

## Give and Live

Christian stewardship is different from raising money for charity. The goal of secular fund raising is dollars for a worthy cause. The goal of Christian stewardship is the faithful management of all that God gives so that God can use our gifts to transform us spiritually and to extend Christ's transforming love to others.

St. Paul spelled out these two goals in his lengthy definition of stewardship in 2 Corinthians 9:11-13. "You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, people will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the Gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them, and with everyone else."

Jesus summed up the spiritual connection between money and God this way: "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Luke 12:34). Financial stewardship is treasure management that helps us escape the trap of selfishness by keeping ourselves spiritually focused on God.

Each of us makes one of two choices in life. We either become emotionally attached to our money, or we become emotionally attached to God who gives us our money. Financial stewardship helps us to overcome the temptation to break the First Commandment and put the false idol of money first, ahead of the God who revealed his love for us in Jesus Christ.

Our focus should be: "What is God calling me to do?" rather than on the question, "What does the parish need in order to pay its bills?" Thus our emphasis becomes a spiritual growth experience, not a fundraising effort. We want our giving to be a way to help us to grow spiritually in our relationship with God by supporting our mission and ministry with a percentage of our income.

This is based on the biblical philosophy of the need of the giver for his or her own spiritual development, rather than on the need of the Chapel to receive. Instead of treating people like members of a social club who should pay dues, we treat people like followers of Jesus Christ who want to give unselfishly as an act of discipleship. It encourages us toward proportionate and systematic giving in response to the question, "What percentage of my income is God calling me to give?"

The popular novelist, John Grisham was quoted in *USA Today* as saying, "My wife and I measure the success of the year on how much we give away. The bulk of it goes to church and related activities."

Alan Redpath tells the story of the two seas in the Holy Land. Both are fed by the same river, the river Jordan. If you went alongside the Sea of Galilee, you would find children playing by the banks, trees growing alongside, and life apparent everywhere. But you would find no sign of life or vegetation around the other sea. There is nothing at all but barrenness.

What is the difference between the two? There is no difference in the source of supply, for the same river supplies both. But the difference is this: that for every drop of water that goes into Galilee, another drop goes out. What it receives, it gives. It takes in, it gives out. And all around it is life, blossoming fruit, abundance. But the other sea jealously hoards its resources and refused to let out a single drop. It keeps everything it takes in. And its name is Dead.

To give is to live. To restrain, to hold, to guard, to hoard, is to die. The same river of life in the power of the Spirit of God comes into your heart and into mine. Freely we have received; the Lord helps us to freely give. *Written by The Rev. Ted Schroeder, Amelia Chapel, Georgia. Given by Eva Mehringer.*