

Stewardship

Inspiring a deeper understanding of true giving

August 2024

My wife and I own a cottage on a small piece of land near a lake. We and the bank own it, since there is a mortgage. But ultimately, it is all the Lord's.

We hold it as temporary stewards. It is a great thing to have use of the land during our stay on this earth. All things belong to the Lord, and yet God freely gives them to us for our use.

The recognition of the extent to which we are blessed by God materially, mentally and spiritually should lead first to gratitude and then to generosity.

There is something missing in our makeup if we can look at all we have to enjoy and not be moved by some desire to express our thanks. And a natural expression of our gratitude is responsible generosity.

Eskimos build a monument

Some years ago, Marie Perry Stafford, the daughter of the famed Admiral Perry, went to Greenland to arrange for the erection of a monument to her father. She began by going to the governor and asking his permission to buy materials and hire laborers. The governor said, "Mrs. Stafford, you don't seem to understand. It is not a matter of getting permission. When the news gets out you are here and wish to erect a monument to your father, Eskimos will come from all over Greenland to make contributions and do the work. They have not forgotten the great friend who

did so much for them. Their undying gratitude will build your monument!" And it did.



Stewardship is not optional

Gratitude for all that comes from God's hand should lead to generous giving. The fact is, we can decide to accept or reject Christ, but once we have decided to accept him, stewardship is no longer optional. We may be a good steward or a poor steward, but once

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Shout from the rooftops that work is a gift from God! It makes no sense to classify people differently, according to their occupation, as if some jobs were nobler than others.





What does Awareness Mean?

There is a story about a pilgrim who scales a tall mountain in the hope of finding a wise man who lives on its peak. The seeker is asking for a single word. The guru responds, "Awareness."


"Yes, but what does that mean?" the pilgrim asks.

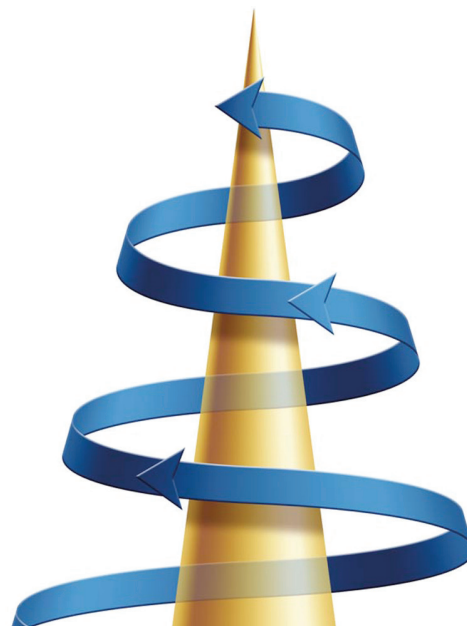
And the guru replies, "Awareness means Awareness."

Are the majority of Christians in the world today really aware of the simple and sometimes difficult needs of others as Jesus had been?

Opportunities to serve are all around us. Small gestures of kindness, like walking home after school with someone who seems lonely, shows that they are aware.

There are our churches, where volunteers can commit to being a disciple of Christ by willingly giving of their *time*.

As Ernest Crosby said, "No one could show me where my soul might be; I searched for God, and God eluded me; I served my neighbor, and I found all three." 



Giving is not only a practical matter making possible the operation of a church, but is also a symbolic act of offering ourselves and all we have to the Father. And the symbolic act is really the more important of the two. Everywhere in the Gospel, Jesus emphasizes the motivation of a person.



Through the Stained Glass...


In 1 Corinthians:16 Paul talks about giving of our material possessions to God:

Now the matter about the money to be raised to help God's people in Judea: you must do what I told the churches in Galatia to do. On the first day of every week each of you must put aside some money, in proportion to what he has earned, and save it up, so there will be no need to collect money when I come.

“On the first day of the week” means that giving is a regular, planned activity, and not a “when I get around to it” function.

“Let everyone” means that each person as an individual has a particular responsibility to give. Giving to God is not a responsibility that can be shifted to someone else.

“According to his financial prosperity.” Paul does not state the exact amount we are to give because each can give according to his prosperity. The more the prosperity, the greater the amount given.

To sum up, Paul's stewardship theology seems to be: Give at a regular interval from a responsible position with a grateful heart and in proportion to what you have received. 

Using Your Talents

Here's a switch: my sister thanked me for a gift that she had given me a few years earlier. She was grateful that I was using it and enjoying it.

Truthfully, I hadn't given much thought to how it would make her feel when I used her gift to me. I just knew that her gift was exactly what I needed and wanted. On that day, I realized that every time we use a gift, it's like a big warm “thank you” to the giver.

The Lord has given each of us special gifts. Whether you have a talent for music, an ability to make others feel welcome, a knack for drawing ... whatever it is, you have a gift from the Lord. Of course, these gifts don't come in pretty packages with colorful bows. Sometimes we have to find our gifts. The best place to look is in your own heart. What do you really love to do? When do others commend your talents? The answers to these questions are your gifts from the Lord.

Appreciate blessings

How appreciated it makes the Lord feel when we use God's gifts to make this world a little better! Wherever and

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Jesus calls us as his disciples to a new way of life, the Christian way of life. He calls us individually by name. Each one of us ... clergy, layperson; married, single, adult, child ... has a personal vocation.

God intends each one of us to play a unique role in carrying out the divine plan. The challenge then is to understand our role, our vocation, and to respond generously to this call from God. Christian vocation entails the practice of stewardship. In addition, Christ calls each of us to be stewards of our personal vocations, which we receive from God.



Giving should reflect our gratitude

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My wife and I own...

we have become a Christian, we are a steward. We have been entrusted with the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are stewards of that. We have been entrusted with material things. We are stewards of those.

Giving should reflect our gratitude


It is no secret that one form of stewardship has to do with how much we give to our church. Someone has called the sermon preached on Pledge Sunday the “Sermon on the Amount.” And a magazine article a few years back compared pastors to newspaper editors. It pointed out that “editors worry about their advertisers, and pastors worry about their contributors.” The article suggested that Pledge Sunday should be called “Worry Sunday.”

I am also sensitive to the charge we sometimes hear that the church is always asking for money. But to tell the truth, I usually hear that complaint from people who don’t give the church any!

Naturally, that which we give to the church and to others should reflect our

gratitude to God for letting us enjoy the earth and its fullness.

In considering how much we give, two questions are helpful: (1) Is this a responsible use of that which God has given me to care for and to use? (2) Am I in any way acting as though all I have is mine, and no one, not even God, has any claim on it?

Stewardship means responsible use of that which we hold in trust from God, that which he has loaned for our blessing and enrichment while on this earth. 

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Using Your Talents...

whenever we volunteer our talents, we are essentially thanking the Lord for such wonderful gifts. We are showing God that we appreciate our blessings. Find a way to use your gifts at church and in the community. The rewards will be far more than you ever expected.



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