

Stewardship

Our Lord's caution about erecting one's home on bedrock in the well-known parable reminds me of a building project in 1917 that illustrated the same lesson. Here it was a case of bridge-building ... the building of a bridge over the waters of the Genesee River at Charlotte, New York.

A bridge at this spot near the rivermouth had been needed for many years; but action had long been deferred because the river, though not wide, was

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navigable to large ships. Finally, the decision was reached to erect a bascule bridge; one whose floor was split across at the middle so that both sides could be lifted to accommodate tall ships. But major problems faced the engineers. They saw that it would be easy to root the bridge on the west-side, since this was a rocky hill. However, the east bank was lower and swampy, and borings showed that the bedrock was down 110 feet. At first they thought it would suffice if they sank wooden piles here to a depth of 70 feet. This didn't work at all. The speedy current soon tore at the piles and made them lean four feet out of plumb.

Finally, they had to resort to the costlier method of sinking a huge broad pipe or caisson down to bedrock. Then they brought in “sand hogs” ... special workmen who would shovel all the earth out



of the tube. The caisson was then filled with concrete ... a great 110 foot column of cement resting in rock. It has supported the bridge well to the present day.

Just as bridges need solid foundations, so do Christian stewards. The foundation of stewardship encompasses the bedrock wisdom of *accountability*. We should know that all that we have on earth is a *gift* from God, and we should recognize that someday we will have to account for the way in which we have managed God's gifts. And we should know that giving is at the heart of genuine religion; that we must all be givers ... givers of time, talent and treasure. ☩

What should be made clear is that stewardship is an attitude. It's not so much what we do, as it is why we are doing something. Stewardship is a continuous revelation that God has given us special talents. By these gifts of talents, we can reveal God to the world.





“Our church is becoming a congregation of the elderly. That means our income is limited while our caregiving expenses increase,” declared Phil Banks, our treasurer. “We must somehow adapt to our situation.”

“For a brief moment, yesterday, I thought I saw what our church should do,” answered old Sam Elder. “Homer Graveside proposed that we accept his house, land, pickup truck and personal property if in exchange we would provide for his modest needs while he lived and give him a decent funeral. For a moment, I wondered if other elderly might want similar arrangements.”

“After further thought, I realized that Homer was indeed giving his ALL, including ALL of his troubles,” Sam indicated. “But even worse, I could see that Our church would be rendering Homer extensive services in expectation of payment from his estate. That’s not charity — that’s a business. Whereas, I can see that some elderly might want such services, I’m convinced that they are not the proper mission for our church.”

“Perhaps that mission warrants further study” said the Pastor.

“Before we could act on it, yes!” said old Sam Elder. “But as I see it, as long as the elderly person retains intelligence, we should be cautious about attempting control of their lives. In other words, we must assist God — NOT compete with God. No! I must advise Homer to

increase his giving to the church while he still lives and to immediately create a will to include the church. In turn, we will try to make sure that appropriate social agencies care for his physical needs.




Every Moment an Opportunity

If one lives to be 70 years of age, the average person spends:

- 20 years sleeping.
- 20 years working.
- 6 years eating.
- 7 years playing.
- 5 years dressing.
- 1 year on the telephone.
- 2 1/2 years in bed.
- 3 years waiting for somebody.
- 5 months tying shoes.
- 2 1/2 years for “other things.”

Does “other things” in your life include some time for participation in serving on a church program?

While our daily lives may have about them a certain “sameness,” still, Christians affirm that every moment is creative by how we experience and respond to this new moment. Within every moment of this day, God is about his creative activity and is presenting us with occasions for discipleship.

Time is one of the most important gifts given us by God. God has given it equally to all. It is our responsibility to use it wisely and well. And we can do so by dedicating some part of it to some apostolic activity, organized within the framework of our own church. 

Do I respect my own abilities and gifts; do I develop them and use them for the Kingdom of God? Do I use the gifts God has given me so that others may be happier? Do I see myself as unique, as important and gifted? In what way have I used my talents for myself, my family, my church and for my community?

It is good for us to reflect upon the way we fulfill the stewardship of our talents.



A generation ago, William Allen White was the brilliant editor of a newspaper in Emporia, Kansas. He was also a very generous person. One day he decided to give a fairly large piece of land to his city. In doing so he wrote that he always found three kicks in a dollar. The first kick, he explained, was in making a dollar. "I dearly love to make a dollar," he said. The second kick he indicated is in having a dollar. His father had been a frugal Yankee who had taught the importance of saving money. Therefore, Mr. White said, "I greatly enjoy having it." Then the wise editor went on to say, "The third kick is when you give dollars away." With exultation, he told his fellow citizens that he was getting a big kick that day in giving them the dollars represented by the piece of land he had turned over to the city.


It's OK to have money

Christians would do well to remember those three kicks Mr. White mentioned. There is nothing wrong with making a dollar legitimately. It is not the quest for money that is wrong, it is making an idol of money. It is putting the quest of wealth ahead of the quest for obedience to God.


It is also permissible for Christians to have money. Better to be in a position of having resources than being

dependent upon the government or beholden to people who misuse power and authority. There is a certain healthy freedom that comes to those who have adequate resources. If we are proper stewards of money, there is a legitimate "kick" in having it.

Stewards always share

But, of course, being a good steward of money always involves sharing it with God's Church and with others. Those who practice such giving invariably testify as to the enjoyment of being able to give. They know that it is indeed more "blessed to give than to receive." That, too, is a "kick." 

Seeing a Need

One afternoon in Chicago, officials gathered to await the arrival of the new Nobel Peace Prize winner. When he arrived, the officials came to greet him. The man thanked them, and then looking over their heads, asked if he might be excused for a moment. He walked through the crowd until he reached an elderly woman who was struggling to carry two large suitcases to a bus. He picked up the bags and escorted the woman to the bus, then returned to the welcoming committee. Later, a member of that committee was telling a friend about the event. He summed it up by saying, "I think that was the first time I ever saw a sermon walking." The man who had delivered that graphic sermon was the missionary doctor who had spent his life helping the poor in Africa, Dr. Albert Schweitzer. Seeing the need, then doing what Jesus would do. That is stewardship of our time. It will say more to those around us than our position or our words. And it gives anyone a chance to be a walking sermon! 

God has filled our lives with good things. They were for us to enjoy. They were also for us to share. Even when we share a generous portion of them, we still have more than we can use. The Bible calls this "proportionate giving." It is the reality that all we have comes from God, and as stewards of these gifts, God asks us to return and to share a portion of them ... just a small portion.



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Steward of the Month

A Heart of Gold

Submitted by: Linda, Logansport, LA

The young lady I am about to tell you about wants no recognition for her mission work, yet she is on the mission 24/7! She has been given a 50/50 chance of survival within a six month time frame, yet she has not stopped caring for others. Her job requires that she interact with people on a daily basis. Therefore she sees the downward side of their life style.

Each day you will find her witnessing to someone. There was a homeless lady that was living on the streets of her small hometown. Officers of the law would pick her up regularly and instead of helping her find some where to live they arrested her. Ms. T. Brown went and found the lady a place to live and went to her congregation that collected food and clothing for her. Then Ms. Brown took her last dollar and gave it to the woman to pay a bill that was due. On several occasions she has taken food from her own home to give to some hungry person. Days she will skip lunch and give her lunch money to others.

Give and it shall be given unto you good measures; press down shaken together and running over. Ms. Brown does not share her health conditions with those around her because she wants no special treatment. Her stewardship takes us to universities, jail houses, hospitals, poverty areas and churches. She is a 30ish year old woman with two children. Even children seek her out for help. Some of these kids have been abused in ways that bring tears to your heart. We need more people like Ms. Brown. 