

Stewardship

Misleading Perceptions

There is an old joke about a really stingy fellow who visits the Empire State building for the first time. As he stands on one of the upper floors, he notices a quarter lying on the sidewalk below. Never being one to miss an opportunity to pick up free money, the man races down flight after flight of stairs, running as hard as he can, determined to get to the quarter before someone else picks it up. With his heart pounding and chest burning, he bursts through the doors onto the sidewalk. There, to his shock and disappointment, he discovers that what he had seen was not a quarter after all. It was a trashcan lid.

This is the power of perspective. We think something is true. We make decisions based on our perception. Then we find out we were mistaken. It wasn't what we thought at all. It was a trashcan lid.

The perspective of wealth

There are those who organize their priorities and values around the perspective of wealth. Wealth and worldly goods are gifts of God. They lie at our disposal like instruments that can be well used by those who know how.

God has given us reason, freedom and responsibility, as well as goods, wealth and property. Stewardship does not necessarily mean renouncing wealth; it does mean responsibly using that which God has entrusted to us.

Talents of All Kinds

There are hundreds of talents, small abilities that, if invested out of love for our Lord, would return dividends of countless benefit.



Do you like to read? Doesn't sound like much does it? Have you ever thought of investing that talent and an hour a week to tutor someone who is illiterate?

Can you cook? We don't mean fancy, but just good nutritious meals? Not everyone has this talent. Our stomachs will testify to that. Do you know there are shut-ins in most parishes who would love to have a home cooked meal once a week?

Do you have \$100 extra in some savings account that you have no use for? Doesn't sound like much, does it? Do you realize how many college students would be so grateful for \$100 to help buy their books? You would be investing in a future. Who could measure the return?



It is not wise to think that giving money to the church satisfies our obligation to God. God wants us first! God wants our hearts to show our love toward him. God knows that when we have truly connected, he will have the fruits of our minds and hands to serve the Kingdom.



Pastor John's musing...



Our stewardship is based on thanksgiving. We give of our time, talent and treasure out of gratitude for all the blessings and gifts God showers on us, regardless of the needs of those we serve.

Charlie Dickson had a question. “Why is it that you stewardship fellows claim that stewardship is a lot more than money, then you end up asking for it?”


“Charlie,” I told him, “There’s nothing wrong with doing our job. Remember that Christ talked about money a lot. There is *Caesar’s Coin*, *Parable of the Three Stewards*, the *Unfaithful Steward*, *Parable of the Vineyard*, and the story of the *Widow’s Mite*, just to mention a few.”

“Maybe so ...,” said Charlie, “But I don’t rightly know why he did it.”

“Same reason we talk about money today,” I answered. “Everyone is acquainted with money, even you, Charlie.”

“With me, it’s just a passing acquaintance,” Charlie mourned.

So I explained that in his early days, Christ knew from his experience as a carpenter just how much rugged labor a Talent coin would buy. So when we try to illustrate the fine art of Christian giving, one way we can do it is by using the giving of money as an example.

“You see Charlie...,” I concluded, “Money is our easiest language. When you become a good steward of your wealth, then you can advance to spiritual treasures.” 

Stewardship Questions

What is stewardship?

A steward is one who takes care of the property of another. Christian stewardship is that which follows Christ’s example and motive as the supreme steward. His example was to put himself ... his life and gifts ... at the complete disposal of his heavenly father. His motive was love, love for his father, and love for us, his brothers and sisters.


What about people?

Stewardship includes a concern for all persons, the elderly, the handicapped, children and the poor. Christ told us our eternal future would be determined by our treatment of those in want (Matthew 25).

What about community work?

Stewardship includes joining and working with civic groups, service clubs and youth groups to better the condition of life for all.

Do I have to join anything?

The servant will be generous enough to say yes, and wise enough to know when to say no, taking family needs into consideration. 




“I would like to begin the budget report by saying that the person who wrote ‘Pennies from Heaven,’ created a mental misconception of monstrous proportions.”

Our World ...and welcome to it!



The Yellowstone Environmental Stewardship (YES!) Initiative is a multi-year action plan to help Yellowstone National Park further reduce its ecological footprint, increase operational efficiency, and better preserve park resources for future generations.

Yellowstone National Park has set ambitious environmental sustainability goals for its operations. They complement and build upon prior stewardship successes in Yellowstone and give employees, visitors, partners, corporations and foundations an opportunity to help serve the goals of making Yellowstone's operations more sustainable, and of ensuring Yellowstone's place as a model for environmental stewardship. The YES! projects cover six key areas: Energy, transportation, water conservation, waste reduction, green purchasing, and leadership and education. Yellowstone aims to achieve the following by the 100th birthday of the National Park Service:

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30%
- Reduce electricity consumption by 15%
- Reduce fossil fuel consumption by 18%
- Reduce water consumption by 15%
- Divert 100% of solid waste from landfills. 



When you think about your church offering, do you think in terms of "how much is the church budget?," whether "they spend it wisely?," or "how much can I afford to give?"

Or, do you think in terms of how many blessings the Lord has showered on your life and the privilege of saying, "thank you" through your financial response to the church's work.



Is the sole role of your church to serve you, or are you supposed to provide service to your church? The Bible has several answers to this question. Matthew 20:26-28 says, “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many.” And in John 12:26 we read, “Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.”

Jesus served us

The lesson is quite clear that Jesus served us by dying on the cross for us and he asks us to serve others in return. We are to live a life of serving because we have been served by the Chief Servant. Service done at your church, in the community and in the world for the benefit of all of God’s creatures and creation is part of our total stewardship of life. The use of talents, gifts and skills for the well being of others is a habit that leads to spiritual maturity.

The church serves you

Your church serves you through its worship services and the many programs it provides for you and you in return are expected to reciprocate by participating in the operation of the church. George Barna writes in his book *“The Habits of Highly Effective Churches”* that “Highly effective churches agree that ministry is not the domain of spectators; it must be populated by activists. Rather than allow people to simply come, watch and give money at ministry events, great churches make it clear that you cannot be part of the real church unless you get involved.”

We serve the church

Churches have a myriad of opportunities for involvement. There is something for everyone. There is a job for everyone for we all have God given gifts (Romans 12:6-8) that can be put to work. George Barna commented that “To be a part of church, you must be involved for then there is no uncertainty about expectations nor any value associated with ‘spectator Christianity.’”

Don’t be a spectator; use your gifts to provide a service to your church! 