


# Stewardship

## We are called to sacrifice

As a young child, you may have wondered, “What is the wind?” The answer is simple; the wind is just air in motion. But think of all the things that it can do! From powering windmills that grind grain into flour, to the wind in the sails of great ships traveling the seas in the past; to today’s wind-powered generators that can provide electricity, to pinwheels spinning on a fence which will (hopefully) keep animals away from the garden, wind has been an important source of power for humanity for centuries.

As an adult, you may have wondered, “What is stewardship?” Well, one answer is that stewardship is just Christians in motion! Think of church members preparing food for the hungry. Think of them visiting shut-ins, or possibly driving them to church or a doctor’s appointment. Think of a Sunday school class of teens raking leaves or painting houses for those in need. Think of younger students pouring lemonade they sell to raise money to send overseas to purchase books for a school serving children who never had a chance at an education before. And many of these actions begin with someone writing a check to pay for needed supplies.

We know from the Bible that Jesus Christ controls the wind, because he stilled it (along with the sea) during the storm when he was on a boat with the Apostles. Christians should also let him control our lives. When we do, our stewardship will become even more powerful. 




## Helping Hands

Everyone knows about “helping hands.” But have you ever thought about all the different things hands can really do?

Hands reach up to paint, clean, and mend the church. They do the same for the homes of those in need nearby. Sometimes, they even build those needed homes. Hands can greet a visitor with a firm handshake. Or they could learn a little sign language to help make a new church member who is deaf feel more welcome.

Hands can dip into pockets to make contributions to the church. They can also dip into buckets with a sponge to swirl across many car windows to raise more funds.

Hands can hold a piece of chalk in the classroom or a piece of music in the choir loft. Even those hands that are clenched are helping. They’re donating blood during a church-sponsored drive.

Surely two of those hands that help belong to someone you know. Maybe they belong to you. 

*We have all heard the saying, “Give until it hurts.” Too often, we assume giving will hurt. So, we procrastinate. When we finally “get around to giving,” we do so timidly, fearful it will impoverish us. We rarely experience the joy of giving. Yet Jesus says: “There is more happiness in giving than in receiving.” (Acts 20:35) Stewardship calls us to plan our giving ... giving the first portion of our income, not the last.*



## Pastor John's musing...



**A generous person knows how to be loving and understanding and how to give material help without demanding love, understanding or help in return. He gives and forgets he has given, and in this lies his riches.**

**“He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”**

*2 Cor 9:6-7*

**F**inding ways to give your time as a family can be a real blessing. It allows you to give freely of your time without dividing your family and encourages good stewardship in your children.

Some of these things can be as simple as baking bread or making a meal. Find out if your parish does meals for shut-ins, has a new mother ministry, or a welcoming committee. Then, with your entire family, lovingly prepare a meal or baked good and deliver it together. Children can make cards or pick flowers to add a special touch.

Another way to serve as a family is to see what yard work needs to be done around your church. All children love to help with yard work, and their enthusiasm will make up for the extra time it takes to keep them involved.

You can also have your children help in clean-up activities after a church event. They can wipe tables, sweep, gather trash and tidy pews. Look for activities that mimic those things they can already do around your own house.

Finally, talk to your children about your responsibility to be good stewards of your time and talents and teach them to be ready to serve by your example.



## Nothing In Return

**M**y twelve year-old daughter was asked to baby-sit the nursery at church for three dollars an hour. I thought it was a great way for her to be introduced to the world of work and earning money. Three weeks after starting, no check had arrived. I figured it must have just been an oversight and said so at the family dinner table.

“Dad, it doesn’t matter. That’s not why I did it,” Alexandra replied. “You help out in Men’s Ministries because you enjoy it and that’s your way of helping the church out. Mine is keeping the toddlers entertained so their parents can focus on the worship and the sermon.” I couldn’t believe the maturity and selflessness my little girl was displaying.

Jesus said we must become like little children to enter his Kingdom. Often times as we get older, we tend to look at gifts like our time, money, or abilities as if they were our own, and sometimes we hang on a little too tight. Once again, I learned a valuable lesson from my children that when we give of our time or talents, there is far more joy if we don’t look for anything in return!



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## Positive Mental Attitude

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**D**r. Karl Menninger, one of America's top psychiatrists a generation ago, once made an interesting comment about the relationship between generosity and mental health. He said: "Money-giving is a very good criterion of a person's mental health. Generous people are rarely mentally ill people."

Consider the most generous people you know and ask yourself. "Are they mentally stable or not? Do they seem happy or not? Are they complainers or not?" My guess would be that they are good-hearted, mature people who have sound mental health.

Once I knew a very old man named Frank who was exceedingly generous with what little he had. Whenever I visited him, I noticed he had visitors coming and going. Little children knocked on the door. He gave them a warm welcome, an ego-boost, sometimes a sucker, and always an invitation to return soon. His mail carrier came in each day, laid down his bag, sat down and enjoyed tea and conversation while resting a bit. Widows and widowers also came often. Frank gave them encouragement, comfort and time in his presence ... just the gifts they needed.

I was his pastor. I felt the need to visit him often, for my sake, not his. His cheerfulness, upbeat outlook, and warm hospitality lifted my spirits. His generosity even improved my mental health. Invariably, as I rose to leave, he would hand me a gift for the church. Our church was doing very well financially. Therefore, one time, I suggested that he keep his gift to use for his own needs. His answer to me was this: "You don't understand. It doesn't matter whether or not the church needs

the money. I need to give it. I get the blessing."

Believe me, Frank could not have had better mental and spiritual health. And the world around him was much the better for it. 




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### Did I Remember?

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**H**ave you ever been about to fall asleep when suddenly you thought, "Did I remember to unplug the iron?" Or, if you've set off on a long trip, did you ever say, "Did I remember to call so the newspapers won't pile up in the driveway?" In either case, even if your next thought was, "Oh, I must have," you'll probably be crawling out of your warm bed or turning the car around just to check. If you don't, it will make it hard to sleep or to travel.

On the other hand, have you ever been heading out of church on Sunday and thought, "Did I remember to sign up to help at the next church dinner?" Or have you ever flipped open your checkbook to see if you remembered to increase your offering, as you'd decided to do in January? Maybe you have, in which case you're like most people. Maybe you haven't ... and in that case, maybe you should. 

*A new sense of mission could be the outcome if a church takes seriously its challenge of relating to a more leisure-oriented world. For Christians, leisure time is not just "to spend." It becomes time to serve. The multiple dimensions of mission in our time suggest that the great variety of work skills and personal capabilities can be utilized in the emerging mission situation. Consequently the church can move even further into the changing world in which, in God's providence, it is placed.*



“Money-giving is a very good criterion of a person’s mental health. Generous people are usually happy, healthy people.”

