Stewardship

Inspiring a deeper understanding of true giving

August 2026

A parable for our times: Now it came to pass that a certain churchperson invited a friend to lunch, and they went to a popular restaurant. The waiter was very efficient and the food was very good.

As they arose to depart, the friend observed that his host had laid some coins under the edge of the plate. And the waiter, who stood by watching, smiled happily, which being interpreted, meant that the tip was satisfactory.

Now the friend was familiar with this custom of tipping. Well did he know that the customer tip used to be the same as the Biblical tithe, ten percent, but that in these latter days, lo, it had risen to a minimum of fifteen percent and in some cases twenty percent, lest the waiter turn against you.

As he meditated on these coins, It came to his friend that few people honor their God as much as they honor their waiter.

Even his churchperson friend here would not think of giving unto the waiter less than the tithe, but did he also give as much unto his God?

Being a good and true friend, he asked him about this matter. "No verily," replied the churchman. "I give unto God whatsoever I feel inspired to give or whatever I think I can spare. In olden days I often put into the collection plate a quarter, but nowadays I usually put in a paperback, a dollar, and on rare occasions, even perchance a five-spot. But added altogether it maketh not the total of the tithe. I know what the Bible says, but I just cannot afford to tithe these days. Everything costs so much, like the expense of eating out. Even the tip has gone up."

"Verily," mused the friend, doth that man fear his waiter more than he feareth God? And doth he love God less than he loveth the waiter: Truly, truly, a man and his money are past understanding."

The best way to lead is by example. As leaders, our responsibility is to set a positive example for others. When we put Christ at the center of our lives, that witness draws others to service and support to the church's mission.

A Starfish on the Beach

As the old man walked the beach at dawn, he noticed a young man ahead of him picking up starfish and flinging them back into the sea.

Finally catching up with the youth, he asked him why he was doing this. The answer was that the stranded starfish would die if left until the morning sun.

"But the beach goes on for miles and there are millions of starfish," countered the old man. "How can your efforts make any difference?"

The young man looked at the starfish in his hand and then threw it to safety in the waves. "It makes a difference to this one!" he replied.

This is a modern-day parable, saying ever so succinctly what we all must realize. We know we are not reaching everyone who needs help in this world, but for all those we do reach we are making the difference.

We can reach out in the service of others through utilizing the talents God has given us to his glory. How well we use our talents and time to reach others who need help is a measure of our stewardship.

Many of us are able to turn our abilities to profit ... in a job, for pay. But whether we work for a salary or are on welfare, whether we have inherited our money, receive a pension check, or get a weekly allowance, how we manage whatever treasure we have shows how we value God's loving generosity to us.

Time? A blessing? Ridiculous!

That's how many people feel. There is too little of it, too much to do. "I don't know how to get it under control." Physicians say that we might look forward to living to be 110 or 120 years old very soon. But that still won't be enough time to set everything right. The list of things we want to accomplish won't be exhausted no matter how many of them we scratch off.

We live in the "now," but we know that death will come to each of us "then." The uneasy feeling that certain death gives us makes us ask why we came here if it was only to disappear seventy-odd years later. But Jesus' resurrection is the event that tells us that eternal life, timeless time, begins in knowing him. Everlasting life has already begun! It means that there is an end to time, but that death will change us, not destroy us. The resurrection of the dead is the other half of the "now" better in every way.

When Jesus tells us to take no thought for tomorrow, he is not saying that death won't come, nor that there will be no judgment. He is telling us to begin living in eternity now. If death ends time as we know it tomorrow, the plans we made yesterday won't make any difference. But today will because today we love our neighbors, today we help the poor, today we pray, and today we give with thanksgiving. Today is the only day we have in which to give our talent and treasure, and to selflessly share our time.

In this way we experience the beginning of eternity and regret about missed opportunities slowly dies. Seize the day and fill it with thanksgiving!

The affairs of God can be described by three words that rhyme. They are caring, sharing, and bearing. Bearing the burden of the cost to support the work of God in the world, whether through charitable donations, raising money for a particular need, or even paying our taxes, is the third way in which we carry out the affairs of God entrusted to us.

Dick and Elizabeth are a retired couple from our church. Rather than spending their golden years watching television and wondering what to do with all their free time, they've given themselves to making short-term mission trips as well as providing lodging and transportation when missionaries visit our church.

People often ask them why they just don't spend their time vacationing and kicking back and relaxing. They respond by saying that in view of the incredible sacrifice that was made by Christ on their behalf, they truly enjoy going to distant lands and sharing God's love and truth.

"We consider it our way of saying 'Thanks' on a daily basis," they often say. With their kids grown and gone from home, it leaves them with plenty of free time and living space to offer the stewardship of hospitality. So many people talk about retiring as a way to 'get away from it all.' Dick and Elizabeth have found that by giving of their time and resources, they've simply opened a whole new chapter in their lives.

What is a good steward?

A good steward shares his or her God-given gifts. We must from time-to-time quietly reflect on the immense goodness of God shown by the many gifts received from God.

The greatest gifts of his son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, the constant presence of his spirit, and the opportunity to live by and in the power of his spirit. God endows each human being with certain personal gifts, talents and material possessions.

Stewardship requires us to acknowledge always the source of each gift that has been received and each possession that has been accumulated. Although we are recipients of almost limitless gifts, our tendency is often to call them our own and claim them for ourselves exclusively.

Christian Stewardship reminds us that these gifts are not our own, that we have a trusteeship over them and not an ownership. Stewardship appeals to our noblest instincts to thank and to share. To give some portion back to God, to those in need, to give away some portion because so many have less than ourselves, is a way of expressing directly our thanksgiving to God for these gifts.

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