is really about finding a balance between all the competitive interests in our lives. Would a life filled only with pleasure feel rewarding?

People sometimes feel the same way about their church and volunteer activities as they do about their winter gardens. They appreciate a break from

“always having to do” in order to support the activities of the church. After years of service, some folks will say “I’m done. Let someone else carry the burden.”

Yes, we all need a break sometimes, but what would God have us to do? Are you now in the mode of only “being served” versus “serving” in your church?

We all have talents and abilities that can contribute to building the Kingdom of God here on earth. So while the garden sleeps, doesn’t that mean you have a few extra hours each month to serve your church? ☩



Steward of the Month

Fab Five Plus!

Submitted by: Cindy, Vermillion, SD

As the sun rises ready for a new day, the halls of the church are buzzing each and every Friday morning. A dedicated group that, I believe, began with only 5 people, prepare the food pantry for the food that will soon be brought in, while another dedicated group travels to the local Walmart and pick up the food that they can no longer use. This group starts with the first ones arriving at a little past 6:00 a.m. Remember ... they are volunteers.

They have endured cold, snowy weather that good old South Dakota brings. They all have their jobs and are super organized. They do this with all of their heart, helping the clientele that may be using the food pantry in the future. Many other volunteers are needed to make this mission a reality. They have put in their own time behind the scenes to help out others in the Clay County area.

Hats off to everyone who helps in the Food Pantry. Their numbers are many and they should be thanked. When asked, can you do it? They gladly stepped up and said, “YES we can!” and they do! ☩

It's tough to include a real pledge of time or money in your New Year's resolutions. Especially when you realize how you will feel if you do not follow through on it. But this is a new year, 2013. Shouldn't it be the cause of each one of us that we will resolve to give our time, and our money, and become a part of the dedicated people of the new year?



“As the sun rises ready for a new day, the halls of the church are buzzing each and every Friday morning.”

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Average man...

of this. It was for me, but again, friends showed me that this too can be used wisely or foolishly for God or just for me.

What would be wise here? I have come to believe deeply that a portion of my money, calculated with prayer and great care, should be returned to God for his work. Some of this would be through the church and some through worthwhile community or national charities.

I believe each individual has to determine their own fair share or proper proportion. But he or she can try to be honest with God by setting a goal of a certain percent of their income and then work towards it in steps.

I found that this wasn't easy, but what is that's worthwhile? And God has a way of helping and blessing those who make such a serious and responsible commitment! There are various standards that men and women through the ages have used in this. Jacob said (in Genesis 28:22), "Of all that thou givest me, I will give the tenth to thee." Others think of a Modern Tithe of 5% of one's net income to the church and 5% to charity.

I'm certain of one thing. The exact figures are not the central issue. No, stewardship is returning in love a thoughtful share of our God-given time, ability and money. ☩

