



THE PASTOR'S PEN

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Stewardship Thoughts

With September comes our annual Stewardship Drive as we prepare our budget for the coming year. Instead of a long article of reflecting on what Christian stewardship is all about, I have decided to offer you a collection of quotations from many different sources that are here to give you some different insights on the subject. As you consider your estimate of giving for 2015, read over a few of these reflections and prayerful consider your personal stewardship plans for the coming year. Then read another one or two of these quotes each day in your devotions or quiet time to help you come to your own conclusions about stewardship in your own theology and your own life. The goal of course is become the best steward you can be in all areas of what God has entrusted to your care.

Blessings,

James

If we were to worship without giving, we would be the first people in history and the only people in the world to do so! The pagan brings an offering to his idol. The Psalms urged the Jews to "bring an offering" and come into the courts of the temple. Jesus sat by the treasury as worshipers cast in their gifts. Paul urged Christians to prepare an offering. Surely, we would not want to be the first to attempt worship without giving!

We must not misunderstand that old hymn "Rock of Ages." It is the favorite of some because of the verse that begins, "Nothing in my hand I bring!" Is that our theme song? It refers to the basis of our forgiveness--not to the acts of our worship. It is true that no offering of ours can take away sin. "Jesus paid it all." It is also true that no real gratitude exists apart from the desire to give, to bring an offering!

"If money talks, as some folks tell, to most of us it says, 'Farewell!' When your money talks, does it say, "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow?" Does it say "Thank you, Lord, for saving my soul?" When your money talks, what does it say?

In the entire history of this earth, only about 8,500 tons of gold have been produced. The metal is so dense that all of the gold ever seen on earth could be contained in a cube eighteen yards on each side! Yet people will steal for it, kill for it, live for it, die for it! Giving keeps us from letting money become our master, or letting gold be our god.

Tourism is the principal means of livelihood on the Caribbean island of Aruba. Aruba means "land of gold," but no gold was ever found there. What a disappointment that must have been to the early explorers. Does our stewardship hold out great promise and then prove to be empty? Is God disappointed in our stewardship?

A little boy was asked the meaning of stewardship. He said, "Life is like a great ship loaded with cargo to be delivered to many different people in many different places. I am the captain. God is the owner!"

Giving is an act of faith. We give, believing that God will provide for our needs. We give, believing that Christ's church is worthy of our offerings. We give, believing that men are lost. We give, believing that the gospel can save them. If you do not give, which of these do you disbelieve?

St. Peters is not the only great church in Rome. The church of St. Mary Major is a grand cathedral with a high, vaulted ceiling. The ceiling is covered with gold--real gold! It is the *first* gold that Columbus brought back from the New World. We are impressed that the *first* gold was given to God. That's what He wants all of us to do--put Him first!

Not everyone gives in proportion to what he possesses. Not everyone gives in proportion to what he earns. Not everyone gives in proportion to the way he has been blessed. But everyone is a proportion giver. We all give in proportion to the amount of religion we really have!

A lady gave a coin to a beggar saying, "That's more than God ever gave me." "No," said the beggar, "God gave you all you have." "No," said the lady, "He only loaned it to me so that I could distribute it for Him."

It actually happened in a Sunday School class of boys long ago. The teacher asked each lad to quote a Bible verse as the offering was taken. One said, "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver." Another said, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor." A third boy blurted out, "A fool and his money are soon parted." The world says you are a fool to give. God says you are a fool *not* to give!"

A man named his boat "Mama's Mink." The meaning is obvious. If we were frank, would some have to name their boats "God's Tenth?" Would some have to name their cars "God's Tenth?" Would some have to name their houses "God's Tenth?"

Ninety percent of all the flowers in the world have an unpleasant odor or no odor at all. Yet, we remember the flowers because of the ten percent that are pleasantly fragrant! Ten percent that is given is remembered long after we have forgotten how we spent the ninety percent. The ten percent rises as an odor of a sweet savor to God."

Everything Midas touched turned to gold. He thought it was a blessing. He found it to be a curse. His food turned to gold. His child turned to gold. Here we see the reverse of the Midas touch. God turns our gold into truth and comfort; into a voice proclaiming the good news; into a hand helping the sick; into a force striking free the chains of sin; into life everlasting. We bring our money so that He may transform it into something *truly* valuable.