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## Stewardship Part I

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### What does stewardship mean to you?

There are two words that send the average congregation and common churchgoer into fear and panic, from the leadership and pastorate, that fears to offend or drive people away, to the church member who may be too far stretched in time and giving, and cannot give anymore, to the person who does not want to be convicted, lest he be forced to reach for the sacred will of his wallet or the exercise of His call. Yet, these two words are simple, and needed, because the church and the body of Christ could not function without them being proclaimed and exercised: These simple words are Stewardship and Evangelism.

Why such fear? Perhaps they necessitate a response that requires us to get up and do when we would rather sit down and don't. So, a cold shiver goes up the back of our complacency. These two words strike at the very heart and will of plans and ideas that we have set up for ourselves. They strike at our comfort, and the way of life we like and have designed for ourselves. Perhaps they even put us in front of the mirror of duty and requirement, of responsibility and a response to our free gift of grace, which we would rather not give. Then there is the world of complacency, where a Christian will just "pew sit" his way though life in his walk with Christ. A Sunday visit from time to time is more of a greater sacrifice than he can handle. His time is booked with the duty of his own plans and ideas. So when stewardship comes up, he realizes his failings. Guilt rears its ugly head, and calls for the primeval reaction of fight or flight. Thus, we can think we can fight against such requirements and proclaim they are not needed so we do not have to meet them. Or, we can run to another church that has no such requirement, so we can hide our inadequacies. I received my gift of grace, yet I will not send a thank-you, nor will I use it. It is to sit on my shelf for my comfort and insurance only. And, for the most part, God will let us keep it there.

That is the beauty of grace--no strings attached. But, what good is a car if all it does is stay parked? Without care, it will rust, degrade, and be of no value, even with 0 miles on the odometer. Yes, grace is given without strings attached, except for our faith. But, as the book of James proclaims, what good is it? What good is our salvation if it is only good for comfort and security? Of course, there is no greater Comfort or Security than our faith in Christ, so, why should we worry about temporary earthly pleasures, when so much more awaits us?

But, these words of Stewardship, sometimes referred to as tithing or Evangelism, and sometimes said of discipleship, do not need to be scary. Stewardship can be an act of love, and even fun! It can be a response to His love, which will give us much, much greater comfort than any plans or ideas on our part. Perhaps Christians want to give, but they do not know how. Maybe they just need to be told that all we have is not really ours to begin with. We are just temporary stewards of His treasures,

time and talents. With such a view, we may see a pleasure in giving, and see the benefits as they help build the body of Christ.

**Read each of these verses: Proverbs 3:9-10; Romans 12:6**

1. How does your world-view influence your beliefs and actions? How does it affect your outcome in serving and giving?
2. What does this Proverb have to say?
3. What does Paul have to say?
4. What does stewardship mean in these verses?
5. What does God want me to do with my Time, Talent and Treasures?
6. How can I have a better attitude about my money and resources?
7. How do you think God feels when we do not put to use what He gives us?
8. How have you forsaken your opportunities and responsibilities?
9. What has your church done with the resources and opportunities the Lord has given?
10. How has your church put its resources back into promoting the Kingdom? How can it do so better?
11. What does it mean to you that our God trusts you with His most valuable goods and people? What have you done? What will you do?
12. Why cannot you be committed to Christ and be motivated by the love of money (Luke 16:10)?
13. Do you really believe that real wealth in life is not in money, but rather in relationships and obedience? If not, why? If so, why?
14. How does it make you feel that when your talents are functioning as they are given to you, you become Christ's hands and feet in the world?