

Heritage Christian Church

Participating Membership

Good Stewardship



Generously Sharing God's Resources

(Lesson 5 of 8)

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"Mine"

It's one of the first words a baby learns. By use of that term, a child differentiates between what is common property – what is "out there" – and what is under his or her control. Just as every child must establish "me" concretely in contrast to "you," healthy development requires "mine" to be distinguished from "yours." It's not selfish for the child to talk this way, though the adamant declaration seems harsh to our adult ears.

Social scientists have tried to engineer people – sometimes, whole cultures – to reject this mind set, but they have all found there's something in the human makeup that requires a separation between what has a unique relationship to me and what has the same relationship with everybody – or at least no special relationship with me. It's a natural and necessary phase of development to draw these boundaries, and if children don't do so, they become pushovers and doormats and live miserable adult lives.

So what does this have to do with good stewardship? Just that we cannot call it good money management to be foolish with our resources either by hoarding or by abandoning the responsibility of ownership. We can and should say "mine" as a starting place to knowing how to handle properly what God gave us. Of course, technically, God is the giver of all good gifts, the ultimate source of all that we own. But we shouldn't throw all our "stuff" away, as if that proves we're not mastered by it. We need to manage it. We need to steward it. And we do this not just by releasing a few dollars here and there to a church. We start by surveying all we have and consider in a fresh way how everything that we have – EVERYTHING, kept or released – should be used in the light of eternity. He dignifies our ownership by asking – not demanding – that we consider His ownership of us and that we reconsider how we grasp what we call our own. And so that there's no mistake about it, He gives us the ultimate example in Jesus Christ, who gave up all He had to bring a lost world home. There will be no more fighting there. No one will ever say "mine" again. In that place, we'll all freely embrace the reality we only begin to grasp through good stewardship on earth.

"His"

Day 1 ***Biblical Tithing***

What percentage is common to the following biblical stories of giving?

Genesis 14:18-20

Leviticus 27:30, 32

Malachi 3:8-10

Do you think Christians should adopt this same historic standard for giving? Why or why not?

Day 2 ***Stewardship of Our Resources***

In Luke 14:33, Jesus lays out for His followers the percentage of our worldly goods that belong to Him, and those that are ours. What is your reaction to His teaching in this verse?

What's the moral of the story Jesus summarized in Luke 16:10-13?

What is the implication of these verses on your own possessions?

Day 3 ***Savings and Debt***

Why is the ant a good model of proper money management according to Proverbs 6:6-11?

What does the writer of Proverbs say about "get rich quick" schemes in Proverbs 28:20?

In this age of easy credit and consumer debt, what does the timeless wisdom of God have to say concerning how we as Christ-followers handle our desires and indebtedness?

Proverbs 22:7

Proverbs 22:26-27

Why do you think the Scriptures elevate practices such as saving and avoiding debt to a spiritual level rather than just a simple monetary one?

Day 4
Attitudes toward Money and Giving

What additional lessons about giving can be gleaned from the following passages?

Matthew 6:3, 4

1 Corinthians 16:1, 2

1 Timothy 6:8-10, 17-19

(See also Proverbs 23:4-5)

What attitudes should characterize giving according to 2 Corinthians 9:6, 7?

What challenge is presented in this passage? What promise?

Day 5
In summary, mature Christians give...

Generously... They know Christ has given all to them, and they know Christ ultimately owns all they have.

Proportionally... They try to give as high a percentage of their income as possible, recognizing the tithe (10%) as a long-established benchmark which may well be exceeded as they prosper.

Regularly...As resources flow in, they offer the “first-fruits” back to God, honoring Him before any others.

Locally...Knowing that they claim this church as their spiritual home, they support the ministries from which they derive benefit.

Liberally...As they are able, they go beyond giving to their own church and contribute to the cause of Christ globally.

Cheerfully...Knowing that God sees the heart, they don't just give to an organization—they give their offering as unto God Himself; they do so willingly, and not under compulsion, but with joyful worship as their resources flow out to serve others.

Anonymously...They don't call attention to themselves when they give or expect their offering to produce an advantage in the church.

Expectantly...Counting on God's promise of provision, they anticipate seeing God use their gift and know He'll work in their own life—including financially—as they give.

The Elders' Statement on “Good Stewardship”

Followers of Christ realize that they have been bought with the price of Christ's blood, and that everything they are and have belongs to Him.

In light of this, they desire to be responsible caretakers of the material resources that God has entrusted to them. They recognize the tithe (10% of one's earnings) as the historic standard of giving in Scripture. But moreover, in response to Christ's abundant giving, they increasingly submit to His Lordship and display a spirit of generosity and cheerfulness in supporting the work of the church.

Personal Response Good Stewardship

(Please retain for your membership confirmation)

Do you believe the way you use your material wealth is God-honoring in all respects?

Yes
 No

If no, in what areas are you lacking? What action are you taking to make changes?

In light of the tithe as a biblical precedent for giving, do you regularly support this body using 10% as a goal to reach (or surpass as God prospers)?

Yes
 No

If not, describe your current practice and ways you're moving toward this goal.

If it becomes possible for you to give beyond a tithe (10%) what dreams do you have for using your resources so God's Kingdom can expand locally and around the world?

Note: People can fall prey to a variety of errors in the area of giving. One extreme is to become compelled by guilt or legalistic "obedience." Paul said God loves a cheerful giver. Reluctant, joyless giving evidences an issue that needs to be addressed. Paul also warned against unbalanced, irresponsible giving that ignores personal needs and can actually create financial dependence. Yet, another extreme is unplanned and haphazard giving that reflects neither faithfulness nor generosity.

What shapes Heritage's position regarding giving?

The Old Testament provides the backdrop – instructing God's people to give the first 10% of their income back to Him – and as such, it ought to move us all toward adopting at least that percentage. In response to Christ's lavish grace, the New Testament goes on to teach proportional giving, and spurs us to doing even more to advance the Kingdom locally – and beyond – as God individually prospers and leads. It is in this spirit that we ask participating members to support this church with their tithe. We realize for some this will be a goal to attain over time; for others, it's already a mark they can surpass as God leads. In any case, we believe God will bless and empower us as we joyfully band together to advance His cause.