

Stewardship

“You shall not offer one that has any defect.”

Leviticus 2:20

The laws of Leviticus specify that any type of physical imperfection caused some degree of ritual impurity. Just as the priest could have no physical deformity, so too the animals offered in sacrifice to the Lord had to be unblemished. Only a perfect sacrifice made an acceptable gift for God.

Thus, the purpose of the law might have been ritual purity, but it provides a continuing lesson in generous giving, as well.

The Israelites were forever reminded to think first of their duty as God’s people, and second of their own needs.

Our contributions to the church tend to come to the bottom of the list.

We ourselves are only too familiar with the urge to skimp when it comes to giving. Our contributions to the church tend to come at the bottom of our list of financial priorities ... after we have met our own needs. Leviticus reminds us that our very best belongs to God.

For reflection: How faithful am I in my financial giving to the Lord? Do my contributions to the Church and to the poor represent my leftovers; or do I willingly give of my best? ☩



There’s something pleasant about having a cute tail-wagging dog nuzzle your hand and encourage you to stroke his back or scratch his ear.

But he does this not because he loves you, but because he wants attention. He is selfish. He knows what’s good for him and so he does it.

He gives that he may get. We, on the other hand, are human.

Our view is different

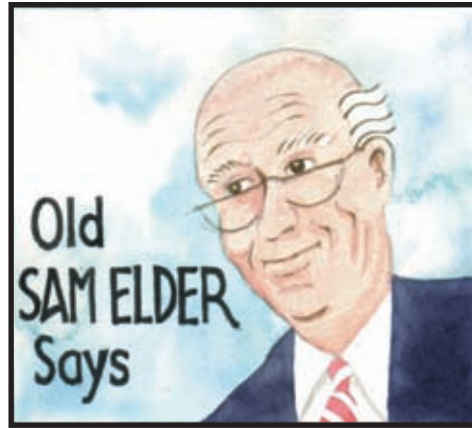
We have to regard the job of living with far more than a “doggy” view.

Our view even spans death. We must integrate into life an awareness of God. And we cannot segregate generosity from faith and our responsibility to God. Christians cannot budget a sacrificial portion of their incomes just so they can have their backs scratched. They do it for God. And as they are generous with God, and because this costs them dearly, they grow rich in faith; their love for God increases. ☩

***L**est we make the mistake of thinking that all we gain is the result of our hard efforts, we are asked to let go of the first and best portion, no matter how hard pressed we are to use it all. This is one message of the scriptures on the right use of material wealth and money.*



God intends possessions to be used. God wants them to be used for the physical, spiritual, educational, social and recreational needs of people. Possibly the biggest problem we face is how to divide the spending of our money between the spiritual and material aspects of life. Our task is to divide it properly.



Jolly Acres Farm had provided health vacations to the obese and out of sorts for over twenty years. Old Sam Elder was making a church call upon owner Barry Pushups saying:

“Barry, you must be doing a few things right to stay in business in this economy.”


“Well, I can say this ... Some families have been coming to us for years,” Barry answered.

“That’s amazing. I didn’t realize that repeat customers was such a big factor in the health business,” said Sam.

“If I can keep them coming, it’s the best and cheapest advertising there is,” exclaimed Barry. “But it does require some prayerful planning.”

“How is that?” Sam asked.


“Trouble is that everyone knows how to reduce fat. You simply bum up more calories that you consume. It’s the same way with the health toning. You exercise every muscle of the body vigorously. The planning is required to make them like it. No one enjoys fasting and dieting. No one enjoys the process of toning up health. I have to sell the image of the new person they will become.”

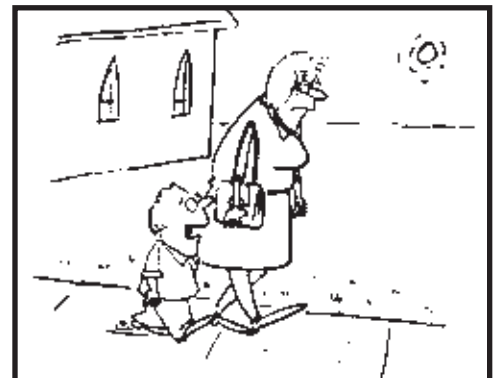
“Barry, you have given me an idea that may apply to our church,” Sam enthused. Instead of selling the joy of giving, perhaps I should dwell on *the new person they will become through giving*. I’ve seen it happen many times. 

Accumulate more... Desire less...

According to the Law of Scarcity in Economics: Economic resources are limited and human wants for material goods are unlimited and insatiable.

G.K. Chesterton commented on this law, saying “There are only two ways to get enough: One is to accumulate more and more, the other is to desire less. Other comments:

1. If we are to avoid the flypaper of materialism, we must discipline our desires.
2. What better way to defeat the monsters of covetousness and greed than through generosity and sharing. Giving is like medicine for the sick soul, food for a strong character. Through giving we assert that God comes first in our lives.
3. But giving is not sorcery. It does not magically fulfill all our desires, and it doesn’t make them go away. Some desires must be met now, others can be postponed, and some can be denied altogether. To stay clear on which is which, use a budget. 



“So, did you give cheerfully or tearfully?”

Let Your Light Shine

The Christian steward is a person who receives God's gifts gratefully, nurtures and develops them accordingly, and then shares their benefits while returning God's gifts in abundance. The spirit of that stewardship permeates the edifice of the church that is graced by the original woodwork of one of its own members.

Born in Lima, Ohio, Jack Homan graduated from the University of Dayton with a degree in mechanical engineering.

Awhile ago, when the new church in their parish became a reality, Jack Homan, then retired, volunteered to build its main altar. In collaboration with his pastor, with some of the initial plans drawn on napkins over dinner, the drawings became realized in the Honduras Mahogany chairs, kneelers, tables, baptismal font, lectern and octagonal candles. At times working seven days a week, twelve hours a day over a period of a year, Jack Homan labored in his converted-garage workshop over this work of love, which now exceeded over seventy pieces in number.

For the many years, day and hours spent laboring in stewardship, his church recognized the time and talent that made Jack Homan its genuine treasure. *"Even so let your light shine before men, in order that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."* (Matthew 5: 14-16)



A Knock on His Door

The writer, Robert Louis Stevenson, went to Samoa for health reasons. For a while, he lived in a small hut, but later he moved into a house.

The first night in his house, it occurred to him that he had not made arrangements for his usual cup of coffee before bedtime. Just as he realized he would miss his evening drink, a knock came on his door. When Stevenson opened the door, he found a native with a tray and steaming cup of coffee.

Being profoundly grateful, Stevenson commended the man with the words, "Great is your forethought."

In return, the man replied, "Great is the love."

Thoughtfulness and loving go hand in hand with giving. A Christian is one who is deeply grateful for God's forethought, immeasurable love, and forgiving grace.

Responding to God's bountiful love, thoughtful Christians feel led to share themselves and their God-given resources to further the Good news of Christ and for the advancement of God's Kingdom on earth. We share, we work, we give, and we love, because God first loved us.



Time and talents are gifts from God that the Lord has sown in our community. God enriches our individual lives and our community life with these gifts. Consider what you may be able to offer in the way of time and talent. Share your unique gifts.



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Would you like to walk through a garden admiring the sights, sounds and smells that comes from someone else's labors, or would you rather experience these same rewards, having contributed to the beauty that you are experiencing? Walking through a public garden can be a wonderful experience. But, there is no real ownership for the results that you are enjoying. Even if it is just one tomato plant that you tend, when you grow it, care for and enjoy the taste ... nothing can be more rewarding!

Are you contributing?

How does this then apply to your spiritual life today? Are you walking into church and experiencing the sights and sounds of worship, and admiring

the fruits of the Spirit brought forth by others ... and then leaving, feeling refreshed and uplifted? Or, are you contributing to the church? Do you think that you've done "your turn" at service in the church and to God?

Can you imagine God saying, "I don't have time. I quit. I've done enough already. I'm done healing and protecting. It is time for others to step forward and take over!" If you are age 14 or age 84, God expects all of us to "find a need and fill it."

Yes, while walking into church and experiencing the gifts of others can be good, it can't compare to the earthly and eternal rewards we can experience when we are personally engaged in God's work. God's voice, hands and feet are yours. 