



THE PASTOR'S PEN

Volume 43 No. 118

August 21, 2013

Stewardship - A Simple Explanation

What is Stewardship?

The simple answer is found in the words of Jesus: "Follow Me." Jesus simply but powerfully commanded the Apostles and they did as he asked. That same call is made to us as well in this day and in this time. How do we follow Jesus? We do it by trying to live our lives as he did – the example of the perfect steward. In fact, stewardship can be synonymous with discipleship. It is the care and use of all that we have been given by God and is often explained in terms of talent, treasure and time. Why? Because communication requires that a message is sent *and* received therefore explaining stewardship in simple, concrete terms is more effective. So here is a way to look at these aspects of stewardship.

Talent

We are all blessed with so many talents and yet we may not know they exist. Talents are found in your personality, your interests and in your skills. Those who love interacting with people, who love to talk and love to be with groups have incredible talents to assist with evangelization. Those who are skilled in trades or have professional abilities are gifted with talents that can support not only a church, but also charitable works throughout the community. Your skills and knowledge can be put to good use in the church curing many ills in our society. Your use of talent for the work of God on earth is one of the most personally fulfilling opportunities of your lifetime. Payment in a smile, in relief of suffering or in lending a hand to someone in desperate need is greater than any material payment you will ever receive.

Treasure

Treasure is a gift and also a burden. We are a part of a society that has become consumed with material goods. Yet, life can be lived very simply, if we choose to live it that way. It is not wrong to enjoy many of the amazing luxuries life has to offer. However, justice requires us to consider the needs of others as we enjoy the gifts we have been given. To some, food and housing have become a luxury they are unable to obtain. Our use of treasure to support the charitable works of the church helps to bring justice and equity to the world.

Charity is not a tax. It should be given freely because we understand and believe in the end result of our giving of financial support to any ministry. Treasure is measured not only in what we give to the church but also in what we provide to other charitable efforts in our community. The Old Testament tithe or 10% for God's work includes **all** of your charitable giving. In light of this, many people are very generous and should feel good about what they do. What should you give, you ask? There is no one

answer, but we should all give according to what we have been given. Rather than gifts of equal size, gifts should be based on equal sacrifice. For example, those who earn minimum wage will find it difficult to provide even basic living needs for themselves and for their family. This financial responsibility is a priority but it may still be possible to be a good steward in terms of time and talent. For many others, it is very possible to make a financial gift. A gift that is truly a sacrifice is a gift out of our need, not just our excess. Only you and God know what is fair, but one way to know when you are making the right gift is when you stop making excuses for its size and stop trying to rationalize why it is enough.

Time

The gift of time is just that – a gift. None of us know exactly how much time we have been granted on this earth. In the time that we have, we are asked to use that time effectively by continuing the mission of Jesus Christ throughout our days. Each day has 24 hours and consists of time at work, time at rest and time with family and friends. We sleep about 8 hours a day on average, work about 8 hours and therefore have 8 hours for “other things.” At rest, we sleep or at least try, so that we may regain strength for our next day. Sleep is essential in considering the body as a temple. In addition to sleep, doing what we can to keep our bodies healthy and strong helps us lead productive lives on behalf of God. At work, our professions should help develop a better world – in some way – while how we work should help to better us personally in many ways. Your interaction with colleagues, customers, employees, employers and others should be conducted in the spirit of the second of God’s great commandments, “love your neighbors as you love yourself.” This includes that often stressful drive to and from work! Our last eight hours of the day are filled with what we do at home or with friends and neighbors. Family responsibility is also important and a major part of that is faith formation. Both at church and at home, we are responsible for handing on the faith to future generations. How we interact with people in front of children teaches valuable lessons on how to live. Our participation at worship and in ministries prepares a roadmap for ourselves and those with whom we have influence on how to lead a Christ-centered life.

So there you have it. Time is fleeting. Make the most of yours by using all of your gifts to follow in the footsteps of Jesus as we commit today to create our tomorrow.

Blessings,

James

