

What is Stewardship?

In last month's Newsletter, I shared that from October 11th – November 15th we are undertaking a Stewardship Campaign. Proverbs 14:8 declares, *"The wisdom of the prudent is to discern his way..."* Ultimately, that's what we're going to be about! We're intentionally discerning our way of stewardship in light of God's Word.

In this month's Newsletter we begin this journey by answering the question, "What is stewardship?" In a nutshell, ***Christian stewardship is the faithful management of our financial resources and all we have.*** It begins with the understanding that everything we possess is God's (Ps. 24:1 "The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it") and that "we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world" (1 Tim 6:7). Since all we have is God's, it is our duty to use it for his purposes. These purposes are expressed in our various vocations, or callings, that we have. So, for example, a father and mother use their income to feed, clothe, and protect their children.

Besides the vocations that each of us have in our family life and in society, as Christians we have the vocation of being a part of a local assembly of believers. In his Word, God lays out what faithful stewardship is regarding this.

1) It's a willing and cheerful endeavor

2 Corinthians 9:7 "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

2) We are not to give God our leftovers

Proverbs 3:9-10 "Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine."

3) Giving is a regular undertaking

1 Corinthians 16:2 "On the first day of every week (i.e. Sunday), each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper..."

4) It's proportional

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Deuteronomy 16:17 "Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God that he has given you."

5) It's Generous

Mark 12: 41-44 And he [Jesus] sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing

to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.

2 Corinthians 8:1-4 "We want you to know... about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor[b] of taking part in the relief of the saints.

As we approach our Stewardship Campaign, prayerfully consider your giving in light of these five themes. Ask yourself:

- Is my giving a joyless endeavor? If so, why?
- Am I faithfully giving God my firstfruits, or am I simply giving him whatever number pops in my head on Sunday Morning? If so, why?
- Do I regularly (i.e. weekly) give to my congregation? If not, why not?
- Is my giving in proportion to how God has blessed me? If not, why not? For guidance on this, look at your giving in comparison to the Old Testament law of tithing (giving 10% of what you receive). Though no longer a *requirement* for Christians, the principle remains. Does your giving even begin to measure up to what God commanded his people of old? If not, why not.
- Would you describe your stewardship toward the church as "generous?" If not, why not? If so, how could excel all the more?"

In next month's article, we'll consider more of what God's Word says about Stewardship along with providing steps for planning your giving over the next year. God bless!