

Stewardship

Inspiring a deeper understanding of true giving

April 2024

May I speak of my money? I own no money, nor do you, simply because God insists that all things ... even money ... belong to him. In God's Word we read, "The silver is mine and the gold is mine," declares the Lord Almighty (Haggai 2: 8)."

This claim of God presents a confusing situation at first glance. After all, I do have money in my possession. I speak of it as mine. The very practical question arises, "Is the money I have God's or mine?"

Actually, there is no confusion. Scripture tells me God owns all things. God places material things in my possession. These are not gifts. Rather God entrusts what is his to my care to use in his service. It follows then that I am not the owner but a manager or steward of God's property.

God entrusts his property

Yet, I am not dismayed that I am deprived of ownership. Can I be deprived of something I never owned? Instead, I am honored that God entrusts his property to my keeping, that God deigns to make me a steward of what is his; that he depends on me to administer it honestly.

Honest administration immediately obligates me to place all that God has entrusted to me to his service. But this doesn't mean I must give every cent to the church. God has entrusted to me a body, soul and mind ... a wife and children, similarly endowed. God has given me the responsibility of caring for them. Therefore, when I take a portion

of the money God has entrusted to me to provide food, clothing, shelter, education, recreation and other necessities of life and health for these, then I am a steward who is fulfilling his trust.

Of course, I provide for these things in proper portion. I would hardly be a good steward if I spent a large sum on



some luxury while a basic need was left un-met. "In proper proportion" is a primary rule in my administration.

In proper proportion

"In proper proportion" is the rule that also applies when I prepare to make my offering to God and through the church. As the owner of all things, God

The joy of sacrificial giving is love. In spite of trials, love emerges as the factor in an individual's happiness.






A Highway Mishap!

Jason was riding alone in his car on a two-lane highway when all the lights on his dashboard went on and the car's engine failed. He was no longer able to steer the car, and the traffic around him was moving at least as fast as the speed limit. Jason knew that he had to get his car over to the side of the road to be out of harm's way.

Within twenty seconds of his car stalling, four football players dressed in uniforms and on their way to a football scrimmage stopped behind Jason and asked if they could help. They and their sturdy Ford pushed the disabled Toyota over to the side of the road. Like angels of mercy, they disappeared before Jason could even offer them something for their kindness: one of them simply said, "I hope your day gets better!"

Little did they know that they had made Jason's day better: by stopping to help him in his need, they helped Jason better understand the power of giving to others. Though this event happened five years ago, Jason loves telling the story even today, as an example of how God rescued him on the road.

Giving that does not expect or demand anything in return is an example of Jesus' loving spirit in action. Small sacrifices, such as being delayed or inconvenienced a few minutes in order to assist others, do reap harvests of a hundred, or sixty, or thirty-fold love. More than "random" acts of kindness, our Jesus-inspired tradition calls us to make our *stewardship of time* a regular component of each day and week. Let your response and attitude be gratitude. 

All churches fall short of what they could be and do because some of their members don't seem to feel the reality of the claim of God on their time through his church. So if you've got an hour to kill some day soon, either do nothing in the presence and consciousness of God, or do something for his sake, and the sake of another.



The Good Steward

Several years ago, Thomas Cannon, an african-american postal worker, and his wife lived in virtual poverty in a Richmond, VA. slum, not because they had to, but because they chose to. He was making \$15,000 a year.


But for the previous seven years he had given away some \$26,000, mostly in \$1,000 parcels. He endowed a \$1,000 annual scholarship at the Hampton Institute. And much more.

A Responsibility To Share

To many Americans, wealth is the house on the hill, overlooking the town. But to many wealthy Americans, wealth means a responsibility to share. Traces of this large-scale giving are all over America.

For example, it is difficult to imagine what Emory University's medical center in Atlanta would be without the more than \$100 million contributed by Coca-Cola magnate, Robert W Woodruff.

Each One Wants To Give

The likes of the Mellons, the Carnegies, the Rockefellers are called philanthropists. Their bequests to society are numerous. But what of the postal worker who lived in the slums and endowed a \$1,000 scholarship? He is among a large group of ordinary Americans, many anonymous, simply known as givers. 



Don't shudder when someone says you have no talents, for everyone of us have been given talents by God, which are to be used partially in God's specific work. It does not take a great deal of talent to visit an elderly person, but only the will to do so. We must make the decision to invest our talents in the services of Christ.

Letters to the Editor



Dear Editor,

In my own life, it is easy to let my heart be troubled. When my heart is troubled, however, I know that I have to get back to God in extended prayer and meditation.

Managing God's time (not mine!) each day is difficult unless I spend my hour in prayer and meditation. Being the good stewards)is so easy with the Lord. Without the Lord I botch everything up because when I do it, my self (ego, flesh) gets in the way.

Stewarding God's time in my life involves these questions:

- Am I giving sacrificially of my time and talents to the church and to others?
- How many of my free hours are spent each week doing things which serve or entertain myself?
- Am I using all my talents in ways which are God-pleasing?
- Do I believe that God will bless me with adequate time to do everything expected if I give generously of my time and talents to others?

Trouble doesn't just happen. A troubled heart is often caused by a faithless spirit and selfish person. What then do I give to God? How many hours do I give to my church weekly? How many hours do I give to Christian service activities outside the church each week?



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requests offerings in many instances. As God's steward, can I disobey?

Yet, I do not bring my offering because of a command from God. Would a command be necessary? When I think of the tremendous blessings God has deluged upon me ... blessings that serve me now and that will endure forever ... could I possibly deny him an offering? Could my offering be only a pittance?

Motivated by love and gratitude, I first separate his portion whenever I receive income. I make that portion of a size that will give adequate evidence of my love and gratitude. This separated portion I then dedicate to God's specific service and administer it in a way that he would have me do.

With this done, the remainder, understand, is still devoted to his service. I use

that remainder, as God would wish, to provide for the needs of my life and for the needs of those he has committed to my care. In God's name and to his service is my guiding principle.

So, as a steward of money, I recognize that God owns all things. I recognize that I am his manager of what he places in my charge. To be a good and faithful steward, that is my aim. ☩

